PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

SIXTH SERIES—VOLUME 76

HOUSE OF COMMONS

OFFICIAL REPORT

SECOND SESSION OF THE FORTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND NORTHERN IRELAND
THIRTY-FOURTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SESSION 1984-85

COMPRISING PERIOD
25 MARCH—4 APRIL 1985

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IN THE SECOND SESSION OF THE FORTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND

THIRTY-FOURTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 76**

TENTH VOLUME OF SESSION 1984-85

House of Commons

Monday 25 March 1985

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

WALES

Energy Policy

1. **Mr. D. E. Thomas** asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he has made any assessment of the effects of Government energy policy on employment prospects in Wales.

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Nicholas Edwards): Our policy of providing competitive and secure supplies of energy is essential for the best development of manufacturing industry and of employment prospects in Wales.

Mr. Thomas: Does the Secretary of State now agree with the view expressed by his right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer at the beginning of the coal industry dispute, which was engineered by the Government, that the dispute was a good investment? How does the absence of a coherent energy policy and of substantial investment in the Welsh coal industry amount to an energy policy that is good for Wales?

Mr. Edwards: I cannot agree with the hon. Gentleman about the absence of a coherent energy policy. Massive investment is going on in the coal industry. We are determined to see that alternative sources of energy are available to industry so that they have competitive fuel sources to enable them to compete with other countries.

Sir Raymond Gower: As the most damaging factor affecting energy in Wales was the unfortunate coal mining strike, to what extent will that affect the prices of electricity in particular and energy in general during the period immediately ahead of us?

Mr. Edwards: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor has already made clear the way in which those costs are being met. They will have no immediate impact on the electricity generating industry, although undoubtedly they represent a burden on the economy.

Mr. Foot: Does the right hon. Gentleman recall that during the miners' strike the churches in Wales produced what the Prime Minister would no doubt describe as a whole nest of cuckoos? Would it not have been right to pay more attention to that rare ornithological development? Why did he not seek to settle on such a fair proposition? Would it not have been better for Wales and the whole country?

Mr. Edwards: I am afraid that the churches were unable to put forward a basis that held out any hope of a realistic settlement at a time when the leader of the NUM was not prepared, as he said, to give an inch.

Mr. Ron Davies: May I remind the Secretary of State of the devastating impact that the proposed closure of Bedwas colliery will have on the Rhymney valley when we already have 10,000 unemployed and now face a further loss of 600-plus jobs? Is he aware that that closure was effected by underhand means by the NCB in Wales? Is he aware of the statement by the Secretary of State for Energy some months ago that the modified colliery review procedure was sacrosanct? Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that that is Government policy and take steps to ensure that before any final decision is taken in respect of Bedwas that colliery is subject to the modified review procedure as agreed with the National Association of Colliery Overmen, Deputies and Shotfirers?

Mr. Edwards: I understand that faces were lost at that colliery during the dispute, that those who work in the colliery have now voted on the issue, and that that is a question for the management of the NCB.

Mr. Terlezki: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the NCB in Wales has lost coal exports to France to the tune of 600,000 tonnes per annum, which is bound to tell on

the Welsh economy and, in particular, on Welsh coal before output is brought to normality and the Welsh economy is stabilised?

Mr. Edwards: I am glad to say that production in the coalfield is already getting back to normal. I heard last week from the chairmen of the NCB and of Associated British Ports that exports have already begun to flow through the south Wales ports. That is obviously an encouraging development and I hope that everyone will work to restore those important markets.

Mr. Barry Jones: It is said that NCB (Enterprise) Ltd. is to be funded with £10 million. What share of that £10 million will Wales have? Does the Secretary of State realise that that £10 million—indeed more than that—could easily be spent in Wales? How much has he won for NCB (Enterprise) Ltd. in Wales?

Mr. Edwards: It has been made clear that these are start-up resources to enable the operation to get off the ground. I understand that a high proportion of the proposals so far made involve Wales. At present there is no inhibition on the company's work arising from a shortage of funds.

A55 Northop Bypass

2. **Mr. Raffan** asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the proposed A55 Northop bypass, giving a schedule of starting and completion dates for its construction.

The Minister of State, Welsh Office (Mr. John Stradling Thomas): I announced my decision on a route for the Northop bypass on 14 March. I have accepted the inspector's recommendation that the route in the published draft order to the north and east of the village should be adopted, though my Department will be discussing questions of access and severed land with the landowners affected. The provisional start date for the scheme is summer 1987, subject to the completion of the remaining statutory procedures and of engineering design. Construction work is expected to take about two years.

Mr. Raffan: Why has the bypass starting date slipped from autumn 1986 to summer 1987? Does my hon. Friend remember his assurance to me on 25 October 1984 that the delay in announcing the outcome of the inquiry would not lead to a delay in the starting date? Does he realise that if this new starting date is followed there will be a period of more than two years when Northop village will be nothing more than a bottleneck between the completed Hawarden and Holywell bypasses?

Mr. Stradling Thomas: I understand my hon. Friend's concern, but careful consideration had to be given to the issues involved. As the report made clear, the inspector found that some of the matters raised at the public inquiry required careful balancing. The provisional start date of summer 1987 accords with the time scale given in "Roads in Wales 1983". The statutory procedures, and the considerations of those of my hon. Friend's constituents who are affected, cannot easily be brushed aside.

Mr. Roy Hughes: Does the Minister agree that since the publication of the document "Roads in Wales 1983" there has been a good deal of slippage in respect of the A55 programme? Is it not a pretty lame excuse for the Welsh Office to talk about changing priorities and competing demands? Is it not obvious that such important road construction work should be given the highest possible priority?

Mr. Stradling Thomas: Such work is, of course, given the highest possible priority. Those who understand the engineering problems involved—and there are many hon. Members who do—will realise that slippage is inevitable in some schemes——

Mr. Roy Hughes: Too many banana skins.

Mr. Stradling Thomas: I thought that we were talking about roads rather than fruit. The hon. Gentleman made a statement that was grossly distorted. Some slippage occurs inevitably because of the difficulties involved, and because of the essential nature of the statutory procedures that protect the rights of those affected.

A465 (Glynneath-Aberdulais)

3. **Mr. Coleman** asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will indicate the latest position in respect of the construction of the section of the A465 trunk road linking Glynneath with Aberdulais; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stradling Thomas: I am pleased to be able to tell the hon. Gentleman that I have decided to replace the existing A465 between Glynneath and Aberdulais with a dual carriageway along the previously announced route. Preparation of the scheme will now proceed and draft line, side roads and compulsory purchase orders will be published in due course.

Mr. Coleman: I am grateful to the Minister for that information, and I thank the Secretary of State for taking note of the representations that were made to him 12 months ago. That road has been the cause of great concern, because there is a mounting toll of lost lives. On behalf of my constituents, may I say how much I appreciate the decision announced this afternoon?

Mr. Stradling Thomas: I thank the hon. Gentleman.

Labour Statistics

4. **Mr. Barry Jones** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the number of people currently unemployed in Wales; how many were unemployed in May 1979; and what is the percentage increase in unemployment in Wales since May 1979.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: On 14 February 1985 there were 183,806 unemployed claimants in Wales. In May 1979 the estimated equivalent figure was 77,200, an increase of 138·1 per cent.

Mr. Jones: After six years the right hon. Gentleman can only tell us these unpleasant figures. Does he agree that the Budget offers few hopes of new jobs? What has he done to safeguard the future of Llanwern as a viable, integrated steelworks against a background of laggardly continental reorganisation? Does he agree that the Shotton works is also a miracle of efficiency and productivity, but that thousands of ex-steelworkers on Deeside still beg for work in a place where vacancies total only 300 and the jobless 13,000? When will the Sharp factory open, and when will the Shotton paper mill be on stream?

Mr. Edwards: Both those major new job-creating projects in the hon. Gentleman's area of Wales will be

starting on time. They are a sign of the scale of the new investment that is taking place. I agree that the Shotton steelworks is doing extremely well and I believe that Llanwern has guaranteed its future by its performance.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Would it not be refreshing, and even fantastic, if there were a positive approach from the Opposition Benches on this matter? Does my right hon. Friend welcome the coming together of HTV and the *Western Mail* for the Welsh national business awards scheme? Did my right hon. Friend welcome the comment by the assistant controller of HTV about the need to inform the people of the many real achievements by industry in Wales?

Mr. Edwards: What the controller said is undoubtedly true. I am sure that everyone with an interest in the industrial future of Wales will take every opportunity to congratulate industry on its good performance and will take pleasure in the announcement of the large-scale new investment that we are securing.

Mr. John: How many of the 183,000 have been unemployed for over a year?

Mr. Edwards: If the hon. Gentleman tables a question, I shall give him an immediate answer.

Mr. Raffan: Does my right hon. Friend agree that if the concern expressed by the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) is to be taken seriously he must have the Welsh economic plan which he pulled out of a hat on 21 October last year independently costed and tell us where on Welsh earth he will find the money to pay for it?

Mr. Edwards: I apologise to the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John) for not having immediately in front of me the figure he seeks. I accept that it is too high, and I am willing to answer a question about it. One of the most significant facts about the economic plan presented by the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) is that much of it has already been implemented by the Government.

Mr. Anderson: Does the Secretary of State recall that each year since 1979, as he has initiated deflationary policies and refused capital investment, he has claimed that we were turning corners, that things were getting better and that the academics at Bangor and elsewhere were alarmist? As the jobless figures continue to climb, why should we have any faith in his pronouncements?

Mr. Edwards: It is nonsense to talk of deflationary policies when clearly there is an increase in demand. My Department has carried out massive investment progammes on roads, factories and hospitals, and on infrastructure generally.

Mr. Terlezki: Does the Secretary of State agree that because of the Budget the WDA, WINvest and overseas companies are bound to expand, and to encourage and create more employment in Wales?

Mr. Edwards: One of the most important aspects of the Budget is the announcement of the dramatic expansion of the youth training scheme and the investment that that involves for the future of training provision. That is only one of our many measures to deal with the current problems.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: In response to the appalling record of increasing unemployment, will the Secretary of State give an assurance that he will resist any attempt by the Government, by the abolition of the wages councils, to cut the wages of the poorest who are employed? Will the right hon. Gentleman assure the House that instead of tinkering with the unemployment problem in that way he will accept that the real need is for a massive redistribution of wealth and income, and will he implement that policy in the near future?

Mr. Edwards: We have issued a consultative paper on the wages councils in which the arguments are set out fully. We should now proceed with the consultation process. I hope that the hon. Gentleman welcomes the measures that were announced in the Budget to lower the cost of employing those on lower wages, because that will help in providing jobs for them.

Mrs. Clwyd: Is the Secretary of State aware that the Cynon Valley is again top of the league table for male unemployment? Is he further aware that five men lost their jobs there last week, on the say-so of one man—Mr. Ian MacGregor? Two of those men were not even present when the so-called incident occurred. Will he intervene to reinstate those five men?

Mr. Edwards: I shall not intervene in what must be management decisions for the National Coal Board.

Private Schools

5. **Mr. Ron Davies** asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many private schools received public funds in Wales in 1984.

Mr. Stradling Thomas: In 1984, eight independent schools in Wales were reimbursed for remitted fees under the assisted places scheme and one received a grant under the direct grant scheme. Some schools will have received payments from boarding school allowances paid to some members of the armed, diplomatic and civil services or from local authorities in respect of children assisted by them.

Mr. Davies: Will the Minister confirm that £80,000 was paid to New College, Cardiff under the 1982 Industrial Development Act?

Mr. Stradling Thomas: No, Sir. New College, Cardiff is an independent establishment of further education and not an independent school. The £80,000 has not yet been paid, as it was only an offer of a job creation grant.

Dr. Marek: Does the Minister realise that at a time when the country is facing economic ruin his Department is continuing to pay out vast sums to maintain the private education sector? Does he agree that those vast sums are not needed by those who receive them, but have the effect merely of maintaining their privileges? Will he give the House, or make available in the Library, a complete breakdown of how much public money is given to the private education system in Wales?

Mr. Stradling Thomas: In the current academic year under the scheme 44 per cent. of pupils have a free place, and only 17 per cent. of families have an annual income in excess of £10,000. It should be borne in mind that fee remission is, broadly speaking, related to the gross income of the family, which in the case of two-parent families

would include the earnings of both the husband and wife if they are working. I do not think that there can be any argument about the fact that the scheme is helping mainly the less-well-off families, in contradiction of the hon. Gentleman's assertion.

Mr. Barry Jones: Have not Welsh Office Ministers sanctioned £2·2 million for the public schools sector between 1983 and 1986, including an estimated £1·1 million for 1985-86? Is the Minister aware that the Clwyd education authority has cut the capitation allowance to its primary schools by 10 per cent. and to its secondary schools by 5 per cent.? How does the Minister justify that odd policy when Her Majesty's Inspectorate has emphasised the serious impact of expenditure cuts on our state schools?

The Minister is a public schoolboy from Rugby, the Secretary of State from Westminster and the hon. Member for Conwy (Mr. Roberts) from Harrow. They are favouring their own.

Mr. Stradling Thomas: I am very proud to have been at Rugby school. I think that we are all proud of the schools that we attended. I do not accept the premise of the hon. Gentleman's question.

It is only right that there should be variety in education, and that people who wish to exercise their choice in this matter — most of whom are not from the better-off section of the community—should be allowed to do so. That is the purpose of the assisted places scheme.

The management of resources in Clwyd or in any other local education authority is a matter for the authority within the terms that make it possible for the authority to manage those resources more efficiently. It is a matter for the LEAs, not central Government.

Voluntary Organisations

6. **Mr. Knox** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what was the value of grants from his Department to voluntary organisations in each of the last three years, at constant prices.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Wyn Roberts): Grants paid to voluntary organisations in the current financial year total about £8·6 million. The amounts for the previous two years, adjusted to 1984-85 price levels, are £8 million in 1983-84 and £6·8 million in 1982-83.

Mr. Knox: I welcome that encouragement to voluntary organisations. What is the spread of the grants?

Mr. Roberts: About 90 bodies are receiving grants this year. They are in four main areas: the personal social services, to which we give £1·7 million; further education and adult education, £3·3 million; voluntary education, £1·2 million; and Welsh language bodies, £1 million.

Mr. Meadowcroft: If the Secretary of State wishes to develop genuine collaboration between statutory and voluntary organisations, will the hon. Gentleman urge him to examine the problems caused by year-on-year funding and give more security of grant-aid over a number of years to assist with recruitment patterns and in developing proper services?

Mr. Roberts: We are greatly concerned with the problem to which the hon. Gentleman refers and, certainly in Wales, we take care over joint funding programmes.

Sir Anthony Meyer: Is my hon. Friend aware of the tremendous efforts that are made in my constituency to raise funds by voluntary means for the National Eisteddfod, which is to be held in Rhyll this summer? Will he make a statement about his Department's contribution towards that?

Mr. Roberts: I am happy to tell my hon. Friend that the National Eisteddfod next year will receive £232,000 from the Welsh Office alone. That is £12,000 more than the combined total of the Welsh Office and the Welsh Arts Council grant this year. As a result of concentrating the funding in the Welsh Office, the Eisteddfod loses nothing and the Welsh Arts Council gains from the Arts Council of Great Britain.

Mr. D. E. Thomas: Before the Under-Secretary gets carried away with his propaganda exercise about the National Eisteddfod, will he turn his attention to the much more important issue of the funding of Welsh Women's Aid? What representations has he received recently from that organisation about the level of funding? Will he confirm that the present level of funding is wholly inadequate for Welsh Women's Aid to meet the increasing incidence of personal relationship breakdowns caused by unemployment?

Mr. Roberts: Bids by Welsh Women's Aid for funding are dealt with in precisely the same way as other bids for funding. There is, of course, competition, but I am sure that the Welsh Women's Aid movement gets it proper deserts.

Mr. Roy Hughes: Amid all the largesse that is allegedly being distributed, will the Minister bear in mind that the town of Caldicot in the county of Gwent has to organise a dance to keep its citizens advice bureau in existence? Will he bear in mind the terrible social problems in the town, particularly the mass unemployment caused by the Government's economic policies? Will he see that such bodies are adequately funded?

Mr. Roberts: I have no objection to—indeed, would encourage — voluntary bodies doing all that they possibly can to increase their funding. The Government add to the funds which they are able to collect for themselves. We have shown clearly, by the increase in funding provided to voluntary bodies, that we fully appreciate the work that they do and wish to encourage them to do more.

Labour Statistics

7. **Mr. Roy Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many people are unemployed in *(a)* Gwent and *(b)* Wales compared with 1979 as a total and a percentage; and of the total unemployed, how many are long-term unemployed.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: On 14 February 1985 there were 29,350 unemployed claimants in Gwent. A comparable claimant-based figure for 1979 in Gwent is not available. On 14 February 1985 there were 183,806 unemployed claimants in Wales, an increase of 113·6 per cent. over the estimated figure of 86,044 for the same date in 1979.

In February 1985, 12,579 had been unemployed in Gwent for over one year. For Wales the figure was 75,964. That is the figure that I should have given to the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John).

Mr. Hughes: When will the Government make a really determined attempt to remedy this terrible unemployment, bearing in mind that the Budget is already a busted flush? The Secretary of State has dangled the bait of Concast over the Llanwern steelworks for long enough. When will he deliver the goods?

Mr. Edwards: I have not dangled the bait of Concast. That is a matter for the management of the steel industry, which has not yet taken decisions on Concast. I understand that it is considering that important programme. I remind the hon. Gentleman of the massive scale of investment in the Llanwern area to provide factories and the infrastructure for jobs since the rundown of the Llanwern steelworks.

Sir Raymond Gower: Is it not a fact that included in the figures is some unemployment which has been caused by the impact of the coal strike? Is my right hon. Friend aware that some of the smaller companies which supply the National Coal Board have suffered rather seriously and that there has been a consequential loss of employment in that sector, too?

Mr. Edwards: Undoubtedly there have been severe consequential effects, especially in Wales. I hope that we shall see a recovery during the current year, as energetic efforts are made to restore the NCB's operations in Wales. I can tell my hon. Friend that between 1983 and 1984 there seems to have been an above-average increase in Wales in the numbers of self-employed and small businesses starting up. Undoubtedly, these are encouragng trends.

Mr. Foot: Is the Secretary of State aware that last week the Chancellor of the Exchequer repeated his claim that we are now in the fourth year of economic recovery? Does the right hon. Gentleman claim that that applies to Wales, especially to those parts which have had over 20 per cent. unemployment throughout the four years?

Mr. Edwards: We face a problem of rising output and investment at a time when the same output can be produced by fewer people. That means that the two statements are not incompatible. If the right hon. Gentleman does not understand that by now, it is hard to see how I can make the point to him again so that he does.

Sir Anthony Meyer: Is my right hon. Friend in a position to assess the number of jobs in British Rail that have been lost because of the refusal of the railway unions to carry material supplies through to Llanwern, and to comment on the attitude of the hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) during the dispute?

Mr. Edwards: Undoubtedly business has been lost by the railways. We shall have to see whether that business can be recovered. I think I am right in saying that as a result of the coal strike about £25 million has been added to the loss made by the railways.

Mr. Ray Powell: Is the Secretary of State aware that in Ogmore there are 8,000 out of work and that last Friday there were 101 vacancies available at the jobcentre? Is he further aware that the St. John's colliery in Maesteg, where currently 834 miners are employed, is threatened with closure? If the colliery is closed, male unemployment will increase to 45 per cent. in the Maesteg area alone. What effect will the Budget have and what can the Secretary of State do to reduce unemployment and provide a chance in future for the Maesteg area?

Mr. Edwards: The local manager of the Welsh Development Agency has reported an increase of almost 100 per cent. in factory lettings to 140,000 sq ft in the Bridgend area for the 10 months of 1984-85 compared with the whole of 1983-84. A great deal of new investment is being made in the area, and that will help to provide the jobs that are undoubtedly needed.

Education Expenditure

9. **Mr. Harvey** asked the Secretary of State for Wales by how much spending on education in Wales has increased since 1979, compared with the period 1974 to 1979; and by how much the teacher-pupil ratio in Wales has changed since 1979.

Mr. John Stradling Thomas: Between the financial years 1978-79 and 1983-84, local authority education expenditure increased in cost terms by 0·7 per cent. compared with a decrease of 7·5 per cent. between 1974-75 and 1978-79. The overall pupil-teacher ratio was 18·2:1 in January and 17·3:1 in January 1984.

Mr. Harvey: Does my hon. Friend agree that those remarkable figures show that the only cuts in education expenditure during the past decade have taken place under a Labour Government? Does he further agree that the industrial dispute involving the teachers is causing damage to education in Wales?

Mr. Stradling Thomas: I certainly agree with my hon. Friend. The figures do not lend support to those who claim that heavy cuts have occurred since 1979. In 1983-84 current expenditure on education, excluding school meals and milk, was almost 4 per cent. greater in cost terms than in 1978-79, but between those years pupil numbers fell by 11 per cent. and teacher numbers by only 6 per cent. I urge the teachers to set a good example.

Dr. Marek: What would be the effect on those figures if the Clegg award, which was made in 1979-80, were taken into account? Does the hon. Gentleman agree that that Clegg award distorts the figures? Does he further agree that if the figures were adjusted to take account of that award education expenditure would be shown to have decreased under the present Tory Administration and to have increased under the previous Labour Adminstration?

Mr. Stradling Thomas: I cannot agree with the hon. Gentleman. The Clegg award was taken into the account in the figures that I cited.

Dr. Marek: No.

Mr. Stradling Thomas: I assure the hon. Gentleman and the House that it was.

Labour Statistics

11. **Mr. Rowlands** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the current level of unemployment in Merthyr Tydfil and the Rhymney valley; and what percentage increase this is over the figures for May 1979.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: On 14 February 1985 the number of unemployed claimants in the Merthyr and Rhymney travel-to-work area was 10,781. Comparable figures for May 1979 are not available because of changes to travel-to-work area boundaries and the move to claimant-based figures.

Mr. Rowlands: Among those horrifying figures is the total job loss after the closure of Hymac. Does the Secretary of State recall the repeated appeals that we all made to him and to the Government to act to stop the dumping of Japanese products on our market? Only now, after all those jobs have been lost, have the Government imposed a 33·33 per cent. tariff on Japanese products coming on to our market. Will the right hon. Gentleman take heed of this sad lesson and support action against cheap and unsafe lifebelts, domestic appliances and washing machines coming on to the British market and take more direct action to protect our jobs? The Secretary of State did nothing for Hymac.

Mr. Edwards: The hon. Gentleman is aware that we have to provide evidence and obtain the agreement of the Community to take such measures. As a country which not only benefits enormously from international trade but is increasing its exports, Britain must be exceedingly careful about the way in which that is done. As I have told the hon. Gentleman frequently, if he will provide evidence, I shall be happy to pass it on to the Department of Trade and Industry, which is responsible for these matters.

Measles, Whooping Cough and Poliomyelitis

12. **Mr. Grist** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the percentage rate of inoculation and vaccination of children for measles, whooping cough, and polio in the last two years for which figures are available.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The percentages of children in Wales vaccinated by their second birthday against measles, whooping cough and poliomyelitis in 1982 were 40 per cent., 33 per cent. and 81 per cent., respectively. In 1983—the latest year for which figures are available—the comparable percentages were 44 per cent., 42 per cent. and 82 per cent.

Mr. Grist: Does my hon. Friend agree that the take-up of vaccination for measles and whooping cough is alarmingly low, not least in view of the fact that measles is a disease that can be eliminated, as was smallpox? Does he further agree that people are laying themselves and their children wide open to severe suffering, and possibly death? What steps is my hon. Friend's Department taking to popularise and spread the take-up of these vaccinations?

Mr. Roberts: My hon. Friend is correct. There are good take-up rates for poliomyelitis, diptheria and tetanus vaccinations, but they need to be proved still further. Uptake rates for other vaccinations, including measles and whooping cough, are far from satisfactory. We intend to continue to improve the way in which we put the case for immunisation against those diseases.

Dr. Roger Thomas: The vast majority of the states in America are now totally measles-free. When can we look forward to a Wales that is totally measles-free? What percentage of children receiving the diptheria vaccination also receive the whooping cough vaccination, and what percentage do not receive the whooping cough vaccination?

Mr. Roberts: The hon. Gentleman is well aware that the uptake of the measles vaccination in Wales has not been all that good. Similarly, the uptake of whooping cough vaccination is nothing like as good as that of polio vaccination. That is presumably because of the adverse reactions that are remotely possible with those vaccinations. However, I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will be pleased to know that the measles vaccination rate in Wales since 1978 has improved by 17 percentage points. We launched a major drive last year aimed at increasing the uptake among pre-school and primary school children and achieving a 90 per cent. uptake among children in the second year of life by 1990, with the eventual aim of eliminating the disease.

Teachers (Pay Dispute)

13. **Sir Anthony Meyer** asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will estimate the number of pupil-hours lost in Wales in consequence of the current teachers' pay dispute.

Mr. John Stradling Thomas: It is not possible to make a reliable estimate from the information that is available centrally. However, a substantial number of schools have been closed or disrupted by industrial action in recent weeks, and I greatly deplore the harm that that is doing to the education of our children at this crucial time in the academic year.

Sir Anthony Meyer: Is my hon. Friend aware that most teachers recognise perfectly well that they have no chance whatever of winning this naughty strike against a Government as resolute as the present one? Will my hon. Friend also consider that teaching is a vocation, not merely a profession, and that in dealing with the teachers he would do well to listen to what is being said by responsible trade union leaders, such as the leader of the Professional Association of Teachers and the leader of the National Union of Teachers in my constituency, who have called upon the teachers to accept arbitration?

Mr. Stradling Thomas: I am aware that there are mixed views within the profession, but the Government deplore the industrial action being taken by members of the NUT and the National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers. The effects on children's education are severe and can never be fully rectified. Teachers must consider whether strikes and other forms of industrial action help their cause. In my opinion, they can only damage the children, the education service as a whole and, by turning the community against them, the teachers themselves. Hurting pupils is the wrong way of proceeding.

Mr. D. E. Thomas: Does the Minister of State accept his responsibility and that of the Government in precipitating this industrial dispute? Will he now confirm that the Government's policy of imposing limits upon local authorities' finance makes it impossible for them to meet the teachers' claim or to negotiate freely with them?

Mr. Stradling Thomas: I accept none of the comments that the hon. Gentleman has just made. As I have said several times at the Dispatch Box, and again today, the management of resources is a matter for the local education authorities. There have been no drastic cuts in the provision for education, despite the allegations that have been made. It is for local education authorities to manage their resources wisely and efficiently to maintain the standards in education that we all wish.

Mr. Barry Jones: What is the Minister of State doing to resolve the dispute? Will the Government intervene in

a positive manner? If the dispute goes to arbitration, will the Government guarantee that the award will be backed by Government funds?

Mr. Stradling Thomas: It is clear that there is not the money available to meet the teachers' demands. Therefore, it is for them to come back and negotiate a sensible settlment, which could be achieved by sitting down and talking sensibly about the restructuring of the profession.

NHS Patient Records

14. **Mrs. Clwyd** asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the confidentiality of patient records in the National Health Service in Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The Data Protection Act 1984 requires health authorities and family practitioner committees to adopt new practices for handling personal health records. The Welsh Office has recently consulted health authorities and other interests in Wales about a draft code on confidentiality of personal health information and comments received are being considered. I shall announce my conclusions in due course.

Mrs. Clwyd: I thank the Minister for his reply. Will he confirm that patient records should be confidential between doctor and patient and that they should not be released to an outside body, whatever the circumstances, without the patient's express permission?

Mr. Roberts: That is the case. We are consulting on the character of the code and will make our views known in due course.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Are considerations of confidentiality inhibiting the computerisation of family practitioner committee records, on which depend the accuracy and reliability of recall for patients, especially as regards screening for cervical cancer?

Mr. Roberts: I am not aware of computerisation and data protection holding up progress such as the hon. Gentleman mentioned.

Mr. Coleman: In view of recent publicity concerning referrals for cervical cancer screening, has the Minister made inquiries in Wales to ascertain the efficiency of the system? Will he take this opportunity to make it clear that responsibility for issuing notification does not lie with the laboratories that carry out the tests?

Mr. Roberts: The hon. Gentleman is right. We have made inquiries, and proper instructions have been issued.

Coal Industry Dispute (Consequences)

15. **Sir Raymond Gower** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is his latest information regarding the consequences in Wales of the coal mining strike in loss of coal production, revenue for British Rail, production of steel, production of tinplate, injurious effects on other industries and in consequential loss of jobs; and what consultations he will have with the Confederation of British Industry, leaders of nationalised industries and private industries, local councils and public authorities and with trade unions to seek to secure the earliest possible recovery from these consequences.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: In South Wales, some 7 million tonnes have been lost and 11 coal faces have been destroyed. Progress towards viability has been seriously disrupted and vital investment has been delayed. British Rail in Wales attributes losses of some £25 million to the strike. That is the figure that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer) a few moments ago. That is for the losses in Wales. The British Steel Corporation had to meet extra costs of keeping its customers supplied, but no separate figures for Wales are available. The impact on other areas has been small. I shall continue to maintain close contact with all sectors involved in the Welsh economy.

Sir Raymond Gower: Can my right hon. Friend assure us that there will be early consultation with all those I have mentioned, and others, who are anxious to ensure the earliest and most complete recovery from the effects of the recent stoppage?

Mr. Edwards: I keep in close contact with all interested groups in Wales. If anyone has any particular representations to put to me on that matter, I am ready to receive them.

Labour Statistics

16. **Mr. Ray Powell** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what are the latest unemployment figures available for (i) Ogmore constituency, (ii) Mid Glamorgan county council and (iii) Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: On 14 January 1985 the numbers of unemployed claimants were 4,690, 35,756 and 183,806, respectively.

Mr. Powell: Further to a question that I asked earlier about Ogmore and unemployment there, is the Secretary of State aware that 2,000 people in the borough are applying for rented council accommodation but that the local authority is not funded sufficiently to house more than 100 a year for the next five years? Is he further aware that 50,000 construction workers are out of work in Wales? Is it not time that we started to build the houses, hospitals, schools and sheltered accommodation that people in the area need?

Mr. Edwards: The hon. Gentleman, of all people, should be aware that we have just completed and handed over on time a district general hospital in his area. That is extremely creditable. It is part of a massive hospital building programme in the Principality.

Departmental Policies (Job Creation)

17. **Dr. Marek** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what impact he expects his policies to have on the level of unemployment in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Beneficial.

Dr. Marek: I genuinely believe that the Secretary of State wants to bring employment to Wales, but what is he doing to persuade his Cabinet colleagues about the need in the Principality to stop our sewers crumbling to pieces, our housing stock declining at an alarming rate, our railway track being in danger of being pulled up, and our roads being inadequate? When will he persuade the Government to start a programme of development and public spending to keep our infrastructure from rotting to pieces?

Mr. Edwards: We are conducting a massive programme of road construction in the hon. Gentleman's

part of Wales. *Industrial Planning and Development*, in its January edition, reported that 1984 was a momentous year at Wrexham. Approximately 400,000 sq ft of factory space was let or purchased, 50 acres of industrial land was acquired by clients, and more than 1,000 new job opportunities will be provided by those developments. I know of more than 1,500 new jobs that will be provided by major industrial developments in the hon. Gentleman's constituency, which have been announced during the past 12 months.

Mr. Ron Davies: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wish to give notice that I shall raise a point of order on Welsh questions after questions on the Arts.

THE ARTS

Private Funding

24. **Mr. Proctor** asked the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State answering in respect of the Arts what further plans the Minister for the Arts has with regard to encouraging private funding of the arts; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. William Waldegrave): From 1 April my noble Friend will be introducing changes designed to make his business sponsorship incentive scheme even more attractive to small and medium-sized companies.

I also remind my hon. Friend that the Budget doubled the limit of higher rate tax relief for covenants to charities, which will undoubtedly encourage more private support for the arts.

Mr. Proctor: Does my hon. Friend agree that at a time when state sponsorship of the arts is likely to be maintained at current rather than increased levels in real terms, as it has been during the past six years, schemes of the kind that he has announced are important, especially the special bonus for first-time company sponsors and the pound for pound approach that the Government are pursuing?

Mr. Waldegrave: Yes, Sir. It was encouraging to see that Arthur Anderson came forward under that scheme to support the foyer programme at the National Theatre.

Mr. Freud: The House will appreciate the help that was given by the hon. Gentleman's noble Friend in matching on a pound for pound basis, but will he bear in mind that in the United States a great deal of money is raised for the arts by giving tax concessions to individuals? Will he ask his right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer to consider further tax incentives for individuals who help the arts?

Mr. Waldegrave: Yes, Sir. That is kept under review. The previous Conservative Administration shortened the period for covenants, which helped a good deal, and we shall certainly keep the matter under review.

Mr. Jessel: Does my hon. Friend believe that more private funding could be obtained for the National theatre?

Mr. Waldegrave: I have already referred to the private money arranged for the foyer programme. I hope that more money can be found for the main programmes of the National theatre. I should have thought that there must be some scope for that.

Mr. Buchan: Will the Minister bear in mind that the amount of support coming forward for the National theatre in its crisis from the public sector—that is, the Greater London council—is 10 times as much as that coming from the private sector? We welcome the changes that have taken place, but is the hon. Gentleman aware that there is a fear in the arts that they will be a replacement and substitute for proper public funding, and does he agree that that should not be tolerated?

Mr. Waldegrave: It is not a matter of replacement. The Government are cutting direct taxes. If the other side of that is rather less state funding, people should support those interests that they value, if they value them.

Mr. Crouch: Does my hon. Friend agree that keeping a subject under review is rather an unimpressive way of trying to persuade the Chancellor of the Exchequer to change his mind? Does he accept that help for living artists by tax concessions should not only be kept under review, but delivered by a lobby or pressure group to the Chancellor?

Mr. Waldegrave: I accept what my hon. Friend says, but we should remember that there is already considerable scope for private tax concessions on donations. A full change to the American system would have some less desirable aspects.

Arts Council Drama Panel

25. **Mr. Fisher** asked the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State answering in respect of the Arts whether the Minister for the Arts intends to meet the chairman of the Arts Council to discuss the composition of the Arts Council drama panel.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. and noble Friend meets the chairman of the Arts Council on a regular basis to discuss matters of common interest.

Mr. Fisher: Does the Minister realise that the seven drama panel members who resigned recently did so because they, with other leading writers, directors and actors, no longer have confidence in the Arts Council? They no longer have confidence that the Arts Council represents and fights for their views and for the future of the theatre. They believe that the Arts Council has become a pawn for Government economic policies and cuts. Does the Minister believe that he can find leading practitioners in the professional theatre to take those seven places?

Mr. Waldegrave: It is impossible to change anything without offending vested interests, which will on some occasions resign.

Mr. Tony Banks: Is it not a fact that the controversy surrounding the drama panel and, indeed, the Arts Council in general, can be welcomed on at least one level: that the concept of the arm's length policy has been rubbished for the myth that it has always been? The Arts Council is a political body: it is made up of people appointed by the Government, and the present director general and chairman of the Arts Council are both Tories.

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman's position on that matter is no more consistent than it has ever been. I happen to know that he wants the Arts Council—if he wants it at all—to be a political body, so I do not understand why he accuses us of making it so. But he is wrong. The Arts Council is not a political body.

Arts Performances (Funding)

26. **Mr. Meadowcroft** asked the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State answering in respect of the Arts what study has been made of the relative cost-effectiveness of *(a)* general subsidies for arts performances and *(b)* specifically-targeted assistance for needy individuals towards the cost of attending such performances.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Arts Council of Great Britain and several regional arts associations have experimented with schemes for assisting audiences with the cost of attending performances, but in general have found these more expensive than subsidy.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Accepting that both the Minister and I want to maximise attendance at arts functions, does he agree that, despite legitimate subsidies, many seats are still too dear for poorer people? Is it not important to continue to try to find ways of assisting people across the board to attend arts functions?

Mr. Waldegrave: I accept the hon. Gentleman's point. Experiments that have been conducted appear to show that keeping down the cost of seats in general is a better way of doing it. As is often the case, the more complicated schemes seem to help the articulate more than the needy.

Mr. Budgen: Has my hon. Friend thought of a method of assessing the average annual incomes of those who attend subsidised arts performances?

Mr. Waldegrave: It would be an interesting survey to conduct, but I am not sure that it is within the resources of the Office of Arts and Libraries to do so.

Northern Arts

27. **Mr. Dormand** asked the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State answering in respect of the Arts what proposals the Minister for the Arts has to increase resources available to Northern Arts.

Mr. Waldegrave: It is for the Arts Council, not for my right hon. and noble Friend, to determine the allocation of central resources to a regional arts association.

Mr. Dormand: Surely the Minister has some responsibility in this matter. It is no good shuffling it off like that. Is he aware that in real terms, and possibly even in cash terms, the money available for Northern Arts will be reduced during each of the next three years? As the northern region receives so little in other ways from the Government, and as the position will become worse because of the new regional policy, is there not the strongest possible case for increasing grants to Northern Arts? The Minister knows that there is a demand. He knows the response to the annual visit of the Royal Shakespeare Company to Newcastle upon Tyne, where the seats are sold out weeks beforehand.

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman should wait a little. What has been announced so far is only the base funding for Northern Arts. Further grants will be announced later this week, and they may contain some good news for him.

Mr. Buchan: Is not the real problem that, apart from what the Minister for the Arts may decide about the Arts Council, the cutting, capping and abolition of local authorities will dramatically lower the amount of money available? Indeed, according to Luke Rittner of the Arts Council, the £34 million that has been earmarked to replace the funding provided by the metropolitan councils is £8 million short of what will be needed. Is not the problem that of cuts centrally, during the next three years and at the same time a reduction in the resources available to local authorities to try to resolve the problem, even in such a fine area for the arts as the northern region?

Mr. Waldegrave: Considering the resources available to local authorities as a whole, I believe that they could provide the additional funding if they wanted to do so. It is inconceivable that any figure announced by the Government would be deemed satisfactory by the Opposition. It would always be alleged to be to little.

Europa Nostra (Departmental Co-operation)

28. **Mr. Murphy** asked the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State answering in respect of the Arts what co-operation exists between the Office of Arts and Libraries and Europa Nostra; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: None, Sir.

Mr. Murphy: I thank my hon. Friend for the precision of his answer. Does he agree that Europa Nostra has a marvellous reputation for the preservation of the artistic and architectural heritage? Therefore, would it not be beneficial to have co-operation between the Office of Arts and Libraries, the Department of the Environment and that organisation?

Mr. Waldegrave: I am sure that my hon. Friend is aware that that organisation is not open to membership by Governments, which is why the Government are not a member of it. A number of important institutions, such as the National Trust, are members of and co-operate with it. I know that my noble Friend Lord Avon will be having the luck to go to a conference in Spain this year at which Europa Nostra is to make a contribution.

Questions to Ministers

3.30 pm

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that you are not responsible for the quality of answers given by Ministers during Question Time, and in the case of Welsh questions you are no doubt eternally grateful for that. On question 1, I put particular points to the Secretary of State about the operation of the NACODS agreement and its——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is seeking to prolong Question Time. He is putting a question to a Minister when he should be putting a question to me.

Mr. Davies: I understand that and my question is to you, Mr. Speaker. At Question Time, I put particular questions to the Secretary of State, and it is the interpretation of those questions and matters of procedure arising from that that I wish to raise with you.

I asked the Secretary of State whether he would confirm that last autumn the Secretary of State for Energy said that the NACODS agreement was inviolate. The Secretary of State for Energy made a statement to the House, for which you, Mr. Speaker, are responsible and on the interpretation of which hon. Members look to you for guidance. The Secretary of State said that the NACODS agreement was available to the NUM. Last week, the National Coal Board management in south Wales——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is an extension of Question Time. The hon. Gentleman must find other ways to deal with the matter. This is not a question for me. I cannot be responsible for answers given from the Front Benches or for questions asked from the Back Benches.

Mr. Davies: It is a procedural question, Mr. Speaker. I ask you to bear with me for a moment. The Secretary of State is responsible for the operation of the NCB in south Wales. Last week, the NCB effectively abrogated the NACODS agreement in respect of the Bedwas pit in my constituency. Have you any powers, Mr. Speaker, under Standing Orders, to require the Secretary of State, on behalf of the Government, to say whether the NACODS agreement is still in existence or whether the NCB, on behalf of the Government, has abrogated that agreement in south Wales?

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman knows that I have no such power.

South Africa (Shootings)

3.32 pm

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East) *(by private notice)* asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he will make a statement on what response he has made and what further steps he proposes following the massacre of blacks in South Africa.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): My right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary issued a statement on 22 March strongly condemning the shootings at Uitenhage and calling for the fullest possible investigation. My hon. Friend the Member for Shoreham (Mr. Luce) summoned the South African ambassador. We view the latest events in South Africa with abhorrence. The deaths are particularly tragic, not only because they occurred on the anniversary of Sharpeville but because they fly in the face of certain more hopeful developments in recent months. We will continue to use all our influence to press the South African Government to introduce the fundamental reforms so clearly needed.

Mr. Anderson: I welcome that response, as far as it goes. Does the Minister not recognise that this massacre, on the 25th anniversary of the massacre at Sharpeville, shows the reality of oppression in today's South Africa and the clear failure of the policy of constructive engagement pursued by this Government and our United States partners?

Since the Prime Minister welcomed President Botha to Chequers on 2 June last year, we have seen, first, the imprisonment of Union Defence Forces leaders and, secondly, the craven British Government response to the Coventry four affair. Are the British Government to continue a policy which consists only of good intentions and of the Minister periodically wagging his finger at the South African ambassador, and which makes us trail behind even right-wing Congressmen in the United States? They do so by ruling out in advance the only policy that could bring effective pressure on the South Africans, which is selective disinvestment. Will the Minister now take the lead in urging the Reagan administration to develop a common western policy on selective disinvestment until Namibia is independent and the end of apartheid is nigh and also join in the Dutch initiative within the European Community on the UDF show trial which is shortly to take place?

Mr. Rifkind: I and, I am sure, many others find it difficult to understand why, if a policy of dialogue is thought to be appropriate for totalitarian states in eastern Europe and the Soviet Union it is always thought to be inappropriate for the South African Government. If we are seeking to influence the leaders of those countries to adopt a more constructive and sensible policy, to refuse to talk to them seems to be a rather negative way of furthering that objective. As for the hon. Gentleman's call for economic sanctions, I have to remind him not only that the last Labour Government believed that such a policy would be inappropriate but that black opinion in South Africa is deeply divided on this issue. Opinion polls conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council and by Professor Schlemmer showed heavy majorities among blacks in South Africa against such a policy. This is also the view of leading black South Africans.

Mr. Robert Rhodes James (Cambridge): Would this not be a good moment to remind the South African Government of the fact that they accepted United Nations Security Council resolution 435 relating to the independence of Namibia?

Mr. Rifkind: I agree with my hon. Friend that Security Council resolution 435 has been accepted by all the parties interested in the future of Namibia. It is very much to be regretted that there has been very little progress over the implementation of that resolution.

Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport): Probably what is wanted for South Africa is a policy of sticks and carrots. It is right to have a dialogue, but it is also necessary to exert pressure. Will the Minister of State consider whether a system would be devised whereby no new investment is made in South Africa unless it is clearly geared to black well-being? If such a policy were to be linked with progress towards abolishing apartheid and the implementation of Security Council resolution 435, it would gain a great deal of support in the United States.

Mr. Rifkind: I notice that the right hon. Gentleman said yesterday in his *Sunday Times* article:

"Total or even selective trade sanctions will not succeed."

I presume that that is still the view today of the right hon. Gentleman. One would have to examine the likely consequences of any such measure in order to decide whether it would achieve the advantages which are often advocated. We are all anxious to press South Africa to introduce real reforms, but there is deep scepticism as to whether economic sanctions would bring that about.

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): Will my hon. Friend accept that the whole House wishes to express great regret at the sad deaths of the blacks in the eastern Cape and, indeed, at the surrounding circumstances? Will he also accept that this is not the time for recrimination or sanctions, that we should acknowledge that substantial changes have been made to the South African constitution and that State President P. W. Botha has made a genuine case for reform? Now is the time not for those on the Opposition Benches to parade their consciences but for co-operation in order to try to show sympathetic understanding of the dilemma which the South African Government face.

Mr. Rifkind: I am certainly prepared to acknowledge that in recent months there have been some important and significant changes in South Africa. However, events such as the one to which this question refers inevitably call into doubt the possibility of the South African Government pursuing the kind of fundamental reforms that are necessary to prevent events of this kind from happening again. We welcome the fact that there is to be a full and independent judicial inquiry into the killings. We hope that that inquiry will not only ascertain the full facts but, if appropriate, will ensure that the necessary action is taken against those responsible.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Do not the words uttered by the hon. Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) shame the House of Commons and do not these tragic events demonstrate how little has changed since Sharpeville and that the bullet and the whip remain the hallmark of the apartheid regime? Instead of wining and dining the Prime Minister of South Africa at Chequers, would it not be far better for the British Government to show how serious they are about apartheid and, with the United States and other western countries, try their utmost to help to defeat and isolate the apartheid regime?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman is ignoring some of the important and positive changes that have taken place in recent years, such as the legalisation of black trade unions, the extension of 99-year leasehold rights to blacks in South Africa, and the realisation and admission by the South African state President that the homelands can offer no answer to the political aspirations of urban blacks. Those and a number of other changes are positive and are in the right direction, but we must emphasise to the South African Government that South Africa and its problems clearly need fundamental reform and that simply to tinker with the existing system is not enough.

Mr. Anthony Nelson (Chichester): Will my hon. Friend confirm that the British Government's policy remains to support political evolution rather than revolution in South Africa and that such an end will not be achieved by the imposition of sanctions which would be unworkable and counter-productive, and, in the end, would harm most the black populations of southern Africa?

Mr. Rifkind: I agree that it can be in no one's interest, black or white, for political change in South Africa to come about by violent means. We hope that the South African Government will appreciate that the best way of avoiding such events would be to enter into a real and sustained dialogue with the genuine leaders of black opinion in South Africa.

Mr. Ian Mikardo (Bow and Poplar): Is it not now super-abundantly clear that the policy called constructive engagement which is pursued by the State Department, with our Foreign Office tagging along behind, has achieved nothing constructive and is not achieving and is not likely to achieve anything constructive? Therefore, is it not time that Her Majesty's Government rethought the matter, even if Washington is too fossilised to do so?

Mr. Rifkind: Anyone who believes that there has been no change in the right direction in South Africa in recent years simply refuses to look facts in the face. There have been changes, they are to be welcomed, and that is important.

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): The hon. Gentleman is an apologist for the South African regime.

Mr. Rifkind: No.

If the hon. Gentleman believes that South Africa today is exactly the same as South Africa 20 years ago, he is simply showing his ignorance of that subject. If he is suggesting that there has not yet been sufficient reform in South Africa to guarantee that the aspirations of all the people there will be satisfied, I, and I think the House, would agree.

Mr. Ian Lloyd (Havant): Nothing is easier, especially at the moment, than to throw the whole lexicon of political abuse at South Africa, and Labour Members are particularly adept at so doing. Rather than now, in breach of the most fundamental treaty of the United Nations, attempting to interfere in the domestic affairs of South Africa, which hon. Members on both sides of the House

[Mr. Ian Lloyd]

may think justifiable, would we not be more likely to achieve a constructive and positive influence by offering help rather than criticism?

Mr. Rifkind: We must offer help, but the best help that one can give to South Africa is to make frank criticism when that criticism is justified. We would not be doing a good service to South Africa or its long-term interests by ignoring the abhorrence that we all feel at recent events.

Mr. Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): As the Minister has already said several times that he regards these events as abhorrent, as I think we all do, and as he has also said that there is a need for fundamental reform rather than simply dealing with details, what exactly does he think that the Government should do to contribute to that, either by ourselves or in conjunction with our European partners?

Mr. Rifkind: We have made it clear many times to the South African Government that if they wish to be treated as a respectable and acceptable member of the international community, the western civilised standards to which they say they are committed must be translated into practice in the way that they deal with all their citizens, black or white.

Mr. Mark Carlisle (Warrington, South): Although I, too, like my hon. Friend the Minister, totally abhor what has happened in South Africa, I accept too that there has been some movement there in recent years. But will my hon. Friend continue to point out to the South African Government that they have no hope of being accepted by the international community unless they make major changes in their policy towards apartheid?

Mr. Rifkind: We have made it clear to the South African Government that if there is modest reform in South Africa, we shall give it a modest welcome, but that if they want a more sustained and enthusiastic welcome for their policies, their reforms must be that much more fundamental and far-reaching.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): Does the Minister not recognise that the killings in South Africa are simply the most recent manifestation of the naked abuse of racialist power? Does he not accept that it throws those so-called reforms totally into question and shows quite clearly that they are nothing more than a cynical, callous charade? Is it not time that he took stock of the situation? The Government have helped, assisted and defended the South African Government for far too long, and it is time that they took some action and applied economic sanctions.

Mr. Rifkind: This Government do not defend the South African Government. If the South African Government carry out policies which we consider to be appropriate, we welcome them, but, if they do not, we condemn them. We have had no hesitation in making our views on such matters very clear. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to put forward a policy of economic sanctions or embargoes, he should at least take into account the opinion of black South Africans, which, on all the evidence that we have, is still overwhelmingly against such a policy.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): So that our condemnation of these atrocities in South Africa is not regarded as in any way hypocritical, will my hon. Friend ensure that the Government equally fiercely condemn the massacre of civilians in Lebanon by the Israeli armed forces and the religious discrimination shown by the Israelis towards Shi'ite Moslems?

Mr. Rifkind: The Government condemn the abuse of human rights wherever it may take place.

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): Is the Minister aware that we import coal from South Africa? After the latest set of shootings, is there not South African blood on every nugget of coal that we import? Should not the Minister tell the Secretary of State for Energy to end those imports until world pressure and other pressures have got rid of apartheid in South Africa?

Mr. Rifkind: We have imported coal from the Soviet Union, and I do not recollect the hon. Gentleman calling on us to cease that trade.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is a private notice question, an extension of Question Time, and we must move on.

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. With all respect, may I point out that this issue in this House at this time is a matter of concern not only for us in Britain, but throughout the world? The House has not yet had an opportunity to express its total abhorrence, and to state that it regards the events of the past 48 hours as an obscenity. In addition, if the Government do not have an opportunity to say that they are as firm as the Opposition are on this issue, the wrong message may well go out from this House.

Mr. Speaker: I have to have regard to all right hon. and hon. Members. This is an extension of Question Time. There is a statement to follow, and 27 right hon. and hon. Members wish to take part in the final day of the Budget debate. It would be unfair to allow questions on this issue to go on until everyone has been called.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Further to that point of order——

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): Further——

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Corbyn: Will you not accept, Mr. Speaker, that as this country is a major investor in South Africa and has major trading links with it, what is said in the House is important to the tragedy going on in South Africa, as blacks are murdered by the apartheid regime?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is seeking to extend the debate. *[Interruption.]* Order. There will be other opportunities to discuss this issue, and I should have thought that there was a good opportunity to do so tomorrow on the motion on the Easter Adjournment.

Mr. Buchan: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman's point of order is an abuse, because it reduces the amount of time available to other hon. Members who want to speak. However, I must hear him.

Mr. Buchan: I wish only to pursue the one point you made, Mr. Speaker, when you said that there was an opportunity to debate the issue tomorrow. What opportunity is that?

Mr. Speaker: Tomorrow there will be a debate on the Easter Adjournment motion. That is a wide subject and all sorts of matters may be raised. The hon. Gentleman does not need me to tell him that he could make the point that the House should not adjourn for Easter until this issue has been discussed.

Foreign Affairs Council

3.50 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): I will with permission, Mr. Speaker, make a statement on the meeting of the Foreign Affairs Council which was held in Brussels from 17 to 21 March and at which my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary and I represented the United Kingdom. My right hon. Friend the Minister for Trade was our representative at a meeting of trade Ministers which was held within the Council on 19 March.

The Community made major progress in dealing with the outstanding problems in the enlargement negotiations with Spain and Portugal. On fisheries, the Community and Spain were able to agree on the general framework for integrating the Spanish fleet into the common fisheries policy on a basis which safeguards the balance of fishing opportunities for existing member states under the common fisheries policy. Good progress was also made with the Portuguese, though a number of specific issues remain outstanding on the fisheries chapter with both candidates.

Considerable progress was also made in resolving the differences between the Community and Spain and Portugal on agriculture and social affairs. A special Foreign Affairs Council, with further ministerial meetings with Spain and Portugal, will be held on 28 March to seek to reach agreement on the outstanding issues before the European Council.

Substantial progress was made on the text of the own resources decision, including provision for our 1,000 million ecu abatement in respect of 1984 and implementation of the Fontainebleau mechanism for United Kingdom rebates in future years. The text is now agreed subject to a Greek waiting reserve. The text provides that, immediately after notification that the new own resources decision has been adopted and ratified by national Parliaments, our 1,000 million ecu abatement should be paid through an anticipation of the new own resources. Subject to ratification of the accession treaty, increased own resources for all other purposes would become available from 1 January 1986. Meanwhile, the Community's budgetary obligations in 1985 should be met through intergovernmental agreement.

Trade Ministers meeting within the Council discussed the proposal for a new round of multilateral trade negotiations in the GATT. They declared the Community's readiness to participate in such a new round, subject to the establishment of an adequate consensus on objectives, participation and timing. The Community undertook to enlist the support of its trading partners, particularly among the developing countries, to this end. The full text of the Council declaration has been placed in the Library of the House.

The Council also discussed the Commission's latest proposals for integrated mediterranean programmes. The subject will be discussed by heads of Government at the European Council on 29 and 30 March.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): Have not the fine words of the Fontainebleau summit last June dissolved into a lake of self-delusion as the real crisis within the EC is revealed? Since we pay 20·5 per cent. of the proposed 3·2 billion ecu, will we not be paying 600 million ecu

[Mr. Donald Anderson]

towards the reimbursement of our own rebate? Does the Minister hail that as a triumph for British diplomacy? On what principle are we being loaned a sum towards moneys which are due and have been owing to us legally since 1 January this year? Since those sums should have been paid on 1 January, what interest has already accrued and what interest is likely to accrue by the end of the year, after ratification by all the other member Parliaments, by which time we might at last receive our rebate for 1984?

Can the Minister confirm that even excluding that levy, the United Kingdom paid this session, by way of supplementary estimates, 800,000 ecu—which is not far short of the total rebate for 1984 which is due to us? Will the Minister confirm that there are bound to be further supplementary levies over the year which masquerade as loans?

The Minister is aware of our well-known support for the principle of including the Iberian countries in the EC. What lessons are there for the future when the EC cannot agree on a common negotiating position in respect of enlargement? Will not the problems of finding a common position be immeasurably increased once enlargement is agreed and the interests of two further countries have to be accommodated within a common programme?

At a time when the EC Foreign Ministers were haggling over the hectolitres of Spanish wine for distillation there was not a peep of protest about the massacre of blacks in South Africa and no consideration of an EC contribution to the famine in Africa. At a time of record agricultural surpluses and record unemployment within the EC and when the agricultural proportion of the budget at 74 per cent. is the highest ever and is unlikely to fall, how can the average citizen in the EC identify with an institution which manifestly does not identify with his or her interests?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman fundamentally misunderstands the position if he is suggesting that we are paying towards our own rebate. The 1,000 million ecus that is to be repaid to the United Kingdom is in respect of our contribution in 1984 and does not arise out of expenditure in the current year.

Under the Fontainebleau mechanism, we are to receive two thirds of the VAT share/expenditure share gap, which means that we will be paying 7 per cent. of additional expenditure, whereas France and Germany will be paying 27 per cent. to 32 per cent. of comparable levels of expenditure. Therefore, Fontainebleau remains an excellent deal for the United Kingdom, and far better than many dared predict. On the difficulties of reaching agreements in an enlarged Community, it goes without saying that a Community of 12 face such difficulties. However, during the years of its existence the Community has shown that, although it is difficult and time-consuming to achieve agreement between 10 or 12 democratic countries, at the end of the day it has always reached agreement, and that has contributed to the strengthening of the Community.

It would have been inappropriate for the Foreign Affairs Council to discuss the position in South Africa when it met last week. It is when the Council meets on political co-operation that developments in other parts of the world are considered. It would have been out of order for the Council, as presently constructed, to deal with matters that were not directly related to work going on within the Community.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): Will my hon. Friend give the House some real information, rather than the bland remarks in his statement, about the position on fishing — especially in view of the importance of Spanish fishing opportunities off the south-west of England? Is the United Kingdom now prepared to agree to Spanish demands for an increase in the number of boats licensed to fish off the south-west coast? If so, will my hon. Friend take note that I shall oppose it?

Mr. Rifkind: I am sorry that I could not go into too much detail on fishing matters. I hope that my hon. Friend will understand that the negotiations are not yet concluded, so it is difficult to give the specific figures and details that he would like. The number of Spanish boats that will be permitted to fish in Community waters has not yet been finally resolved. I have every reason to believe that the agreement that we expect to be reached soon will be fully consistent with the protection of British interests and the interests of the fishermen whom my hon. Friend so ably represents.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): The Minister has spoken of there having been agreement on the general framework of a fishing agreement with Spain. Will he spell out that general framework and reassure some of the fishermen in Britain who are concerned about what has already been agreed?

In view of the difficulties that are obviously being encountered on agriculture, does the Minister believe that there is now any prospect of Spain and Portugal entering the Community this year?

Mr. Rifkind: On the first point, it is generally accepted by both the applicant countries and the existing member states that Spain and Portugal should be progressively integrated into the common fisheries policy, that fishing opportunities in existing Community waters should be based on their traditional involvement in those waters and that they cannot expect any significant change during the duration of the CFP unless there was a unanimous agreement to that effect at some time in the 1990s.

The proposed date for Spanish and Portuguese membership of the Community is 1 January 1986. That does mean a somewhat tight timetable, but it is still possible to conform to that, especially if agreement is reached on most of the outstanding matters at the Council meeting due to be held this Thursday.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): In relation to wines and made wines, has the lesser but nevertheless important question of British sherry come up in the talks so far? Did my hon. Friend, or perhaps my right hon. and learned Friend, have a chance to put forward again the British case, not to harm Spanish interests but to preserve our situation in the derogation that has provisionally been agreed? If not, will my hon. Friend guarantee that that will be done as soon as possible in discussions with the Ministry of Agriculture?

Mr. Rifkind: The matter was raised. I am pleased to say that the Community's position, not just the British position, is that British sherry should be protected in the way that we have sought—namely, that there should be

not simply a temporary derogation but an open-ended ability to apply the present designation, as has been the case for about 100 years.

Mr. Eric Deakins (Walthamstow): Is the Minister aware that the agricultural costs of the position of Spain and Portugal are likely to soar sky-high because of the way in which the Community is going about negotiating? Is he aware, from what he has told us, that the integrated Mediterranean programme for existing members of the EEC is being delayed while entry negotiations go on for agricultural agreements with Spain and Portugal? Is he further aware that, whichever comes first, existing producers will need to be protected against the consequences of enlargement through ever more costly programmes, producing more and more surpluses?

Mr. Rifkind: There is absolutely no question of integrated Mediterranean programmes being available to countries which are not yet members of the Community. There is continuing discussion about the appropriate provision for integrated Mediterranean programmes, and that matter will be discussed at the European Council next weekend.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Were the press reports wrong in suggesting that, whereas at Fontainebleau we had a cast-iron, copper-bottomed guarantee of a £600 million rebate for 1985, before resources went up in 1986, the position now is that we shall get that rebate only if Britain and every other member state agree to increase the resources of the EEC? Does my hon. Friend agree that it would be shameful if there were such an increase in own resources at a time when the Common Market is spending £20 million every day on the storage and dumping of surplus foodstuffs?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend will be pleased to know that the British Government have made it abundantly clear that they could not contemplate an increase in own resources to take place unless the payment of our rebate for this year was absolutely cast-iron. There is no disposition on the part of any other member state of the Community to question that. In recent weeks, when discussions have taken place on a number of procedural matters, every member state has emphasised that great importance is attached by them to honouring the Fontainebleau agreement. At no time has it been suggested that any solution or procedure would be acceptable unless it ensured the payment to the United Kingdom of the sums agreed at Fontainebleau.

Mr. John Ryman (Blyth Valley): Has any progress been made in the discussions to protect textile interests in the United Kingdom? Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the biggest and most efficient textile factory in Western Europe is in my constituency—at Cramlington—and that because of the feebleness of the British Government and the lack of initiative by Common Market Ministers, far eastern and American imports, subsidised by those Governments, are flooding our markets, creating unfair competition to textile interests in Northumberland, resulting in the fear of substantial redundancies?

Mr. Rifkind: I share the hon. Gentleman's concern for the well-being of the textile industry. That subject was not on the agenda of the Foreign Affairs Council meeting last week

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Did the foreign Ministers discuss the dreadful situation in southern Lebanon? If so—but even if they did not—does my hon. Friend think it right that we should continue to allow access duty-free to Israeli manufactures while at the same time the Israelis are daily subjecting southern Lebanon to the most ghastly reprisal raids? Does he think it right that such trade arrangements should be permitted to continue before all Israeli troops—direct or surrogate troops—have left southern Lebanon?

Mr. Rifkind: That matter was not on the agenda last week. However, Israel and a number of other Mediterranean countries have association agreements with the European Community that enable them to have access to Community markets, and there is no proposal to discontinue that.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): How much preparation was made by the Foreign Affairs Council for the Heads of Government meeting at the end of this week? How will the reports of the ad hoc committees—the so-called Dooge and People's Europe committees—be handled? Are not those committees unrepresentative, being composed of unelected persons? Unless they are handled carefully, will they not produce legislation which is then rubber-stamped by the Heads of Government and sent to the Commission for the drawing up of regulations?

Mr. Rifkind: As the British representative on the Dooge committee, I somewhat resent the hon. Gentleman's description of the members as being unrepresentative or unelected. The Dooge committee has prepared its final report, which will be presented to the European Council. The other committee to which he referred has not yet prepared its final report, but it will be putting forward certain interim proposals. At its last meeting, the European Council announced that it intended to set aside two days for a full discussion of the recommendations at the June Council meeting.

Mr. Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): What are the main outstanding issues in connection with enlargement, apart from fishing, which it is hoped to resolve on Thursday? On own resources, will the hon. Gentleman explain the Delphic expression
"subject to a Greek waiting reserve",
which sounds somewhat ominous?

Mr. Rifkind: The points that it is hoped finally to resolve on Thursday, apart from fisheries, are concerned mainly with agriculture and social affairs, about which certain points of detail remain to be concluded. It is also hoped to have further discussion with the Spanish and Portuguese about the transitional financial arrangements affecting their accession to the Community.

As for the Greek waiting reserve, the Greek Government have made it clear that while they accept the proposals that have been put forward on the increase in own resources and financing of the Community's deficit, they could not give their final agreement until the Heads of Government had discussed, and hopefully resolved, the problem of integrated Mediterranean programmes and the proper level of resources for those programmes.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Does the Minister appreciate that there will be considerable dismay and surprise among many British people at the fact that the Community's relationship with South Africa was

[Mr. Max Madden]

considered inappropriate for discussion at the meeting? Will he undertake, on behalf of the British Government, to place that issue on the agenda of an appropriate meeting, because many British people want to see the British Government taking a lead on the matter within the Community?

Mr. Rifkind: The European foreign Ministers have on many occasions discussed southern Africa, including South Africa, at meetings devoted to political co-operation in the Community. I have not the slightest doubt that the matter will appear on the agenda in the near future.

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): When does the Minister expect to lay an order increasing our budget contribution by 40 per cent.? Will he confirm that, when that order has passed through this House, the Government will be enabled to raise our budget contributions without reference back to the House?

Mr. Rifkind: No date has yet been fixed for the presentation of such a proposal. Any increase in own resources can take place only if this House approves it; and, even if it approves it, it can take place only up to the level that has been approved by the House. Therefore, the implication of the hon. Member's question does not apply.

ENDURING POWERS OF ATTORNEY BILL *[Lords]*

Ordered,

That the Enduring Powers of Attorney Bill *[Lords]* be referred to a Second Reading Committee.—*[Mr. Archie Hamilton.]*

INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT BILL *[Lords]*

Ordered,

That the Industrial Development Bill *[Lords]* be referred to a Second Reading Committee.—*[Mr. Archie Hamilton.]*

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS &c.

Mr. Speaker: By leave of the House, I shall put together the two Questions on motions relating to statutory instruments.

Ordered,

That the draft Docks and Harbours (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1985 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the National Health Service (General Ophthalmic Services) Amendment Regulations 1985 (S.I., 1985, No. 298) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Archie Hamilton.]*

Orders of the Day

WAYS AND MEANS

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [19 March].

AMENDMENT OF THE LAW

Motion made, and Question proposed.

That it is expedient to amend the law with respect to the National Debt and public revenue and to make further provision in connection with finance; but this Resolution does not extend to the making of any amendment with respect to value added tax so as to provide—

(a) for zero-rating or exempting any supply;

(b) for refunding any amount of tax, otherwise than by a provision relating to the insolvency of a person to whom goods or services have been supplied;

(c) for varying the rate of that tax otherwise than in relation to all supplies and importance; or

(d) for any relief other than relief applying to goods of whatever description or services of whatever description.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

Budget Resolutions and Economic Situation

[Relevant documents: European Community Document No. 10277/84, Annual Economic Report 1984-85 and the Unnumbered document Annual Economic Report 1984-85 (final version as adopted by the Council).]

Mr. Speaker: I remind the House that I have had notification of 27 right hon. and hon. Members seeking to take part in today's proceedings. I therefore propose to apply the 10-minute limit between 7 and 8·50 pm. I hope that Privy Councillors who may be called before that time will bear in mind that some of their colleagues may have a shorter period afterwards.

4.10 pm

The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Norman Tebbit): As we commence this last day of the Budget debate I wish to re-establish some of the facts upon which opinions and policies are based. Clearly, we all share a common concern at the problem of unemployment and the problems of the unemployed. We are none of us unaware of the costs—in every sense—of unemployment. I have no doubts about the commitment of the Opposition to policies that they currently believe would reduce unemployment, although I hold that those policies are mistaken and would worsen our predicament, not improve it, as they believed throughout the time that they were in office.

For our part, while our commitment to the fight against unemployment is as strong as that of the Opposition, we have drawn different conclusions from the lessons of the past and developed different policies. That is quite understandable: however, it is a pity when the clear facts of our present position are misunderstood or misrepresented.

A theme of opposition speeches, particularly in the past week, and even more of Opposition catcalls, has been: "Recovery — what recovery?" Indeed, even my right hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Pym) was far too modest about the Administration

in which he served so robustly for four years, let alone the achievements which have been built since then on the foundations which he helped so skilfully to lay.

My right hon. Friend said:

"thank goodness we now have some growth. No one pretends that it is enough, and it still has not returned us to the level of output of 1979".—[*Official Report*, 20 March 1985; Vol. 75, c. 902.]

Mr. John Smith (Monklands, East): Hear, hear.

Mr. Tebbit: The right hon. and learned Gentleman says, "Hear hear," but he is wrong as well. After a sharp dip in GDP from the second quarter of 1979 peak to the second quarter of 1981 trough, GDP was recovering well even by the time that my right hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East left the Government. Indeed, the 1983 figure was above that of 1979. The rise has continued, with the fourth quarter of 1984 being 4·1 points above the second quarter of 1979 peak.

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): Big deal.

Mr. Tebbit: It is all very well for the right hon. Gentleman to say, "Big deal." He and his right hon. and hon. Friends have been saying consistently that unemployment is in recession and that output is below the levels which we reached in 1979.

So we see an economy that has been growing since the second quarter of 1981, which is growing now, and which is forecast by everyone, except Labour Members, to continue to grow.

Mr. Hattersley: At a decreasing rate.

Mr. Tebbit: No, at an increased rate. The right hon. Gentleman has it wrong again. Indeed, it is growing well by comparison with other European countries.

Faced with the facts, the Opposition turn to their next favourite cry almost inevitably, which is, "It's all oil," as though no investment, or skill, or human, or material resources were needed to produce that wealth from the North sea and as though somehow it should not count. That would be as absurd as to suggest that digging coal is not an economic contribution, especially when it is carried out in an economic fashion.

Mr. John Smith: The Secretary of State said that the Opposition have misled the House in the comments that Opposition Members have made on the Budget. When he was challenged on investment decreasing in future, he said that that was not true. I refer the right hon. Gentleman to table 3.9 of the Red Book, which makes it clear that in 1985 investment is scheduled to increase by 2 per cent. instead of 6.5 per cent. and will drop to 1 per cent. in the first half of 1986. Surely that is correct. That information is in the Red Book.

Mr. Tebbit: I shall return to investment. I thought that the right hon. and learned Gentleman was referring to output, to which I was referring. As I have said, he is wrong on that. No doubt, as oil exports fall in the 1990s, the Labour Opposition of the day will decide that oil production and not manufacturing is the measure of our national standing.

So let us consider the figures. Gross domestic product —the measure of the nation's total output—is, as I have said, at an all-time peak. It is about 4 per cent. above its previous peak in real terms in 1979.

Mr. John Smith: With oil.

Mr. Tebbit: Exactly. The right hon. and learned Gentleman implies that oil should be excluded from these matters. That is a nonsensical suggestion. If we were to exclude oil, we might just as well exclude banking, other financial services, manufacturing, mining or quarrying. He must take the statistics and the facts as they are and not as he wants them to be.

Mr. John Smith *rose*——

Mr. Tebbit: Very well.

Mr. John Smith: The Secretary of State should stop his heavy sighing. If he attacks the Opposition, he will be challenged on attacks that are falsely made. Are the Government saying that they are proud of an increase in output and claim credit for it if the bulk of the increase comes from North sea oil, which the Government did nothing to bring ashore?

Mr. Tebbit: The right hon. and learned Gentleman must understand that the Government do not produce the bulk of wealth in the United Kingdom in any vent. Private enterprise does that and private enterprise was predominant in extracting wealth from the North sea.

Total business investment grew by 12 per cent. in 1984 and is also at an all-time real peak. Moreover, the recovery, which is already the longest sustained period of upturn in the United Kingdom since the second world war, is far from over. The forecasters — perhaps the 364 economists and their satellites on the Opposition Front Bench are to be excepted — are predicting continued buoyant growth throughout 1985, probably up to about 3·5 per cent.

I remind the House that the United Kingdom led Europe out of the recession — *[Interruption.]* Would Labour Members like the figures, the dates, the times of the troughs and the time of the recovery? I shall place them in the *Official Report* if that will help them.

Last year, despite the miners' strike, which took about 1 per cent. from our growth rate, United Kingdom growth is still expected to have been close to the European Community average, and in 1985 forecasters are once again expecting the United Kingdom to head the European Community growth league.

Of course the Opposition deplore at length the difficulties of the manufacturing sector. Let us look a little harder at that. Overall, manufacturing industry output fell sharply from its 1978 peak of 109·8 to a trough of 93·9 in 1981 and in 1984 it was back up to 100·2. Within the general category of manufacturing some sectors are still in decline while others are pushing strongly ahead.

Of course, Labour party thinking is governed by the block votes of trade unions — *[Interruption.]* If we observe the Labour party conference we know that it is governed by the block votes of the trade unions. Labour Members might not like that, but they must put up with it.

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): There is no thinking allowed at a Tory conference.

Mr. Tebbit: We manage our conferences quite easily and skilfully. The hon. Gentleman had better try it himself. The block votes of the trade unions govern the Labour party conference and the industries which count are the heavily unionised and dominant employers of the past, not the less unionised and growing industries of today and tomorrow.

[Mr. Tebbit]

The growth of some manufacturing sectors has been dramatic. Output of office machinery, including electronic data processing equipment, has risen by 182 per cent. since the manufacturing recession trough in the first quarter of 1981. Electronic consumer goods output has grown by 35 per cent., agricultural chemicals by 29 per cent., plastic products by 25 per cent. and pharmaceutical and consumer chemicals, industrial chemicals, electronic industrial goods and electrical consumer goods all by 21 per cent. All those sectors are now producing at record levels. The recovery in manufacturing can be seen in the improvement of export performance.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Is the Secretary of State aware that his sneers a few moments ago were an insult to the Labour party and to the west midlands, which has been devastated over the past five years as a result of Government policies? Unemployment in 1979 was 5 per cent. in the west midlands and it is now well over 15 per cent. In some places it is well over 20 per cent. Areas such as Darlaston in the black country have become industrial wastelands. When is unemployment likely to be reduced?

Mr. Tebbit: I shall come to unemployment. In the meantime, there is no question of insulting the west midlands. I do not even insult the Labour party. I have merely stated the facts about it. If the facts are insulting, that is a pity, but that is the way life is.

Since the end of 1983, manufactured exports have been rising strongly; and by the end of 1984 this expansion had turned into what might almost be called a surge. In the final quarter of 1984 the volume of manufactured exports was 15 per cent. higher than a year earlier and 13 per cent. higher than the previous quarter. Manufactured export volumes are now running at over 10 per cent. above their previous peak. This may come as news to the Opposition, who pretend that it is not happening. Investment volume in manufacturing rose sharply by 13 per cent. in 1984, and a further 7 per cent. real increase is predicted for 1985 by our investment intentions survey. There has been a remarkable improvement in manufacturing productivity, even though the hon. Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle) believes that

"there has been no recovery"

and that

"productivity is no higher now than it was six years ago."—[*Official Report*, 20 March 1985; Vol. 75, c. 904-5.]

Mr. Winnick: So all is well.

Mr. Tebbit: The hon. Gentleman must not say that. I have made it plain that all is not yet well. I am trying to explain the basic economic facts, which the hon. Gentleman does not want to recognise.

By the last quarter of 1984, output per head in manufacturing was 28 per cent. above its trough in 1980 — an average growth of 6·5 per cent. for four years. Productivity performance remains strong, with an increase of 4·5 per cent. in 1984. Since 1979, output per head in manufacturing has increased by about 3·5 per cent. a year compared with 1 per cent. in the period of the previous Labour Government.

There are dangers, of course. Wages here have been rising recently far faster than in Germany, the United States or Japan, and our unit labour costs have been running ahead of theirs. No doubt that is why the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) has committed himself so firmly to controls on incomes and a formal wages policy of some type worked out with the trade unions. No doubt for the same reason, the alliance parties have committed themselves to similar policies. If that is allowed to continue, we would soon fall back to the sorry tale of past failures. With rising output, exports, investment and profitability, it is hardly surprising that business confidence and export optimism in the CBI's industrial trends survey remain strong.

Naturally our attention during these debates has turned time and time again to unemployment. Of course, because our concern is for those without work, we look at unemployment, but to see what is happening in the economy we might be advised to look at employment too.

Mr. Winnick: The right hon. Gentleman cannot sleep at night because of unemployment.

Mr. Tebbit: The hon. Gentleman would be better employed sleeping somewhere if he cannot keep his mouth shut for two minutes at a time.

Our employment peak was 1979, when the annual average figure — *[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman should listen and he could learn something. Our employment peak was 1979, when the annual average figure was 24,799,000. The trough was in 1983, when the annual average figure was 23,124,000. In fact, the trough quarter was the first quarter of 1983. My right hon. Friends knew, when we were returned at the 1983 general election, that employment was already growing in the economy. Since then, the number of those in work has been rising and the 1984 figure—although this is not yet finalised—looks to be about 23,450,000. Yes, it is still 1,300,000 down from the peak but over 300,000 above the trough on an annual basis and some 480,000 above the trough on a quarterly basis.

So the picture is not of an economy in decline, but of one that is expanding. It is an economy not in which jobs are being destroyed or lost overall, but in which they are being created overall.

Mr. Winnick: Oh, no.

Mr. Tebbit: If the hon. Gentleman cannot add and subtract, he had better go out and start to learn simple arithmetic. In other words, the truth about the economy is almost the opposite of what the Labour party is saying. Indeed, it is the opposite of what the leader of the Liberal party so slily implied when, in his Budget broadcast on 21 March, he said:

"Is there no alternative to the continuing contraction of British industry?"

What weasel words. He did not actually tell a lie, but he implied a lie in his question. Industry is not contracting; it is expanding. The answer to the right hon. Gentleman's question is, yes, there is an alternative to contraction—it is expansion and that is what the policies of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor are already bringing about. Of course, the increase in jobs is not yet sufficient to arrest the rise in unemployment, but I hope that hon. Members will this afternoon conduct a debate on the basis of realities and no imaginings, although I begin to despair already from what I have heard from the Opposition.

No one pretends that everything is perfect. When I spoke in the Budget debate last year, it was against the background of falling interest rates and cuts in mortgage rates. No doubt the right hon. and learned Member for

Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) will make the obvious point that interest rates are now higher than they were a year ago, although they have begun to fall again. But why did interest rates rise? It was because of higher public borrowing and spending resulting from the miners' strike, which the right hon. and learned Gentleman and his colleagues did so much to sustain, and because of the surge in the value of the dollar against all other major currencies.

Who is more likely to bring interest rates down again — a Government committed to further reductions in PSBR and Government borrowing, or one committed to an enormous increase in borrowing and spending?

Mr. Winnick: How many more pages does the right hon. Gentleman have?

Mr. Tebbit: Plenty more. The hon. Gentleman will get through them much faster if he manages to keep quiet for a minute or two.

It is fair to say I have had another disappointment since last year. The scheme of assistance to the textile industry —CLOFT—has not been implemented, because it has been turned down by the Commission. That was hard to accept after past approvals for large aid schemes for these industries in other member states.

I have made it clear to the Commission that we expect this new and stringent policy for these industries to be applied without exception throughout the Community. The Commission has confirmed that this is its intention.

To ensure that there is no accidental leakage through this dam on state aids for such industries, I hope to enlist the support and help of the CBI and TUC. I have therefore asked them to report any instances in other member states that they believe are suspicious; I have instigated a trawl for further information from our embassies in the capitals of other member states; and I am actively seeking any information on such transgressions elsewhere.

Perhaps here is a constructive and patriotic role for investigative journalism. If there is to be a strict regime, let it be applied with equal force throughout the Community.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): As the right hon. Gentleman is referring to the textile industry, he will know of the widespread concern within this industry about the future of the multi-fibre arrangement. Will the right hon. Gentleman take this opportunity to reassure the industry and the House that the British Government are firmly committed to the renewal of the MFA?

Mr. Tebbit: We shall come to these issues before long. I hope that we shall debate them more generally. When the Government have fully considered and concluded their policy towards the renewal of the MFA, I shall be happy to make a statement about it.

I should make it plain that I do not wish to claim the improvement in the economy as the exclusive achievement of Government. It is, above all, the achievement of commerce and industry and workers from boardroom to shopfloor. Our main contribution is to set the framework. There are specific things we can do beyond that. Science and technology and their effective use are central to wealth and job creation. In more mature industries and in the new high technology industries alike, we need to accept and exploit the benefits that technology brings.

Last Tuesday my right hon. Friend the Chancellor announced three additional important tax measures to encourage research and development and innovation: first, scientific research allowances are to remain at 100 per cent., to recognise the risks involved. Secondly, capital allowances announced in last year's Budget are to be refined to allow, from April 1986, short-life assets to be written off for tax purposes over their commercial life. Thirdly, the business expansion scheme is to be extended to include research and development companies — precisely the type of high-risk, high-tech company that the generous personal tax relief of the BES was designed to assist. Those are the improvements in the macro-framework for research and development. We are also introducing a number of measures designed to ensure that my own Department's support for innovation will be more precisely targeted to ensure that it achieves more effective improvements in British technology.

On 12 November last year, my hon. Friend the Minister for Information Technology announced a review of the Department's general industrial support for research and development. I can today announce the results of that review. I have concluded that there should be a change of emphasis in our support. I intend to increase the proportion of aid going on advisory services, the encouragement of best practice, improvement in the supply of key skills, and collaborative research. Support in those areas should help improve the capacity of a wide range of companies to exploit technological opportunities.

It is for individual companies themselves to bear the primary responsibility for projects near the market, and with the increasing company profitability they are now better placed to do so. I know that the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East is dismissive of profits — he talks of corporate tax savings being "frittered away" in profits. *[Interruption.]* If the right hon. and learned Gentleman's memory fails him, I remind him that he said that in column 529 of the *Official Report* on 15 March 1984.

Personally, I welcome the recovery in profits which enables me to reduce the proportion of the Department's support that goes on such projects. The criteria for assistance under our support for innovation programme, which will be open to new applicants from 1 April, will accordingly be focused more sharply than before.

Our aim is to concentrate support on innovative projects that represent a significant advance for the industry or sector concerned, taking into account the degree of innovation, the degree of technical and commercial risk involved, the potential for market exploitation, and any wider industrial benefits. Products and processes that represent merely a small step forward, needed primarily to keep up with the competition in the United Kingdom, are unlikely to be supported. In line with that, the normal minimum project size will be increased to £100,000. But to help small firms, we shall continue to provide support to them for projects below the £100,000 limit. As in the past, they will also benefit from simplified administrative procedures and less stringent eligibility criteria.

Within those general arrangements, we shall continue to emphasise certain key technologies and their application, such as micro-electronics, fibre optics and computer software. Some key technologies will also continue to qualify for support in respect of investment projects under the Industrial Development Act. Support for aircraft and aero-engine research and development will also continue, but at a reduced level.

[Mr. Tebbit]

I am also taking this opportunity to bring into effect a regrouping of the Department's assistance schemes, which I first announced last July. All the schemes will be presented under just four main groups: support for business and technical advisory services; support for innovation; support for national and regional investment; and support for exports.

Mr. John Smith: With regard to support for innovation schemes, in the forthcoming year does the Secretary of State anticipate an increase in Government expenditure to support those schemes or a reduction?

Mr. Tebbit: There will be less expenditure in real terms. That, of course, is as it should be. The Department of Trade and Industry is not established as a mechanism for handing out taxpayers' money to profitable industry, and as industry becomes more profitable, so it should carry the burden of those activities more and more itself.

My aim is to offer a more helpful and more readily comprehensible service to industry and commerce. With improving profitability, improving prospects and a more helpful tax regime, companies are able to afford to do more. That is in line with the views of the right hon. and learned Gentleman himself. He has expressed the view that he is not very keen on grants and that — *[Interruption.]* Yes, indeed. I should like to quote from *The Guardian* — and that is pretty good — of 22 February——

Mr. John Smith: But I agree.

Mr. Tebbit: Oh. Fine. We are in agreement, then, that we should have more profitability, better tax arrangements and fewer grants. So the right hon. and learned Gentleman and I are on absolutely the same side.

I am determined to ensure that the Government spend taxpayers' money only where it is most likely to bring forward new technology or new developments that would not otherwise have occurred. The ability of industry to compete is governed by the quality and skill of our work force. Even now we have grave skill shortages in some sectors——

Mr. Prescott: It was the right hon. Gentleman who abolished 16 of the 23 industrial training boards, with the collapse of apprenticeships.

Mr. Tebbit: Indeed — in order to improve the standard of industrial training.

If those skill shortages persist, we shall miss the opportunities offered by the fastest growing industrial sectors.

A committee, chaired by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, has been looking at those problems. That committee, the IT skills shortages committee, has reported on the shortages of graduates and technicians, and the importance of forging a partnership between industry and the education system. It is for industry to define its skills requirements; the education system must then respond rapidly to industry's needs.

Industry has already committed itself to providing finance, teaching manpower and equipment. It has set up the IT skills agency, alongside the CBI, to co-ordinate industrial contributions to help solve the problems of IT skills shortages.

We are determined to respond particularly to the need for more graduates in engineering and technology. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science announced last week that £43 million will be available over the next three years to provide additional places for engineering and technology in higher education institutions. A number of Departments — not least my own — are contributing towards the cost of that initiative, which complements the commitments that industry is making. That is a mark of the importance that we attach to solving the problem.

But if industry is to expand, the Government themselves must not clog up the works, impede progress or stifle initiative. There has been a growing recognition, not only in this country but elsewhere, that compliance with Government requirements imposes real and significant costs on business. Last year we announced a review of administrative and legislative requirements in seven Departments of Government. The scrutiny team's report will be published on Friday this week. It identifies options for action to cut burdens in all the main areas of regulation. It calls for a centrally co-ordinated drive to achieve a balance between costs and benefits in enforcement; to improve communications with business, in central Government and local authorities alike; and to control the growth of regulation in future, in the European Community as well as at home.

Mr. Eldon Griffiths (Bury St. Edmunds): My right hon. Friend is showing most welcome concern about compliance costs. Will he say in broad terms whether compliance costs in the United Kingdom tend to be higher or lower than those of our principal competitors?

Mr. Tebbit: It is difficult to say, but I would imagine from all the evidence that our compliance costs are considerably higher than, for example, those in the United States. It is difficult to compare like with like because systems are often so widely different. What I know, and what the report makes plain, is that there are real compliance costs here, and we should do something to reduce them.

We are publishing that report in advance of Government decisions on most of the options that it identifies. In some areas—on value added tax, wages councils and unfair dismissal law—action has already been announced. Of course there should be a framework to protect employees, consumers and the public as a whole, but that must not impose such a load as to damage the interest of those very groups.

There is another way to help industry. It is to liberate our nationalised industries from the restriction and interference that are an inevitable consequence of state control. We have made remarkable progress in the past year, not least with British Telecom. But there is still much to be done.

I am therefore pleased to be able to tell the House today of a further step in reducing state ownership. Last summer I asked British Shipbuilders to dispose of its warship building interests, to make substantial progress by 31 March this year, and to complete the process by 31 March 1986. I am pleased to say that I have today given my consent to British Shipbuilders for the sale of Yarrow Shipbuilders Limited to GEC. British Shipbuilders will receive almost £34 million for Yarrow by way of cash consideration, dividend and a payment in due course for

group tax relief. This is an excellent start to the process of returning the warship yards to the private sector and it is an encouraging comment on our economic policy that a company such as GEC, which has sometimes been criticised for sitting on a cash mountain rather than investing in industry, has decided to invest in shipbuilding. I am not sure whether I have to congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Waveney (Mr. Prior) on these matters, but it is a most welcome investment. I hope that other sales will follow before long.

Last year, the Opposition spokesman on the last day of the Budget debate was the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore), then the Opposition spokesman on trade and industry, whose retirement from active politics we all understand and regret. At column 721 of the *Official Report* for 19 March 1984 he said:

"It would be absurd if we left the judgment of this Budget to the City columnists and Stock Exchange dealers. The major tests we should apply are threefold. First, will the Budget improve the competitiveness of the United Kingdom economy? Will that competitiveness be expressed in our greater ability to prosper in trade with other nations and thus sustain a favourable balance of payments? Secondly, will the Budget lead to a sustained growth of output? Thirdly, will it make an impact on the appallingly, wasteful and socially disastrous total of 3½ million unemployed" —[*Official Report*, 19 March 1984; Vol. 56, c. 721.]

Those were the tests which the right hon. Gentleman wanted to apply. Let us apply them. Sadly, unemployment has continued to rise——

Mr. Prescott: Sadly!

Mr. Tebbit: Is the hon. Gentleman not sad about it?

Mr. Prescott: It is deliberate policy.

Mr. Tebbit: The hon. Gentleman is offensive and downright stupid. Any Government who set out deliberately to increase unemployment would be signing their death warrant. Governments do not do that.

Mr. Prescott: The right hon. Gentleman has.

Mr. Tebbit: As I said, the hon. Gentleman is offensive and stupid. The sooner he learns a little about the need for courtesy and some common sense, the better.

Mr. Prescott: The right hon. Gentleman is the pole cat.

Mr. Tebbit: Sadly, unemployment has continued to rise, but the first step towards checking and reversing that increase has clearly been taken. The number of jobs in the economy is increasing, as is the number of people at work.

Secondly, the Budget led to a sustained growth of output. That growth was less than we had hoped. We all know that it was due to the coal strike, which was supported by the Labour party which lacked the morals and guts to stand up and support the majority of the miners, but crawled along behind the Scargillite minority.

Mr. Prescott: Was it a good investment for the right hon. Gentleman, then?

Mr. Tebbit: It was a good investment for the nation that that strike was defeated.

The same is true for the balance of trade. Despite the effects of the coal strike, we maintained a balance of payments surplus for the fifth year running. That is the longest run of balance of payments surplus since the end of the second world war.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): The right hon. Gentleman has quoted from my reasonably impressive and well measured remarks of one year ago. Will he tell us what was the balance of payments surplus last year and what it was in 1983?

Mr. Tebbit: I shall happily look the figures up for the right hon. Gentleman. [HON. MEMBERS: "Ah."] I know what point the right hon. Gentleman is making, but he used balance of payments as his criterion. I am using balance of payments as mine. The right hon. Gentleman knows that the position deteriorated and that the prime reason for that was the coal strike of which he was such an enthusiastic supporter. On the Opposition's own test for last year's Budget, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor's judgment was right and his success would have been the greater but for the Scargillite wreckers and their craven allies on the Opposition Front Bench.

Today, despite temporarily high interest rates, industry and commerce is optimistic, confidence is high and prospects are good. There is no shortage of demand in the economy, and it is for British business to satisfy that demand, thereby increasing the number of jobs available.

In this Budget, my right hon. Friend has again acted to help business improve competitiveness, create more work and employ more people. It is a Budget that I am glad to commend to the House.

4.45 pm

Mr. John Smith (Monklands, East): I suppose that the kindest thing I can say about the Secretary of State's speech is that it was delivered with the usual amount of charm. For the right hon. Gentleman, it was a remarkably defensive speech. It bore all the remarks of careful preparation during the past couple of weeks—of private offices sculling through every selective statistic that could be found and through a mound of press cuttings—to see if the right hon. Gentleman could paste together some apologies to be offered to defend his stewardship of trade and industry.

The statistics were culled on the basis that if a quarter was suitable, a quarter was taken, when it was better to take a year, a year was taken, when there was a suitable reference to the EEC, the EEC was taken and when reference to the OECD was more suitable, the OECD it would be—all of which adds up to an unconvincing picture. The right hon. Gentleman lacked conviction in the ritual peroration with which he finished his speech.

Mr. Tebbit: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman answer one simple, straightforward and unselective question? Is the number of jobs in the economy increasing and is gross domestic product increasing?

Dr. Oonagh McDonald (Thurrock): There has been an increase in part-time jobs.

Mr. Tebbit: If I were the hon. Lady, I should not quibble about part-time jobs, especially for women. She will get into trouble, especially with the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Smith: The original part of that was a question. I can tell the right hon. Gentleman straight that the number of part-time jobs has increased, but, unfortunately, the number of full-time unemployed has increased at the same time. Gross domestic product has increased——

Mr. Tebbit: Ah!

Mr. Smith: The right hon. Gentleman asked me a straight question. He got a straight answer, and it is too

[Mr. Smith]

bad if he does not like it. He must listen sometimes, especially when he strays from the land of prejudice into that of fact—countryside with which he is less familiar. Going back to 1979——

Mr. Tebbit: What about GDP?

Mr. Smith: I shall deal with that in a moment, and I shall give the real figures of the peaks and troughs of the Government's achievements. I also have something to say to the Chancellor on that matter.

That is all a far cry, is it not, from the happy days of 1979 when the Thatcher Government were returned with some new and interesting economic propositions? We were told that the Labour Government, with unemployment at 1·3 million, had failed the nation and working people. We bear it in mind that if we apply the calculation of unemployment that the Government use, that figure would be nearer 1 million. We remember the then Leader of the Opposition excoriating the Government for the youth opportunities scheme. The right hon. Lady said that she was not interested in those jobs but only in real jobs. That is what we had to suffer when in government.

Mr. Tebbit: There was no youth training scheme.

Mr. Smith: There was a youth opportunities scheme. I think that the right hon. Gentleman can hear quite clearly and that he heard youth opportunities scheme mentioned then. If he cannot hear clearly, perhaps he will listen a little more attentively.

Three propositions were to mark the new dawn of Conservative economic policy. First, if the money supply was controlled, that would ipso facto control inflation. Secondly, cuts in public expenditure would lead to increased investment in the economy because of the ending of the so-called "crowding out" theory. Thirdly, cuts in personal taxation, especially for higher earners, would galvanise the crucial entrepreneurs who would reinvigorate the economy.

Why, in the whole of the right hon. Gentleman's speech, did we not hear a reference to any of those three propositions, which were reckoned to be crucial for Britain's economic recovery? The truth is that six years later, two thirds of the way into a two-term period of office and ominously near the next general election, the economic policies have not worked.

Until now the Government have usually taken one of two courses when challenged whether the new policies would be successful. The first line that is occasionally adopted is that all is not well. The Government candidly confess to that, but say that it is not their fault; it is that of the Labour Government, trade unions—that is the favourite—the world recession, sometimes of President Reagan and occasionally of bishops and academics. The other policy, which the right hon. Gentleman chose to follow today, is to claim that all is well, the economy is doing sparklingly well, and that with sufficient selected statistics they can persuade a baffled nation, which apparently does not understand as clearly as it should, that we are doing well.

All the Ministers who have spoken in the Budget debates, including the Chancellor of the Exchequer, indulged in that tactic, which makes me think that it was probably predetermined. The phrases recur from one speech to another. They spoke of the fifth year of economic recovery. They did not mention peaks and troughs, but they implied that this was the fifth year of continuous economic recovery. The Secretary of State for Employment spoke of the most sustained economic recovery for 40 years, which the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry repeated almost word for word today.

In Newcastle, at the weekend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer said that 500,000 jobs had been created during the past two years. It is relevant, and of assistance to a nation puzzled about whether it is doing well, to point out that the vast bulk of them are part-time jobs. No reference was made to the increase in unemployment, except by the Secretary of State for Employment who, in his Budget speech, said that the decrease in unemployment had not yet been enough, and thus implied that a little patience was all that was required.

We shall examine the true figures about our economic position. Last year — 1984 — is the first year when investment reached its 1979 level. As the right hon. Gentleman well knows, it is predicted to increase by only 2 per cent. in 1985 and by 1 per cent. in the first half of 1986. The Chancellor of the Exchequer said that manufacturing output had increased by 3·5 per cent. However, it remains 9 per cent. below the 1979 level.

Most ominously of all, although the right hon. Gentleman talked about the increase in exports, no word was uttered about the increase in imports. What sort of presentation of our trading position to the House and the nation deals with an increase in exports but does not mention imports? That is one of the most revealing examples of the selective use of economic statistics. How a responsible Minister can come to the House with the effrontery to expect it to accept such a presentation defeats the imagination. The ominous truth about our balance of trade is that we had a £4 billion deficit on manufactured goods in the past year. If an honest account were given of the Government's performance, that statistic would have fallen from the right hon. Gentleman's lips. He did not mention the increasing import penetration into the United Kingdom.

The truth about the right hon. Gentleman's statistics, like those which we have heard throughout the debates and which during the next year we shall hear ad nauseam, is that, where there are percentage improvements, they are usually only on the Government's own worst performance. The British economy is in difficulties. Hon. Members, objective commentators who look at our condition, and people whose eyes are open and travel round the country, know that the decay has gone far, especially in our industrial areas. Yet the Government have had the benefit of North sea oil revenues.

It is the fashion to anticipate the attack about North sea oil, as the right hon. Gentleman did. However, North sea oil cannot be abstracted from the economy any more than banking or other sectors of economic activity. That is a simplistic view for the right hon. Gentleman to take because he knows what North sea oil has meant to the Government. The Labour Government, who did more than this Government are doing to ensure that oil came on stream on time, received about £600 million in North sea oil revenues. This year the Government will receive £12,000 million in North sea oil revenues. By the time they complete their period in office, they will have received between £70,000 million and £80,000 million. No Government this century have had a windfall of such

proportions with which either to increase public expenditure or to diminish taxation. No Government have had such massive assistance to help with the balance of trade or the balance of payments. We must always remember that enormous windfall benefit when we assess this Government's performance against that of previous Governments and our competitor nations. We do not intend to let Conservative Members forget that. They have had a windfall benefit and spent every penny piece of it on paying for the extra unemployment that has been created since they came to office in 1979.

When our history comes to be written, there will be great puzzlement why a nation which received such an enormous benefit decided to create circumstances to consume it in payments for human misery rather than to invest it in retooling and re-equipping industry and putting the nation into a better state. That is the Government's record, and it is uncreasingly understood by the public.

What does the Budget do to help?

Mr. Tebbit: Before the right hon. and learned Gentleman leaves that point, will he tell us whether he accepts that the economy is expanding, that the level of output is higher than ever before and that that expansion is set fair to continue?

Mr. Smith: Output is increasing, but in nearly every year this century output has increased on the year that preceded it. That puts the statistic in a less important light. It would be odd if that were not so. What makes the Government's history useful to them is that they brought us so low between 1980 and 1982, that it is hardly surprising that figures are slightly better in 1983 and 1984. I wish that the right hon. Gentleman had got to his feet and told us that we did not have to worry about the £4 billion deficit on our balance of trade in manufactured goods. He did not mention that in his speech, and I doubt whether he will interrupt me on that subject.

It would be fair to judge the Budget in two ways: what it does to improve employment and achieve more jobs, and what it does to reverse our industrial and economic decline.

Regarding jobs, the Chancellor advertised the Budget as a Budget for jobs, and told us how worried he was about unemployment. He used the word "evil" on one occasion and "scourge" on another. We take it that the Chancellor of the Exchequer, like the right hon. Gentleman, wants us to believe that he is genuinely worried about unemployment, deeply sad that it has reached these proportions, and anxiously casting his mind for ways to reduce it. We must wonder about the Chancellor who, according to *The Observer* on Sunday, told the *Washington Post* last December:

"economically and politically Britain can get along adequately with double-digit unemployment."

Is that the statement of a man who cares deeply about unemployment? The House should note the word "politically". The Chancellor does not deny it. That comment was published in an authoratitive newspaper. I take it from the fact that he does not deny it, that it is true. It is interesting that members of the Administration reveal the truth in America more often than in the United Kingdom.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Nigel Lawson): The right hon. and learned Gentleman is getting carried away. The gentleman from the *Washington Post* who came to see me got in slightly garbled form what I had said, which was simply that, despite double-digit unemployment, the economy was going ahead rapidly and we had succeeded in winning the previous general election with a large majority. I went on to tell him that, nevertheless, the Government were deeply concerned about unemployment and were doing all they could to try to reduce it.

Mr. Smith: I have some experience of criminal law, and, on the basis of what the Chancellor said, I find him guilty immediately. That was not the convincing denial of a man who had been grossly misquoted. What an elaborate, confused explanation. No doubt when the Chancellor saw the article in the *Washington Post*, he wrote immediately to correct this misapprehension. He was not worried, because it was the sort of misapprehension that he did not mind being known about in America. But an alert reporter discovered it, and now we know about it in Britain. The message must be spread, because it is the truth, that the Government's political assessment is that they can get away with the present level of unemployment. The truth is that the Government have no priority for reducing unemployment and that high unemployment suits their political strategy.

If Conservative Members do not like that accusation — it is an accusation which events have forced us to make — let them tell us why, in Budget after Budget, the Government have resolutely turned away from any steps to reduce unemployment. This is not the first Budget in which a wide range of opinion has asked for a modest public sector works programme, organised selectively, to get a few hundred thousand construction workers back to work and to improve our decaying social fabric. It is not just the Opposition who ask for that. As Ministers will know, many Conservative Members — I see them as I look round the Chamber and they always attend such debates — have urged that course upon the Government. It cannot be a devious Socialist manoeuvre if it comes from such respectable advocates.

We also know that there has been no shortage of suggestions put to the Chancellor for stimulating the economy and increasing demand. If the Secretary of State believes that there is no problem with demand, he should visit all the companies which have had to lay off workers because there is no demand for their goods. I hope that he will visit the factories that are producing at 50 per cent. of production and having to lay off workers and tell them, "It does not matter. There is plenty of demand in the economy, and you should know it. That is why you are selling so well." But the Government have spurned every course that they could have taken to reduce unemployment, and even in this Budget the reduction of unemployment is not a high priority. The public are becoming increasingly aware of the truth. They are becoming aware that the misery of unemployment, which affects their families, children and communities, is avoidable and that the Government are pursuing their policies relentlessly, disregarding the social misery that unemployment has brought to our community.

Mr. Richard Page (Hertfordshire, South-West): How does the right hon. and learned Gentleman square the lack of demand with the huge amount of imports that he says is coming into the country? His argument does not jell.

Mr. Smith: It is too simple to say that if imports are increasing, there is no problem with demand. It is more complicated than that. [HON. MEMBERS: "Ah!"] Of course it is. If there is greater demand in the economy, it offers an opportunity to domestic producers and to importers; but a larger overall demand must give a better opportunity to our producers, unless we are so unconfident about their capacity to compete that we dare not increase demand because imports will take it all up. It is an interesting comment on the present state of industry that we are so unconfident about it that we dare not increase demand.

When will it be safe to expand? Will there come a day when the Government can have a public sector programme? Will there come a day when we can again aspire to economic growth without the fear of inflation? Of course there will. The Government know full well that there is sufficient slack in the economy to increase demand significantly and to have a considerable injection of public expenditure without a substantial increase in inflation.

Mr. Tebbit: Have not the right hon. and learned Gentleman and his colleagues consistently made the case recently that we should have not tax cuts but infrastructure spending? The right hon. and learned Gentleman is afraid that if people had more of their own money to spend, they might be so wicked as to spend it on a holiday abroad or on imported goods. He, not the Government, is saying that he does not have confidence in the ability of British industry.

Mr. Smith: The right hon. Gentleman's intervention did not have much to do with what I was saying, but I am happy to answer it. Has not the Secretary of State grasped by now that the case which many people, not just the Labour party, have made for spending on the infrastructure is that money spent in that way will create far more jobs than will money given in tax cuts? There is a heavy body of evidence to that effect. Since we regard the reduction of unemployment as the highest priority, we naturally advocate that course. The money to spend that the right hon. Gentleman talks about is not available to the entire community. As he knows, many people have not done well out of the Government. If they get a minor cut in taxation, it is soon swallowed by increased gas or electricity prices, prescription charges, or mortgage interest rates. The Secretary of State's suggestion that the miners' strike caused the increase in interest rates will occasion much surprise, but, of course, the miners' strike must be fitted into every problem. It is the best scapegoat of all. According to the Secretary of State, it was responsible simultaneously for the balance of payments problem and for high interest rates.

The Secretary of State knows that the Government are not concerned about reducing unemployment, or they would have taken steps to do so. Instead, they are pursuing and adding to unemployment by trying to introduce a low-wage economy. They started with the abolition of the fair wages resolution and the repeal of the 11th schedule to the Employment Protection Act 1975. Now we are told that jobs will be created by allowing employers unfairly to dismiss people within the first two years of employment. What an absurd irrelevancy. What does allowing an employer unfairly to dismiss someone have to do with creating jobs? What does the abolition of the wages councils have to do with the creation of more jobs? As my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) said in a debate last week, it is to the shame of Britain that, alone among the 94 countries which signed the ILO convention, it proposes to renounce its obligations under it. To try to drive down further the wages of people who have been regarded by all parties over a long period as in need of special protection is an especially pernicious way of trying to put the responsibility for our economic problems on people who were not responsible for their creation.

Mr. Winnick: Is it not even more nauseating to consider that the campaign to abolish the wages councils has been run by the most prosperous business men in the Conservative party?

Mr. Smith: As my hon. Friend says, during the debates on the Budget, when an hon. Member has advocated cutting wages or abolishing the wages councils, attention has been drawn by one of my hon. Friends to his entry on the Register of Members' Interests. That will tell a great deal to those who listen to and read our debates.

One would have thought that workers needed little protection nowadays. Indeed, many Conservative Members believe that they should be grateful to have jobs at all and should behave accordingly. Let me tell the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, who was Secretary of State for Employment for some time, that workers are being exploited. The drive for low wages during a period of high unemployment is causing injustice.

I quote to the right hon. Gentleman the case of Gary Leadbeater, a 17-year-old who lives in the new town of Washington. His case was discovered during a low pay campaign in the north-east. He works as a trainee carpet cleaner, and is paid £33·99 for a 45-hour week. He is paid that sum deliberately. Were he paid £34 a week, his employer would have to pay £4 in national insurance. Until it was abolished in the Budget, the employer received a subsidy of £15 a week from the Government under the young workers scheme. The employer skipped out of the national insurance obligation and got a £15 subsidy, but that boy had to work regularly every weekend because his contract of employment was such that he was obliged to work whenever his employer worked.

It is a scandal that exploitation on that scale should be permitted. These people are vulnerable. In any civilised community, they would be protected, and any civilised Parliament would seek to protect them. People such as Gary Leadbeater will be thrown to the wolves by the abolition of the rights that have been fought and won for them over many years.

We looked at the Budget and saw tax cuts again being given to people in fortunate circumstances. We saw the loving care with which difficulties in the transferring of fortunes from one generation to another are being ironed out in successive Budgets. We came to the simple conclusion about the social justice aspect of the Budget that it is tax cuts for the rich and wage cuts for the poor.

Mr. Lawson: Unfair.

Mr. Smith: The Chancellor may say that, but there were tax cuts for the rich. Under the period of this Conservative Government, the rich are better off by £3,000 million every year. The right hon. Gentleman knows that we are entitled to take one Budget with the others and look at the Conservative Government's record. He may think that that is unfair, but I do not. The benefits given in one Budget are retained for the following year.

There is the long-term problem of industrial decline. Unlike the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, I do not take the sunshine view of our economy that all is going well and we have little about which to worry. The truth is that with a balance of trade deficit on manufactures of £4 billion — it was only under this Government that we moved into such a balance of trade deficit—we are in difficult circumstances. Many people are worried that in the 1990s we shall be faced with industry based on obsolete technology and staffed by an unskilled work force. That will happen just at a time when North sea oil is running out, and for Britain to try to re-enter the highly technologically developed manufacturing system will be difficult, if not impossible, with the way that we are going.

The Secretary of State referred to the future support for innovation schemes; but, even in the new industries, the Government are cutting back support for crucial industries. The Secretary of State chose not to give us the figures. He is good at giving us figures about anything else except for the policy changes that he announces. Although we did not get any figures, I suspect that there is a substantial reduction in the amount of money that is provided. At least this time the announcement was made to the House instead of being sneaked into a parliamentary written answer as it was on 12 November 1984.

The Government are withdrawing assistance to important industries in information technology where we have a substantial balance of trade deficit as well, as the Secretary of State knows. There is a distinct change of emphasis in the Government. We used to be told about the sunrise industries by the right hon. Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker), who is now the Minister for Local Government. As the Minister for Information Technology, he gave a great deal of support to the sunrise industries, but since he has moved the scene has changed.

The Ashworth report, set up by the National Economic Development Council, told us that the industry is in danger of being eclipsed before it has risen. Unless we get new technology, introduced properly, we shall not have the industries of the future, and existing industries will not be able to adapt and renew to play their part in creating wealth in the future.

I mentioned creating wealth because the Secretary of State seems to find it surprising that the Labour party should argue for policies for the creation of wealth. We want to see the creation of wealth, unlike the Conservative party, which does a lot of talking about it, but not much to achieve it. It is odd to observe that the Government are not creating wealth but are redistributing it. But instead of redistributing it from the rich to the poor, they are redistributing it from the poor to the rich. We are not increasing our national wealth. I wish to goodness that we had some policies substantially to create national wealth. The Secretary of State seems to think that, because output is historically up this year on last year, that is good enough. No doubt he will come back next year and say that, as a result of a small increase, the Government are doing well and putting output up every year. He should know very well that in the whole of this century, output has gone up one year after another.

Urgent action is necessary in three sectors to improve our industrial future and performance. We need a new look at education and training. The right hon. Gentleman, when he was Secretary of State for Employment, was responsible for dismantling a great deal of our training system and for destroying our apprenticeship schemes. He is continuing the task, because the changes in YTS are irrelevant to the major problem that we face, which is training new technologists for the future at all levels, from school right through to the higher research institutes.

Recently, the Prime Minister of France said that education and training were so important to that country that it needed 20 years unremitting effort. I wish that we had a Minister in this Government who would take such a view about our future.

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster) *rose*——

Mr. Smith: We know that the programmes for research and development that we have are insufficient. It will not do to allow just a little more tax deductions by way of the business expansion scheme.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: The right hon. and learned Gentleman is not giving way at all.

Mr. Smith: The hon. Lady knows that I have given way frequently, but other hon. Members wish to speak.

The key to new products and new processes lies in the application of research and development to our industries. What the Government have announced in the Budget is pathetically irrelevant to the scale of the problem that we face.

We also need new methods of investment. As the Secretary of State for Wales told us only a fortnight ago, the City has lamentably failed the country. It does not produce the available money——

Mr. Tebbit: That is not so.

Mr. Smith: I did not say it. A member of the Cabinet said it. I am entitled to take what a Cabinet member said and treat it with a certain amount of respect, although I would not do that for all members of the Cabinet. For once, this Cabinet member happened to strike the nail on the head. We know that it is true.

Mr. Tebbit: The right hon. and learned Gentleman is being selective.

Mr. Smith: I am not being selective. I was taking the basis of the whole speech, which the right hon. Gentleman would do well to read.

We know that investment is not being provided on the scale and for the purposes that are required and we do not have the long-term investment in Britain's future that we need. None of these important developments is encouraged by the Budget. It is not so much an unremarkable Budget, as some have said, as a bald Budget, because it perpetuates a political assumption that the Government are making, that they can get away with high unemployment and that their political future will be unscathed, despite the fact that unemployment will stay high and may even rise. That assumption, on which the Government are proceeding, will not be tolerated by the people, who have seen, as Budget has followed Budget, the Government woefully and deliberately taking steps——

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for the right hon. and learned Gentleman deliberately to repeat the misleading statement that output has always gone up, when under Labour it did not?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): That is a matter for the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith).

Mr. Smith: The Government are proceeding upon the political assumption that they can get away with high unemployment. I dare say that when they retire at night to chew the fat, they say to each other, "Well, we got away with it in 1983, and there is no reason why we should not get away with it at the next election."

However, people are seeing clearly what the Government's game is. They see that high unemployment is being used to discipline the work force, and, if that is not enough, low wages are to be brought in, and, instead of having a high-producing, high-wage economy, we have a low-productivity, low-wage economy, with all its effects on the standards of living of ordinary people and their families, and which they remember from bitter experience between the wars when similar policies of deflation were followed.

Time is running out for the Government, because what they are doing is being understood more clearly by people. Eventually, the Government will find that the verdict of the people, whether it comes early or late, will be based on the Government's wilful neglect and the creation of the misery of mass unemployment.

5.18 pm

Mr. Edward Heath (Old Bexley and Sidcup): Through the kindness of the media, I had a number of opportunities before the Chancellor made his Budget speech of saying what I should have liked to put in my Budget. Therefore, I am not suffering from the benign neglect with which the Chancellor treated sterling in earlier days. I do not wish to take a great deal of time, but I should like to deal with some of the basic aspects of the problem.

The country was hoping that it would receive from the Chancellor a major creative effort to enable the economy to grow on a sufficient scale to bring about a substantial reduction in unemployment. I believe that a large number of hon. Members of all parties wanted the Chancellor to introduce just such a Budget. He was absolutely frank when he said that he was not going to do so. He introduced a deflationary Budget at a time when there is massive unemployment, which again the Chancellor has been frank enough to tell us will continue to increase. Therefore, after six years of Conservative Government we are faced with unemployment that is getting worse and worse. It is with great sadness and regret that I see this happening.

There has been discussion this afternoon about the political advantage being on one side or the other. To many hon. Members that is not the major factor. The major factor is that in itself unemployment is a pernicious evil. One of the major objectives of those hon. Members who came into politics after the second world war was to prevent the 1930s ever being repeated. Now, to our dismay, we see a situation developing which is worse than that which we lived through in the 1930s. What is even more disturbing is that now we are going back to the same sort of terminology which was used in the 1930s and which then completely failed to solve our problems. The situation was alleviated only by the outbreak of war in 1939.

The Chancellor says that he has been boxed in. Of course he is boxed in, by his own beliefs. There are wide differences among hon. Members about the action which ought to be taken. The major difference is whether or not the Government should make a major effort of their own, through Government expenditure, to deal selectively with the weaknesses in our infrastructure in order to bring us up to date and enable industry to be more efficient, and, in the process, create genuine jobs. This is not a scheme under which it is said that we must find some way of providing jobs, and therefore we must spend money. This is investment for the future. What we are able to do today we owe very largely to the investment of our forefathers in the 19th century and in the early part of this century. If our infrastructure is not kept up to date and efficient we shall betray those who are to follow us because they will not have the same facilities as we have enjoyed during our lifetime.

I said that there are wide differences of view between the two sides of the House and certainly within my own party on this matter. No attempt has ever been made to bridge those differences. I believe that the time has come when we must try to bridge them, not by debating points across the Chamber but by trying to find a definitive solution to the questions which are being raised.

I should like to make one general point, which was touched upon by the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) at the end of his speech. I always understood it to be the aim of the Conservative party to achieve a high-wage, high-productivity, low-cost economy. I give credit to the Chancellor for what in his early days he urged upon us in that direction. It seems that we are now in grave danger of going in exactly the opposite direction — of pursuing a low-wage economy without the incentive of achieving high productivity, while still maintaining high costs.

In this respect, the abolition of the wages councils is a retrograde step. Examination of the wages councils is absolutely justifiable and reform may well be necessary, but their abolition will be very considerably opposed by this side of the House, as well as by the Opposition. Having been privileged to be Minister of Labour in my time, I know of the work which the wages councils do. I am reinforced in this view by the fact that a large number of employers do not want the wages councils to be abolished. They believe that they do a good job for those who are covered by them — even 2·5 million is a substantial number — and that they bring about good industrial relations between employers and those working in firms that are covered by the wages councils. That is why they do not wish the wages councils to be abolished. I want to sound that note of warning to my right hon. Friends opposite—*[Laughter.]* I meant opposite me on this gangway.

Another worrying aspect is that, although the national insurance contribution changes may help the Chancellor to reduce the contribution of the lower paid, they militate against the employers of the higher paid. If we are aiming at a higher-pay, higher-productivity, low-cost economy, again this is going in the opposite direction. I cannot but feel that, by making these changes in this form, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has overlooked those basic principles at which we have been aiming for a long time.

Mr. Lawson: If my right hon. Friend is so anxious that there should be ever higher pay, why, when he was Prime Minister, did he introduce a statutory pay policy?

Mr. Heath: I introduced a statutory pay policy with the full support of every colleague in my Government because of the extreme position in which we found ourselves in 1972-73 as a result of world inflation in commodity prices

and of the world increase in oil prices. It was always believed that it would be removed when we reached a stable position, and we worked towards that end. What is more, we allowed for considerable increases in wages as we unwound the pay policy. This is one of the myths. The Government have a pay policy. What are they doing all the time bullying the nationalised industries if they do not have a pay policy? Of course they have a pay policy. What are they always urging the trade unions to do? What does the Secretary of State for Employment spend his time lecturing the trade unions about? If we believe in a market economy, we do not spend our time lecturing the market about what it ought to do.

This is the inner contradiction about the Government's attitude. They spend their time saying that sterling is too low. One cannot say whether sterling is too high or too low if one believes in a market economy. The market settles it. At one time the Prime Minister said herself that sterling was too low. One cannot say that if one believes in a market economy, because the market settles it and one cannot have any say in it. If the market has settled at that level, that is the market level in the economy. If my hon. Friend does not understand that, I am very sorry, but it justifies his intervention on sterling.

Mr. Tebbit: It is not necessarily a matter of telling people what they should pay for something. It is often a matter of expressing an opinion as to whether an asset is under-valued or over-valued. It is often a question of telling people what the consequences are of over-valuing or under-valuing assets. That is not incompatible with a free market economy, any more than my right hon. Friend's statutory pay policy was incompatible with his election manifesto that stated that we utterly rejected the philosophy of compulsory wages control.

Mr. Heath: And when we found the necessity for it, and the whole Cabinet supported it, we had the courage to change our policy to deal with that emergency. If the Chancellor has the courage to change his policy to deal with the present emergency of nearly 4 million unemployed, and rising unemployment, I shall have the greatest admiration for him.

We have been told by the Secretary of State that demand is enough. I think he said that there was plenty of demand. But what is "enough"? How in these circumstances does one define "enough"? If unemployment is at the scale that it has reached now and is rising, how can one say that demand is enough to keep those people in employment? If we do not, we are admitting the need for unemployment. That is the basic argument. That is why I want to draw the attention of the House to these basic points which we have got to face, both philosophically and politically.

What is enough? It is quite apparent today that the demand is not enough. The Front Bench insinuation is that the demand is there, but that it has been taken up by imports. There is no indication of how one prevents that happening. The importation of manufactured products has become a far worse problem. However, even if one were able to prevent all the consumer imports, one would still not deal with mass unemployment. There would still be a massive figure, which can be easily calculated. Demand is not enough. There are 24 million unemployed in the OECD countries and that affects all of us, although the United States to a lesser degree.

Now we are told that borrowing for a programme such as many have urged causes inflation. That is a sentence which, in vacuum, is meaningless. Borrowing is going on already. The Chancellor has to decide the level of borrowing. Chancellors have overshot by between £2 billion and £3 billion on their expectations year by year. That has not brought the world or the country to an end. Nor has it produced a solution.

But Goverment borrowing must be seen in relation to the savings of the people. Whether borrowing causes inflation must also depend on unemployment. The fact is that there is massive unemployment. Inflation also depends on the use to which borrowing is put. If it is used for capital investment, as is being urged, it is justifiable. If it is for pure consumption, it is obviously unjutifiable. Those must be the criteria by which we judge whether borrowing for a programme will cause inflation.

We have also heard the argument that borrowing will push up interest rates. The Treasury in Washington and the Federal Reserve Board take exactly the opposite view. They have said publicly that high interest rates are not caused by their own borrowing. Paul Volcker has stated that publicly. The United States has high interest rates, but the United States does not connect that to the borrowing.

The United States has carried through the greatest reflation in history, yet it does not have high inflation. Yet we hear that, if we are to carry through a modest amount of reflation, that will bring about a massive inflation. That is not a justifiable argument.

I am sometimes puzzled because we are always urged to follow the United States in its policies and attitudes. We are told that the American dream must be pursued. I do not know what the American dream is, but I know what the present American situation is. It is borrowing three times as much as we do, taking our currencies and GDP into account. It is taking 70 per cent. of its private savings in order to carry out that policy. The rest—30 per cent.—is coming from overseas. United States savings as a percentage of disposable income are between 5 and 6 per cent. In Britain, they are between 11 and 12 per cent. Therefore, we have more than twice as much disposable income in savings than the Americans if we want to use it properly. The Japanese have 18 per cent. of their disposable income in savings and that enables them to have a much larger borrowing requirement and for the Government to carry out investment.

On the one hand, the United States is showing what it can do by a massive budget deficit, which is largely carried through defence programmes and which goes on into other private industry programmes. On the other hand, the United States is now an international debtor. By the end of the year, it will be the largest international debtor in the world—larger than Brazil. That does not alter the fact that we have twice the personal savings of the United States and just over half that of Japan which can be used for Government purposes.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State identified the public sector borrowing requirement as one of the causes of the fall in sterling. I cannot accept that for one moment. When one talks to operators on the exchanges, particularly in Wall street, they have no idea what the British Government's borrowing requirement is or will turn out as. What they do know is that they are worried about the oil crisis and its effect on our economy. They are worried about the future of the oil industry, as that turns

[Mr. Heath]

down on our economy. That is what is worrying them as long-term investors in Britain, not the Government's PSBR.

Our interest rates are almost entirely governed by American interest rates. The PSBR did not cause the pound to drop. The pound dropped because the dollar rose with increased confidence in it and because of the doubts that I have expressed. Now the pound has risen. That is not because the borrowing requirement has been shown to be any different. It is not even because of the increase of 4·5 per cent. in interest rates. They had no immediate effect. The pound went on dropping. No, it was caused by doubts about whether the United States could keep up its growth and by the banking crisis in Ohio.

That in itself should be a warning to us about the position of the United States. With farmers in a more and more difficult position, the impact on the farm banks will grow. We may well find them in the same difficulties as the savings banks in Ohio. We hear so much about the strength of the American economy, but one has only to think of the furore which arose here, rightly, with the collapse of one bank in the City of London. To have 71 banks collapse at one time shows the danger in the American economy.

My next major point concerns the free market. That affects much of what my right hon. Friends the Chancellor and the Secretary of State have said. It is commonly said that we must remove all distortions, with no explanation as to why action has to be taken. That is not justifiable. Distortions are of two kinds. There are natural ones which we try to counter-balance through our policy and our financial legislation. They provide the justification for regional development programmes, which the Government are rapidly dismantling. Therefore, we find that the north cannot compete with the south. That is why it is falling more and more into derelict acreages. I do not want to go into detail, but I shall argue that at any time with anybody.

Other distortions in our financial legislation were because we wished to influence circumstances at a certain time. We must ask ourselves whether those circumstances have changed sufficiently to alter the situation. There is no automatic principle that distortions of any kind must be removed. That is where we are liable to be misled. To abandon them without showing that they are no longer necessary would be an abdication of government.

I believe more strongly than ever that a Government programme of investment in the infrastructure is desperately needed and should be carried through. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's announcement on education is welcome, as is the Chancellor's Budget announcement on the youth training scheme. We must face the fact that Britain still does not have a comprehensive technical education scheme which compares with those of our competitors. This scheme will not be put into effect for another year, so another year will go by and the young will still be unemployed and untrained.

Let me add a word of warning here. Many of us would find it extremely difficult to accept a situation in which social benefits were removed from people between the ages of 16 and 18 if they did not accept a Government proposal for a training scheme. [HON. MEMBERS: "Why?"] Because I strongly believe in the freedom of the individual, including young people. I shall go on believing in that and I do not believe in taking it away from young people.

When one puts together the abolition of the wages councils and the removal of the safeguards on unfair dismissal, one can see that unscrupulous employers will be given the opportunity to employ young people on a low wage and dismiss them within two years in order to take on new young people. We have seen that happen before and we opposed it. We produced legislation to prevent it happening. That is why I am sad to see these proposals come forward.

We must also have a regional development policy to create a balance between the north and the south. We have tried to do that in the past, with considerable success—*[Interruption.]* Does anybody doubt that success?

Mr. Peter Hordern (Horsham): Given the substantial grants that have been made to the regions for many years, what success can my right hon. Friend possibly point to? What extra employment has been provided by those grants?

Mr. Heath: Until this world depression, or the depression in this country, arrived, I could have pointed to innumerable places in the north-east—*[Interruption.]* I was responsible for the north-east in 1963. Lord Hailsham did the plan and I carried it through. What would the north-east be like today without what we did? If my hon. Friend went to Scotland, he would see that the plan is still working there, because Scotland receives a much higher grant than the regions of England. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland can work with local government, and Scotland has its own organisation overseas to obtain trade and investment for Scotland. Despite all the difficulties, there has still been success.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Will my right hon. Friend also point out that that policy was designed to disadvantage the west midlands, and that it has been remarkably successful in that regard?

Mr. Heath: That policy was not designed to disadvantage anyone, and it did not do so. This is the first recession in which the midlands has suffered. Many of us always noted that some cities, such as Leicester and Nottingham, because of their diversification, were not affected in the same way as regions such as the north-east, Scotland, Wales, the north-west and other regions containing the older industries. Birmingham always came through, along with Leicester and Nottingham. But on this occasion, I am sorry to say that Birmingham has not come through. How can those acres of dereliction in the west midlands be restored to our industrial life unless there is an efficient regional policy?

I repeat that we should join the European monetary system. Once again I repeat my plea to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer kindly to explain to the House, on one occasion in detail, why we are not members of the EMS. Our membership would not only bolster sterling, but would give us more influence in Europe, and would enable us to hold our position with other currencies such as the dollar.

Our greatest problem is our manufacturing industry. There can be no doubt that the base has been eroded. Where else would those derelict acres have come from, had it not been for the fact that our industrial base had been

eroded? When my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State cites particular industries, he does not mention the manpower involved in their percentage improvements. The new industries such as the high technology, biotechnology and communications industries are not employing anything like the manpower that our older manufacturing industries employed.

Mr. Lawson: It is the same all over the world.

Mr. Heath: Very well, but that is a fact about the new industries that must be faced. It may be true throughout the world, but I am concerned about this country as well as the rest of the world. If we are going to deal with that position, we must face the fact that we must find employment for those people. How is it to be done? We are not addressing ourselves to that question. We are saying, "Yes, this has gone up a percentage point since 1979, when the Labour Government were in power." But that does not concern me. I am concerned about what we are going to do to replace our derelict areas, to replace the industry that has disappeared and to help the 3·5 million people — and the number is increasing — who are unemployed. That is the crux of the matter.

Our solutions should not be impeded by the sort of dogmatic assertions that I have shown are unnecessary and unjustifiable. When we can face up to that future, we shall have some chance of solving the problem. Of course it will take time to solve it, but we must first recognise it openly and frankly, and then say how we are going to re-create the industrial base that this country needs. It will not be done without the Government. It can never be done alone in modern times, on the scale needed, by saying that we will leave that to private enterprise and that we need only think about the supply side.

Unless that is realised, we shall be left with a legacy of dereliction throughout the country and massive unemployment for decades to come. That is not a future to which I am prepared to look forward.

5.43 pm

Mr. John Silkin (Lewisham, Deptford): Whatever the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry may try to tell us, this debate is not about recovery but is, as the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) has told us, about a deflationary Budget.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer has responded to the mythology and superstition of City opinion, which he himself helped to foster. Indeed, he more than anyone is the author of the constraints that he now claims to face. For half a dozen years he has been peddling his medium term financial strategy — a permanent prescription for severe deflation. In last year's Budget speech he presented his medium term financial strategy as a formula for financial discipline, the 1980s equivalent of the gold standard and the balanced budget.

Yet again this year the Chancellor of the Exchequer assures us that he has little room for choice, and that there is "no virtue like necessity." But he chooses to ignore the fact that it was only by abandoning the gold standard and the balanced budget that Britain escaped from mass unemployment 50 years ago. Only by breaking free from the Government's medium term financial strategy will we generate real recovery in the 1980s.

As the right hon. Member for old Bexley and Sidcup has said, what is missing from the Budget is a major programme of public investment in construction and civil engineering to rebuild our crumbling infrastructure and to create new homes for the homeless and the overcrowded. The need is enormous and the resources could be made available. In England and Wales there are more than 2 million homes that are either unfit or in need of basic amenities. We have roads and sewerage systems that are falling to bits. We also have 500,000 building workers looking for work but unable to find it.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer tells us that the coal dispute has cost £3 billion in one year. That is his excuse for a deflationary budget. This country has three times as many building workers unemployed as there were striking miners in the coalfields. What about the lost production caused by the enforced idleness of construction workers? Britain has an army of jobless bricklayers, carpenters, painters and decorators, dumper drivers and so on, all desperate to get back to work. They want to be on the site, not on the dole. That is bad enough but what is infinitely worse is the effect that that has upon the future of our country.

Reference has already been made to the technological age. To move into that new technological age without the skills that are necessary to house and buttress those skills is to give up the technological race to our competitors: unemployed building workers speedily drift out of the profession; the skills that have been built up over so long a time are all too easily lost forever.

But the Chancellor of the Exchequer has turned a deaf ear to the chorus of voices not just from the trade unions but from employers, unions and independent bodies alike, all calling for a programme of public sector investment in construction. Spending on the public infrastructure such as roads and sewers is the cheapest way of getting people off the dole. It also saves money in the long run. In its latest report, the national Economic Development Office says:

> "The consequences of delaying required maintenance work can be well illustratd for roads. An average life for a road's surface dressing may be 4-8 years. A failure to renew this dressing (the minimum treatment) at the appropriate time can lead to the need for complete resurface at a cost per square metre some ten times greater than that for surface dressing. If resurfacing is also delayed so that the foundations of the road are affected, the cost of restoration can be fifty times that for surface dressing. One typical shire county estimates that at present even its principle roads are only being surface dressed every 10-12 years."

Or take my own borough of Lewisham. The chief executive has drawn attention in the February 1985 issue of *Town and Country Planning* to a stretch of major road where the water main has burst six times in the past two years. Many hon. Members can tell of similar experiences in their constituencies.

In a real sense less than nothing has been done about this for years. Two of Britain's industries have just passed their fourth successive year of negative net investment in real terms. For four years spending on plant and equipment in the construction and transport industries has been so low that they failed even to maintain their stock of equipment intact, let alone modernise and increase it.

Last year the deputy governor of the Bank of England, Mr. Christopher McMahon, pointed out that the same thing had been happening for three successive years to manufacturing industry — a precise repeat of what happened in the 1930s. The Government should be acting to reverse that spiral of decline. Instead, they have cut back further on public sector construction contracts.

[Mr. John Silkin]

In addition, the Budget encourages the revival of labour-only subcontracting in the construction industry. That is a recipe for neglect of safety considerations and of workmanship. Overlooked guard rails and overloaded scaffolding can be death traps. The Health and Safety Executive reckons that self-employed building workers suffer 15,000 injuries a year which are not covered by the 1980 notification of accidents regulations.

The Director General of Fair Trading has drawn attention to shoddy work by cowboy tradesmen. The catalogue of botched jobs, such as securing nails that are missed out and new fittings attached to clapped-out wiring, is legion. Covering up faulty or skimped work is the hallmark of the self-employed cowboy whose motto is

"In glue and dust we put our trust.
If they won't work, putty must."

If the income tax and national insurance rules are to be changed to give a boost to self employment, the building trade should have been exempted. A real effort must be made to defeat the lump.

We are told that the Government are no longer simply monetarist, but that they have now embraced supply-side economics. In a way I am a supply-sider too, in that I accept the validity of Josh Billings's comment:

"As scarce as truth is, the supply is greater than demand."

The Government are refusing to face the truth that there is an alternative to mass unemployment. The Budget does not provide that alternative. It is not a Budget for jobs at all. It is a Budget against jobs. This Budget leaves the unemployed where supply-side economics has always meant them to be — in Professor Galbraith's phrase, "abundant, redundant and poor." That is not a recipe for recovery. It is a recipe for disaster.

5.52 pm

Mr. James Prior (Waveney): It is a long time since I made a speech from the Back Benches. I must crave the indulgence of the House. It will come as no surprise to a number of hon. Members when I say that at times I have disagreed with Government policy in the past few years, and that sometimes I even disagreed with my party's policy in opposition. However, I am not setting out to be a rebel in what has become the accepted sense of the word. I shall try to steer a course between the fairly wide spectrum that exists between my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) and the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

I remind myself and the House that the late Iain Macleod always said that running the country economically was like a juggler trying to keep a number of balls in the air at the same time. He referred to three balls—inflation, unemployment and the balance of payments. It is easy to get one ball in the air and perhaps even two. The secret is in getting three balls in the air. If we are frank, we should accept that no one, for more than a very short time, has managed to keep all three balls in the air at the same time.

The Budget provides an opportunity to look at the economic situation and to assess how we are doing. I believe that Budgets are a much overrated pastime. I cannot for the life of me see how a country with a middle range industrial base such as Britain can have a statement once a year and think that nothing will alter between one and the next. I am certain that, before many months are up, the Chancellor will be back to make another statement. That does not mean that he should indulge in the old concept of fine tuning, but that with the uncertain state of the world and with large amounts of money sloshing all over the place, it is not possible to set a course on 19 March and think that it can be followed immutably until the Budget the following year.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer has taken a number of extremely useful steps in his Budget. I think of the improvements to the youth training scheme, which is a great advance. For the first time we have the beginnings of an amalgamation of national insurance and tax. That must be the right way. There are improvements in science and technology and the announcements today by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. These matters are complicated and I shall not talk about them now. If the Chancellor is doing anything to help reduce industry's costs and to reduce the burden on industry, we welcome it. We certainly welcome the Secretary of State for Education and Science's additional money for technology and engineering training.

I agree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup that our manufacturing base has narrowed considerably. No one can doubt that. A number of other industries are coming along to take its place, but the high exchange rate between 1979 and 1981 did not destroy just the fat; it destroyed quite a lot of muscle. That in part explains why we are importing a larger percentage of manufactured goods.

The manufacturing industry is still the main provider of employment in Britain. Without it, most service industries cannot prosper. The number employed in the service industries cannot be increased without a good and prosperous manufacturing industry. Some important service industries, such as banking and insurance, do not always rely upon manufacturing, but at an insurance dinner the other night the chairman of an insurance company said that he needed a strong base at home to sell insurance in the rest of the world. Tourism also plays its part. Basically, manufacturing industry counts in terms of greater employment and the use of wealth.

The Government are not paying sufficient attention to the need to reduce imports and to encourage exports. We are now competitive in terms of price, but in export markets we are often nothing like as competitive as others in terms of available credit.

The aid and trade programme is an important help to British industry. It can help countries which need aid, but it can also help British industry to give those countries a capital goods structure, which means that they will have to come back time and again to re-order from Britain.

The penny-pinching of the Foreign Office budget is a great mistake. During my many travels in recent weeks, I have come to respect a great deal more of the work carried out by the Foreign Office and the trade commissioners. It is absolute folly to cut back in the way that is intended. For instance, the more overseas students, who do engineering and manufacturing-based degrees in this country, the more likely they are when they return to their homes to order goods from Britain.

Those are important points. I do not think the Treasury always takes a broad view; it tends to look at matters in isolation. For example, if I am asked what the measures I have discussed will do for employment, I have to say that, in isolation, they will probably do very little. But if we believe that manufacturing industry is a crucial

employer of labour, a little extra money spent wisely on some of the measures that I have suggested could have a remarkable effect on the level of employment in manufacturing or service industries, and will, in the long run, reduce unemployment and expenditure on unemployment.

I hope that the Treasury will not always look only at the gross figures. This is the first Budget when it has tended to look at the net figures of some of the measures. I used to argue strongly with my colleagues that we should look at the net figures. Perhaps, for the first time, we are now doing so. Although it is well known that I have a thing about the Treasury, I do not think that it is wholly unjustified. The Treasury has a lot to answer for, because it sometimes has not seen the picture in the round.

The Government get themselves into a terribly difficult position by always concentrating on particular targets such as the public sector borrowing requirement or the medium term financial strategy — which is meant to be only indicative, but which has become part of the Holy Grail. The PSBR is the difference between two enormous figures which are bound to change very considerably during the course of the year. The problem is that all these things may be very important, but a Government must weave and turn and not be stuck on particular figures.

On the occasions that I have gone to the City, I have asked those who work there how they think things are going. They say, "We are a bit worried about the level of the PSBR." When I ask why, they say, "Because the Government tell us that we should be worried about it." I have then discussed that with my colleagues, and I have asked them, "How do you think things are going?" They say, "We are very worried about the PSBR." When I ask why, they say, "Because the City tells us we should be worried about it." There is a degree of semantics in this, and I hope tht we will try to get away from it.

I was delighted to read in the *Financial Times* today, and to note from the Chancellor's speech, that my right hon. Friend is beginning to realise that borrowing need not be quite so tight as it has been in the past. We are borrowing less now than any other advanced society in the world. We have become pinned down on borrowing, which has restricted — and continues to restrict — the Chancellor's ability to move. Therefore, I welcome what he says about possibly doing something next year.

On the argument about extra borrowing and therefore extra public expenditure on infrastructure — it is a dreadful word and I wish that we could find a better one — I simply say that if there are important tasks that need to be done, and which can be shown to be cost-effective and economically worth doing, we should try to find the money for them regardless of whether or not that creates more jobs. If something needs doing, it should be done in the interests of the economy as a whole. We often continue to pour out revenue simply because we have never found quite sufficient money for the capital expenditure that would save revenue in the future.

Those are a number of fairly critical, but not too critical, suggestions, and I turn now to the supply side of the economy. By their legislation and by the changing of attitudes, the Government have done an enormous amount to bring about a better balance between management and labour. There is a growing understanding among trade unionists and others on the shop floor that they cannot simply go on in the old ways, that there must be changes and that the only way to keep a job is to be prepared to accept change and new methods. Simply thinking that one can put one's head in the sand and forget about the problems because of the protection of a trade union is no longer an answer.

Although the legislation that the House has passed in three successive Acts is not used a great deal, it is having a very marked effect on the way and the manner in which trade unions behave. The trade unions must come to terms with the legislation. If they do, they can start to take advantage of it. In future, there will not be the opportunities for trade unions simply to tell people what they can do and expect them to do it. Trade unionists will now want to play a much bigger part in the running of their unions and in the decisions that they make.

It is interesting that the AFL-CIO, the American trade union organisation, has been looking at its records over the past few years, when its membership has fallen and its power of authority very much lessened. It has produced a new document with the remarkable phrase

"unions find themselves behind the pace of change."

If that is true of American unions, it is certainly true of unions in this country.

I should like to hear the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) tell the House his views on the employment legislation. He will be doing his party and the country a grave disservice if he thinks that the Opposition, if they gain power at the next election, should repeal the measures on the statute book. I regard their attitude to the legislation as a great test of their sincerity in wishing to have a coherent industrial policy.

I want to say something about the other supply measures. The measures relating to trade unions have been a successful piece of supply economics. I cannot say the same about one or two of the measures in the Budget. My hon. Friends will know of my strongly held views on wages councils. They may need change or alteration, and some of the independent members may have behaved in an extraordinarily silly manner in some of the wage awards, but they do protect the poorest section of society, and that poorest section does need protection.

Getting rid of the councils will not necessarily increase the number of jobs. It might increase the number of part-time jobs, but we are desperately in need of more full-time jobs. The people who are particularly suffering in Britain today are the long-term unemployed, those who have been out of work for more than a year. We must do all we can to get them back into employment.

We might well follow the suggestion that in the first year of the long-term unemployed coming off the unemployment register, they should not have to pay national insurance contributions. That would be a considerable incentive to people to employ the long-term unemployed.

I fear that the latest measures will not make much difference to the level of unemployment, particularly among low wage earners. Evidence of that is to be found in the fact that the young workers' scheme has not worked. That scheme was designed to persuade people to accept that, if wages were kept below a certain level, there would be £15 for the employer, so reducing his labour costs and enabling him to employ more people. That scheme is now being scrapped.

It was a piece of supply side economics which a few close advisers of the Prime Minister thought would work. I fear that some of the suggestions in the Budget came

[Mr. James Prior]

from the same stable. They should go the same way. It is not part of Conservative philosophy to push down those who are already the poorest sections of society.

This is a Budget for jobs. The Chancellor found himself boxed in with little room to manoeuvre. To that extent, I admire his ability to build with what he had available. No Government can do everything. On the other hand, no Government need do nothing. It is not enough for the monetarists to say that nothing can be done about unemployment, just as I and a number of others made the mistake of believing as Keynesians that nothing could be done to stop inflation rising. The truth is that neither the old doctrine of Keynesianism nor the new doctrine of monetarism is the answer to Britain's problems.

We know, or should know—particularly those on the Conservative Benches should know—that there is little place for dogma in a society as free and independent as ours. We must cast out dogma and do what we know to be right and sound and common sense for society. If we do that, the Chancellor will start to tackle the terrible problem of unemployment. I hope that he will have more success than we have achieved up to now.

6.13 pm

Mr. Roy Jenkins (Glasgow, Hillhead): The right hon. Member for Waveney (Mr. Prior) reminded the House that he was making what was for him almost a maiden speech, speaking from the Back Benches, it having been a decade or more since he had addressed the House from that position. I feel, therefore, that I should congratulate him and say that we look forward to hearing him again. He made an interesting and good speech. He managed well without a Dispatch Box. With the more significant part of his speech I was in agreement, though I thought, in manner at any rate, that he was rather more anxious to be emollient to the Government now that he was no longer a member than he was when he was in the heart of the Cabinet.

I was in almost complete agreement with the remarks of the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath). That is happening increasingly often these days. Indeed, that trend has been developing over the past 10 years. I do not know what effect losing the leadership of the Conservative party is said to have had on his temper, but it has had a remarkably good effect on the sense and sweep of his judgment and view of the world.

I do not know what would happen if the fate that befell the right hon. Gentleman were to befall the present Prime Minister and whether it would have the same effect on her. I am unoptimistic on both counts.

There has been talk recently of a consensus developing against the budgetary policy. Indeed, the chairman of the Conservative party, the hon. Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer), gave a certain authenticity to that in a speech last week in which he denounced the consensus. He performs a useful role in the body politic; whenever an idea begins to achieve sense and force, he is immediately sent in to denounce it. He is rather like having an adviser who is invariably wrong, which, so long as one is aware of the adjustment that must be made, is almost as good as having an adviser who is invariably right.

On this occasion he said that it was not a consensus but just the old Callaghan Lib-Lab coalition of 1979. That was rather offbeam. I do not recollect the right hon. Members for Old Bexley and Sidcup, for Chesham and Amersham (Sir I. Gilmour) or for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Pym) being great supporters of that Government. Indeed, I was not a supporter of them at that stage. Nor, for instance, was Lord Stockton.

There is developing a remarkable and spontaneous consensus not so much against the Budget—because the Budget, the burnt offering of a chastened Chancellor, is hardly worth the creation of a hostile consensus—but against the central tenets of the Government's economic policy, against their hallowed medium term financial strategy.

Let us neither underestimate nor be imprecise about how deep is the difference between the Government and their critics on both sides of the House and how shallow are the differences between the critics, wherever in the House they sit.

What are the main points of difference? First, the Government believe that there is no shortage of demand and that any attempt to provide more would foster inflation and not create jobs. The critics almost universally believe that, with unemployment at historically high levels, with the national debt in relation to the GDP, to national income, at an historically low level—barely half of what it was 20 years ago—and with a Budget impact, if one abstracts the features which arise purely as a result of unemployment, which is wholly restrictive, there is significant room for expansion.

Secondly, the Government dismiss any such call as an addict's demand for ever-increasing doses of discredited reflation. It is nothing of the sort. It is not discredited because increasingly there is evidence around the world that in conditions of substantial unused resources, there is a strong and direct correlation between the sizes of budget deficits and unemployment ratios.

In addition, the critics of the Government's policy are not calling for more reflation; they merely seek less vicious deflation. It is clear that the Government's fiscal stance is not neutral; it is strongly deflationary. The £4·1 billion that is due to come off the financial deficit, which is a more precise measurement than the PSBR, in the coming year—the process is due to continue——

Mr. Richard Ryder (Mid-Norfolk): Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman will explain how it was that on 17 March, 10 days ago, the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel), the leader of the Liberal party, was reported in the *Sunday Times* as having suggested that if the alliance were to increase public spending by £4 billion we would have a PSBR of only £8·9 billion.

Mr. Jenkins: The hon. Gentleman had better put that question to my right hon. Friend the Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel), who is frequently in the House, if he wants to know more about the precise arithmetic behind his suggestion. There is no doubt that the relationship between the PSBR and an increase in spending is not a simple or direct one. If it ever had any validity, the Government have completely confused it by the nonsensical act of selling off assets in the belief that that affects the Government's general fiscal stance and position.

I shall divert from these considerations to ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer a question which I hope he will answer when he replies to the debate. He began his Budget speech with a catalogue of praise for the performance of the economy in 1984. He spoke of steady

growth, low inflation, record exports, and record investment. However, the PSBR is £3 billion above target and, therefore, it must be lashed back into line. If the economy did as well as he claimed with a PSBR of £10·5 billion this year, why do we need the PSBR to be reduced to £7 billion next year?

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): So that we may get the good things that the right hon. Gentleman seeks.

Mr. Jenkins: That is not untypical of the hon. Gentleman; he has the argument completely wrong. How can it possibly be argued that it is good value for money and a good investment to spend £2·75 billion on a miners' strike and a bad investment and bad value for money to spend that sum on improving the infrastructure, which will be essential for Britain's future well-being?

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Mr. Jenkins: I have replied to one interjection of the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) and that is not a reason for allowing him to make an intervention——

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Mr. Jenkins: ——particularly in view of the nature of his interjection.

I turn to the third area of difference between the Government and the generality of the critics on both sides of the House. The Government's financial stance begins to have just a flicker of sense only on the assumption that the road to health is through the intensification of the bleeding to which the economy has been subjected over the past six years. The evidence increasingly is that the slimming down which has come from a destruction of a significant part of our industry has produced malnutrition and not muscular tone.

No one could have put the unpalatable truth with more flat accuracy than did the right hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Pym) last Wednesday. He said:

> "We are no more competitive today than we were six years ago, and probably less so. We still have a lot of progress to make."—[*Official Report*, 20 march 1985; Vol. 75, c. 902.]

Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman was being rather kind to the Government for he implied that we are moving, even imperceptibly, in the right direction. On his own showing, Britain is no more competitive now than six years ago, and probably less so, which would suggest that we are moving in the wrong direction. That is the third major difference between the Government and their critics.

I shall deal briefly with one facet of the international considerations. One of the now favourite arguments of Conservative Back Benchers is to play the French card. It has become a well-drilled response. When a loyal Conservative Back Bencher hears the word "expansion" he, to paraphrase Marshal Goering—this is the good Thatcherite—reaches for his anti-Mitterrand gun.

The weapon is inapposite. In 1981-82, the new French Government gave or encouraged substantial pay rises, nationalised a vast chunk of industry and attempted to combine sitting on interest rates with an expansionary fiscal policy. I am not sure about the Labour party, but it would not be the policy of the Alliance, or I believe of various critical Conservative Back Benchers, to embrace any of the first three policies of the French Government. The analogy therefore collapses.

It is possible that there can be agreement on both sides of the House that there is a limit to the amount of expansion which this country or any other, perhaps with the exception of the United States, can achieve against a world trend—in other words, to buck the international system, as it were, and to stand on its own. This does not mean that our room for manoeuvre is negligible. However, it means that it is finite and would confine us to a result well below tolerable unemployment levels. In my view, something significant could be achieved on our own.

In considering how to handle these restraints, a fourth gulf between the Government and their critics immediately opens. The Government are no more in favour of concerted expansion than of unilateral expansion. At least they are consistent on this issue. They practise what they preach and preach what they practise. Outside the United States they have had a certain baleful influence. Their message to the rest of Europe about public sector deficits has been "hurry on down". Where the advice has been followed, countries in Europe, after lagging shamefully behind in 1981 and 1982, have made a brave effort to catch up with us by increasing their unemployment figures. This has been cited constantly with pride and pleasure by the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Where the advice has been rejected—rather excessively so in the United States—exactly the reverse has happened. As we approach the Bonn summit the Government's posture is rather like that of a man holding a red flag in front of a 5 mph train.

The fifth divide between the Government's critics and the Government is that if the Government judged that they could inject a few billion pounds into the economy they would insist on doing so through cuts in direct taxation. The critics, in accordance with all rational analysis, would give priority to well-selected investment and job creation policies. Another gulf is opening up politically and potentially but for the moment this is rather academic. After all his brave talk in the autumn, the Chancellor has run for cover in the spring.

My advice to the Chancellor would be in future to talk less before his Budgets and to do more when he introduces them. Last year, whether out of over-excitement or for some other reason, he leaked everything to the Sunday press. He was lucky that he was not serving under Lord Attlee. This year he did not leak. Of course, there was not very much to leak. However, his actions were still more foolish. He spent the autumn erecting a number of windmills—for example, VAT on books, newspapers and children's shoes and a tax on pension schemes—at which he proposed to tilt. In addition, he proclaimed the huge splendour of the landscape of vast direct taxation cuts which would be opened up after disposal of the windmills. In the event, neither happened. He did not tilt and there was no splendour. The Budget's interest lies, in the main, in what the Chancellor did not do. This may be all right if there is a sense of calm management and others have created the fears. However, the fears have been created by the Chancellor, and the management of the exchange rate in particular has mingled ineptitude and dogmatism in July and again in January into an almost lethal cocktail.

The Chancellor's clamant, know-all discourtesy does not matter much. In some ways, it is rather endearing. At least it is universal—the right hon. Gentleman does not discriminate between people. What matters more is that, of all the 15 Chancellors I have seen operate in the House, the right hon. Gentleman is at once the most arrogant and the most incompetent. [HON. MEMBERS: "Were you the

[Mr. Jenkins]

runner up?"] For some reason, that is not the general view. The Chancellor has become a Figaro who cannot sing, a clown who is not funny. There is no question of bad strategy being redeemed by the Chancellor's virtuoso performance.

Mr. Tim Eggar (Enfield, North): I think that earlier the right hon. Gentleman was edging himself and the alliance towards opposing the autumn statement. This is an important policy pronouncement. The Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee called for the autumn statement which was delivered by the previous Chancellor. Is the right hon. Gentleman against the statement?

Mr. Jenkins: Is the hon. Gentleman asking about the context or the contents of the autumn statement. It is desirable that there should be an autumn statement. That does not mean that the Chancellor has to announce in advance a number of proposals that he may or may not make six months later. That is not a sensible way in which to proceed.

Dr. Brian Mawhinney (Peterborough): The right hon. Gentleman has returned to the suggestion that, in some way, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor initiated the public debate about various prospective VAT measures. When my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry quoted the words of the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), he produced chapter and verse for every quotation. Will the right hon. Gentleman extend to the House the same privilege and let us know, chapter and verse, the reference showing when my right hon. Friend the Chancellor indulged in this discussion about VAT?

Mr. Jenkins: I cannot do that because, as I think the House knows perfectly well, the Chancellor proceeds not by on-the-record statements, but by hints, leaks and indications. If that is not so, will the Chancellor tell us exactly how the whole of last year's Budget was leaked to the Sunday press, as it most certainly was?

We return to certain basic facts. The Government are resolved to continue their deflationary policy. There is no doubt about that. Some of the higher lunacies of believing that control of sterling M3 solved all the problems of pay, productivity or panic in the exchange markets may have been abandoned. The economy may occasionally benefit from the fact that the Chancellor misses his targets, as his predecessor did.

The Government's basic belief remains that the right policy—even with unemployment at 3·5 million—is to reduce the level of Government-induced demand. There is not, therefore, the slightest prospect of unemployment falling below 3 million during this Parliament and well beyond. Indeed, when the great United States boom turns downwards, unemployment will easily be pushed to 4 million, of whom an increasingly high proportion will be long-term unemployed. At the same time, present policies offer no recipe for the revival of our industry, and therefore no real prospect of paying our way satisfactorily when the oil surplus runs out.

Mr. Tebbit: I have been waiting for the right hon. Gentleman to come to his sixth or seventh point on which the Opposition parties are agreed and have a difference with the Government. Are they all committed to an incomes policy—a freeze, inflation tax or another of the social contracts with the unions which do not work and which the Government believe are the wrong approach? Is that not one of the most important differences?

Mr. Jenkins: I had dealt with five points. Other parties, especially the main Opposition party, must speak for themselves. I would not run away from an incomes policy. I would run away from the hypocrisy of the present Government who pretend that they have no incomes policy but in fact have, and must have, an incomes policy. Let the Government ask any of their employees in the public sector whether they think that there is an incomes policy. It is much better to have an open rather than a covert incomes policy.

Because there is no prospect of dealing with unemployment and we see no way in which, with present policies, we can pay our way when the oil surplus goes —I am talking not about when the oil goes but about when the surplus goes, which will be much earlier—the economic policies that are currently pursued endanger our nation's unity and viability. The prospect is worse— there were some murmurs when the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup said this—than during the early 1930s. At that time, the unemployment percentage was marginally higher and there was certainly more widespread absolute poverty, but unemployment did not stay at a high level as it is now. Unemployment has been stuck at a high level since the end of 1981. The unemployment rate began to fall rapidly in 1934. The reduction gathered momentum, but there is no sign of that happening now.

Another analogy with the 1930s is far more apt than the analogy with France during the early 1980s, which is so frequently quoted. There was then an increasingly uncoordinated move to broad agreement against the foreign and defence policies of the Chamberlain Government, against appeasement. It embraced the Churchill and Eden wing of the Conservative party, the Liberal party, much of the Labour party—although a substantial element declined to recognise that arms as well as resolutions were needed to resist Hitler — and many people who were not concerned much with party politics. The move was fragmented and attempts to mount a common programme to achieve a united leverage mostly foundered on narrow party considerations. The Labour party believed in its ideological purity and the Conservatives — only Mr. Harold Macmillan apart — preferred to keep the whip and occasionally fulminate from within the tabernacle. As a result, the policy changed only under pressure from outside circumstances — outside the country. That happened so desperately late as to bring us within a hair's breadth of national disaster. The anti-appeasement coalition never got together until Dunkirk was upon us.

Today, fortunately, the stakes are not quite so high. We are unlikely to be invaded by tyranny. But the danger of a destructive decline that goes past the point of no return cannot be dismissed. This time we shall not have external factors to force us out of our folly. If we are to correct the major errors of current economic policy, there must be resolute and united action from all those who believe and know that we are now on the wrong road. Without that, for all the splendour and sense of the speeches that are made, there is little chance of either the critics or the nation escaping from the glare of the Prime Minister's headlights until it is too late.

6.40 pm

Sir William Clark (Croydon, South): I am sure that the whole House welcomes back the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins) after his illness. He congratulated my right hon. Friend the Member for Waveney (Mr. Prior) on doing quite well without a Dispatch Box, and I pay him the same compliment.

I think that the right hon. Member for Hillhead misunderstood the comparison with France that is made by some of my hon. Friends. There was a rapid increase in public expenditure, which President Mitterrand had to reverse. That is the only criticism that we make and comparison that we draw.

We have now heard five speeches, all reasonably critical of the Budget. Later, I should like to refer to some of the good things in it, which will help. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor has been extremely skilful, taking into account the constraints upon him, in what he has done in the Budget. I do not intend to enumerate in detail all the things that he has done, but I shall mention just a few. What were those constraints? Hon. Members throughout the House know what the major constraint was. It was the cost of the miners' strike. Public sector borrowing went up and that affected the Chancellor's ability to cut taxes. If the £2·5 billion that was spent on the miners' strike had been available, my right hon. Friend could have done much more in the radical reform of taxation. Indeed, he could have increased capital expenditure. Opposition Members are in no position to criticise my right hon. Friend because of the constraints, when throughout the miners' strike they themselves did nothing at all to try to persuade the leaders of the National Union of Mineworkers to call off their political strike.

Listening to some of the speeches that we have heard, one would think that a Government could legislate for prosperity. Hon. Members in all parts of the House know that that is absolute rubbish. I welcome the parts of the Budget that will help employment. Of course we would all like to do more and put in more taxpayers' money to try to solve the problem. I remind the House that over £2,000 million is being spent in trying to do so, and next year that figure is being remarkably increased.

I accept and welcome the extension of the youth training scheme from one to two years. I disagreed fundamentally with my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) when he said that unemployment today is worse than in the 1930s. That is a travesty of the truth because there is no comparison between 1930 and today. In the 1930s, not so many married women were going out to work, and the number of people in full-time employment today is far greater than it has been——

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): So is the population.

Sir William Clark: That is right.

The accusation that was made by my right hon. Friend, who has held high office, should be refuted.

I welcome the graduation in the national insurance contribution introduced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor. The upper limit for national insurance contributions has gone up for some companies. Some people have mentioned British Oxygen and other public companies in which there are highly paid executives. The 10 per cent. extra that they will have to pay will be allowable for corporation tax purposes and, indeed, corporation tax is reduced by 40 per cent. I should have thought that if a public company was sufficiently prosperous to pay an executive £50,000, £60,000, £100,000, £150,000 or £200,000 a year for his services, the company must be profitable, and the extra cost should not be a burden on it. However, it allows the Chancellor the flexibility of being able to reduce the national insurance contributions of the lower income groups.

No one seems to think that there is any good news, but the fact that there have been half a million more jobs in the past two years must be something to be welcomed. Right hon. and hon. Members who should know better are always denigrating the economy, which cannot help. Why do we always have to talk gloom and doom? Many things in the economy are good. I welcome the change in the unfair dismissal measures and the abolition of the wages councils. I am convinced by my industrial experience that many employers are reluctant to take people on just in case they cannot get rid of them. It is all very well taking on people when business is increasing, but if it declines, that employer is stuck.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor envisages overspending of £7 billion for next year. It is a question of judgment. Should it be £7 billion, £10 billion, £9 billion or whatever? When critics say that we should increase the public sector borrowing requirement by £2 billion or £3 billion, the impression is given that there is no capital expenditure. However, over £20 billion of the £132 billion public expenditure is capital expenditure. That is no small figure, but listening to some of the speeches that are made, one would think that there was no capital expenditure.

I raised this matter earlier in the debate. I should like to ask my right hon. Friend the Chancellor about the interest on the national debt. I should like to know the breakdown of gross interest. The figure in the Red Book is £17 billion. I am told that that includes the indexed part of the index-linked gilts. I should like my right hon. Friend to explain that to the House.

Everyone agrees that there should be tax reform. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Waveney said, it is high time that we amalgamated the real income tax and national insurance contributions. Despite the graduation, the national insurance contribution is a poll tax and I should have thought that it should be a progressive tax, so it should be amalgamated with income tax. The right hon. Member for Hillhead mistakenly accused my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of flying kites on VAT on children's clothing, books and so on. There was no justification for that accusation.

I am delighted that my right hon. Friend has done nothing to harm the prosperity and success of the pension industry. I am convinced that it is part of Tory philosophy to help people to look after themselves. If the incentive to take out occupational pension schemes was diminished, I fear that many employers would contract back in to the state scheme, as it would be cheaper, and, in 30 years' time, more people would have only one pension.

I urge my right hon. Friend to control public expenditure. He knows that I am a critic of the control of public expenditure, in that there seems to be a weak link. Once a budget for a Department is agreed, it is left to get on with it. I should like there to be a Treasury watchdog in each spending Department. That might secure better value for money. I understood that area managing directors in the NHS were introduced to bring in expertise

[Sir William Clark]

in the running of that service. I was disappointed to learn recently that, out of the 13 area financial officers who have been appointed, 12 came from within the NHS and only one came from outside business. That is reminiscent of the local government reorganisation of a few years ago. Business experience in such nationalised services is highly desirable.

My right hon. Friend should pay attention to the fact that we are trying to get more people to set up in business. The proposals concerning VAT in the Keith report are important in this connection. On Thursday, I asked my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Treasury whether the taxpayer has a right of appeal. Under the suggested clauses, there is an automatic fine on the taxpayer who sends in a wrong return, unintentionally or otherwise. There should be a strict right of appeal. Although my hon. Friend said that representations will be taken into account when the taxpayer has a "reasonable excuse", I should like to know who will take those representations into account. Will it be the tax collector or an independent tribunal?

My right hon. Friend should take comfort from the fact that, with the exception of those who want to make a political point, the Budget has been well received. It could have been better, but people realise the cost of the miners' strike. Any Government would have had to resist the bully-boy tactics of that strike and no Government could have avoided spending that money. The right hon. Member for Hillhead and others know full well that if the strike had not been resisted, the country would have become virtually ungovernable without the diktat of the trade union movement. The right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) made that clear throughout the strike.

Mr. Roy Jenkins: The hon. Gentleman must not misunderstand me. Saying that, with a public sector borrowing requirement of £10·5 billion this year, it is not necessary to reduce it to £7 billion for the coming year, does not mean that one would have been in favour of giving in to the miners, which I was not.

Sir William Clark: I had not misunderstood that at all. I thought that I had said that the £7 billion PSBR was a matter of judgment for the Chancellor. I also said that captial expenditure was included in that total.

Mr. Roy Jenkins: The hon. Gentleman has misunderstood for the second time, but I do not intend to take the time of the House explaining myself to him.

Sir William Clark: The right hon. Gentleman should take some of his own strictures to heart when he accuses my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of being arrogant. I do not know whether he knows the story of the pot calling the kettle black, but to say that I misunderstood is offensive and, I believe, arrogant.

I urge my right hon. Friend to resist the pressures to increase public expenditure. Inflation is down. It will have a hiccup in the new few months, but it will come back to below 5 per cent. He should concentrate on keeping inflation down, as that helps the old, the young, the rich and the poor alike. It is the best benefit that any Chancellor can give the country. The United Kingdom recovery is firmly based. I do not believe that we should change course now, so I welcome the Budget.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I must remind the House that the 10-minute restriction on speeches becomes effective at 7 pm.

6.56 pm

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Motherwell, South): On Tuesday last week, the Chancellor said that the Government's purpose is the "defeat of inflation" and he added:

"We must also do what we can to combat the scourge of unemployment."

Do we see opening up in the fundamental logic of the Chancellor the glimmer of hope that the House, the 4 million unemployed and Conservative Members who are beginning to get worried as the Chancellor's arrogance leads him into electoral disaster have been looking for? We must look carefully at the speech and the financial statement. While the Chancellor has changed the mechanics substantially since the first financial statement with which he was seriously associated—in 1980—we find that he has not deviated from his purpose. The Budget and the tattered philosophy behind it offer no hope of any relief of unemployment.

In its original form, the medium term financial statement offered a coherent, if somewhat naive, basis for Government policy. Look after inflation, it argued, and unemployment will look after itself. It rested on three theories of economic behaviour, which were especially boldly stated by the Chancellor. First, money supply determines money incomes. Secondly, by controlling money income, one controls inflation because output will look after itself with markets clearing on their own and genuine job seekers finding jobs. Thirdly, the exchange rate will adjust to reflect demand for money in different currencies, and hence the price in different countries will maintain a constant level of competitiveness.

Most of that has been abandoned. The only dogma that remains is the self-balancing economy — markets clearing of their own accord. Even that is now heavily qualified by blaming unemployment on market imperfections such as employment protection and wages councils, which are to go by the board.

What has gone wrong with the Chancellor's logic? First, money supply does not determine money incomes. The first glad, confident statement in 1980 did not mention the exchange rate or money incomes, but said that there would be no question of departing from money supply policy, targets being set broadly for four years ahead. Money supply targets for later years are now described as "illustrative ranges" based on assumptions about the growth of money GDP, which appears for the first time this year. There is no confident setting of expectations here.

The money supply targets on their own cannot be trusted to give the right message. The exchange rate has now forced itself inescapably on to the scene and the financial statement argues that we must

"balance the appropriate combination of the exchange rate and domestic monetary growth needed to keep financial policy on track." — [*Official Report*, 19 March 1985; Vol. 75, c. 787-89.]

What is this "financial policy" about which the Chancellor speaks? Is it distinct from "domestic monetary policy"? Has it anything to do with the gross loss of competitiveness which wrecked British industry in 1980 and 1981? No; it is a balance that the Chancellor says must be struck in a way that takes no chances with inflation. In other words, he clings to the strategy of boosting the

exchange rate to fight inflation, rather than pushing it in the direction needed to maintain full employment. The theories, targets and mechanisms of policy are all gone. Only the smile on the rather ugly Cheshire cat remains —the purpose of fighting inflation, whatever the cost in lost output, misery and unemployment.

The latest twist is that, as the cost escalates, it is transmuted into a measure of the depravity of the evil that the Chancellor believes must be dealt with. The greater the cost, the greater the evil must have been. Therefore, it is a self-confirming self-righteousness. The Chancellor put it well at Question Time when he said:

"Stable prices . . . is the greatest social service that any Government can provide."—[*Official Report*, 21 March 1985; Vol. 75, c. 973.]

The worry that lurks on Conservative Back Benches is that such priggishness loses elections, even if it is convenient in the City. Conservative Members are looking across the Atlantic and asking, "Why not let the fiscal balance rip, cut taxes and keep the money supply and inflation in check with high interest rates?" The Chancellor conceded that there was nothing sacrosanct about the precise mix of monetary and fiscal policies required to meet the objectives of the medium-term financial strategy, but said that this was not the year to make adjustments in either direction. He repeated the suggestion yesterday on "Weekend World".

The fact is that the Chancellor has not the faintest idea what would happen if he let the PSBR rip. He fears that it would result in the pound plummeting and interest rates rising not to 16 or 17 per cent. but to 25 or 30 per cent. and still not holding the pound. The Chancellor is not now prepared to take that gamble, although he has kept that option open for the last full-year Budget before the general election, when he hopes that the pound will be stronger and when, in a losing position politically, he can blame any fall in the pound on fears of a Labour Government.

If that record has spelt the end of the Government's financial strategy, what should we do? We need a balanced pursuit of objectives, which recognises that in all practical respects the economy is not self-balancing. If we do not seek full employment, we shall not get it. If we do not seek stable prices, we shall get inflation. If we do not seek growth, we shall get stagnation. We can and must seek them all with an appropriate balance between them.

The right hon. Member for Waveney (Mr. Prior) put it well when he referred to Iain Macleod's simile of the juggler having to keep three balls in the air at the same time. That is a good analogy. An even better one is flying an aeroplane in which, if any one direction of control goes wrong, the aeroplane goes into a spin. An apparatus is needed to keep the economy on an even keel. Nowadays it becomes a matter of technical argument, which is pursued effectively in Select Committees, but with only partial access to the facts and the analysis. The Chancellor takes delight publicly in rubbishing that apparatus of information, models, and the way to use them, while in private he creeps round to consult them and tries to rig the oracles of Delphi to his persuasion.

In a wiser and more dispassionate moment 10 years ago, the Chancellor, on Report on the Labour Government's Industry Bill in 1975, voted for an amendment, which I moved, to make the Treasury model available to the public and requiring the Treasury to publish forecasts, of which we have the latest in the financial statement. That has proved a mildly useful exercise, but we now need to take the further step not only of making the models available for test in the macro-economic centre at the university of Warwick, but of applying those models to the analysis of their policy implications. The House is taking that further step by setting up a parliamentary unit at the university of Warwick to work alongside the bureau which tests and compares the models. The parliamentary unit takes the further step of testing and comparing the policies implied by the models for Select Committees, individual hon. Members directly and through the Library. I hope that the Chancellor will show the self-confidence to instruct the Treasury to co-operate fully with the parliamentary unit so that it can be used to defend and criticise the Government's policy and the alternatives.

I am reasonably confident that the Government's policy will stand condemned. The Chancellor will take a different view. He should join the argument, put forward the evidence, let it be searchingly examined and let Select Committees and hon. Members see what the score is.

I am not for one moment suggesting that analysis is everything. We must deal with the challenging and difficult political and moral problems that we face. If we look at the wider political and moral problems, there is no doubt that in the major departures which policy must make, we need the best analysis available.

7.5 pm

Sir Edward du Cann (Taunton): In view of the time constraints, I hope that my right hon. Friends, who are not present in any case, will be good enough to take the compliments as read. I shall confine myself to two points, on which I may expand on another occasion.

First, as I sat in this crowded Chamber last Tuesday, I reflected, not for the first time, that our Budget day arrangements are becoming increasingly a farce. It cannot be right that the speech of the Chancellor of the Exchequer is almost wholly occupied with a series of detailed announcements about this tax measure or that piece of administration. There are huge issues to discuss, and one looks to the Chancellor to lead the discussions about the decline in the British share of world markets, competition issues, which are now so unfairly fierce on the United Kingdom, exchange rates and so on. In 1963, we made an attempt in that direction. These detailed matters, such as revenue, should in future be confined to the debate on the public expenditure White Paper, and the Budget day debate should be used for the much more serious matters of the national and international economic context in which we live.

My second point deals with the supply side measures announced by my right hon. Friend. They are praiseworthy and will have an effect. In aggregate, his attempt to encourage labour mobility, his determination to achieve better training and his practical measures to make it easier to employ people are wholly admirable. Not for the first time, I avow that unemployment is a curse and degradation for our people. My right hon. Friend could and should have gone further in his attempt to alleviate those problems.

I shall put a single specific proposal to my right hon. Friend. I am one of many hon. Members who have consistently drawn attention to the habit of Governments to spend too much on items of current expenditure and too little on capital projects. When it comes to discussions in Government about levels of expenditure, the capital

[Sir Edward du Cann]

programmes always seem to be at risk and the administration sacrosanct. Year after year, the Select Committee on the Treasury and Civil Service has quoted figures that show an inadequate level of capital investment. The Government's expenditure plans for 1985-86 to 1987-88 show that that trend continues. By 1987-88, public capital spending will be 12 per cent. lower in real terms than in 1984-85, while current spending will have increased by 0·5 per cent.

As hon. Members on both sides of the House have said, it is essential that capital investment is increased. It could easily be increased. There is something farcical in circumstances which permit a company in the private sector to spend whatever sums it thinks appropriate on capital items, while a water authority, my local authority in Taunton or, indeed, the Government, are highly regulated.

If it is right to transfer functions in the current expenditure category to private enterprise in the interests of economy, it must be right to transfer capital expenditures. Let corporations in the private sector build schools and hospitals — of course, to a specified standard. Then the users — the local education authorities and the regional health authorities—can pay rent adequate to service the capital cost and to amortise the debt. The debate of which we have heard something across the Floor of the Chamber this afternoon — tax cuts versus public investment—is a sterile debate. We are perfectly able to have both if we want them, and both are certainly overdue.

If the logic of my right hon. Friend's approach to his Budget is the containment of public expenditure, this proposal would assist him. If the object of his detailed measures is to facilitate employment, the removal of the shackles on the construction industry would provide many jobs and reinforce his purpose. There is enough spare capacity in the construction industry for it to expand hugely without inflationary pressures.

I do not know what the position is in other constituencies. I can say only that my constituency has been waiting 30 years for a new hospital, which is too damned long. Many schools in Somerset are old, and I could give the House a long catalogue of essential works which I long to see started in my constituency and county. I am sure that every Member of Parliament could do that. It would include bridges, barracks, sewerage works, courts, swimming baths, sports arenas and offices. The list is endless, but it could and should be started.

I find myself asking the question: what are we in the House of Commons? Are we mere talkers and nothing else, or are we doers? We need a little imagination and a little determination. I will give the House a slogan which is perhaps not inappropriate: there must be a way to find work for our people, to replace despair where it exists with a new confidence, and to encourage new growth in our economy and new dynamism. We boast about the growth in our economy, but it is pretty trivial when one stops to think about it. Only an expanding home base will give us a chance to expand our export capability to any real extent.

I do not know what right hon. and hon. Members think about such matters and about the present economic scene. When I saw my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) sitting in that seat today, I was reminded of the time when Winston sat there, and something that he once said went through my mind. He said that to destroy can be a heedless act of a moment —although sometimes destruction is deliberate—but to build is more often the hard and, at times, unthanked labour of weeks, months or even generations. If I have an ambition, it is that the people outside will see us as the builders. There is no reason why we should not be.

I hope that the Minister of State, Treasury will ask my right hon. Friend the Chancellor seriously to consider the idea that I put forward. I am not without experience of raising money in the City and of applying it to constructive purposes. Why should not those things be done? What is holding us back?

Those are the items which I would sooner have us discuss than a few pennies on whisky or a few pennies off the rate of our individual taxes. It is time that the House gave our people a lead, and it is overdue for us to inculcate in their breasts the idea that there is, as there should be, hope for the future.

7.14 pm

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): The right hon. Member for Taunton (Sir Edward du Cann) talked about the trivial rate of economic growth, and many will echo what he said. He also deplored the treatment of capital expenditure by an expenditure-cutting Government. Only the 10-minute rule prevents me from following the right hon. Gentleman into those important areas, which we shall have to discuss in greater depth in the months to come.

I wish to deal with the sort of Budget that we might have expected from this Chancellor of the Exchequer. We all know what sort of a person he is. He has a clear vision coupled with clear intentions, and he has a strong determination to match both. Sometimes he has seemed to have a mission—almost a messianic mission—to carry them into effect. As such, he has been, and I suppose he has seen himself as, the most important executive arm of a theoretical and over-doctrinaire Government. Others in the Conservative party might dream of a world fit for entrepreneurs to live in; it has been his goal to turn it into reality. So determined was he, that at one time during the Labour Government he proposed an Act of Parliament removing from the Government the control of money supply and placing the power in the Bank of England and outside the control of the House of Commons.

That enthusiasm, which as a rule is unusual in this moderate Chamber, found its outlet in the work that the Chancellor did at the Treasury. As the architect of the medium term financial strategy of 1980, as my hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray) said, he prepared the foundations of an economic plan that was intended to liberate the energies of our wealth creators and to remove the distortions which he believed prevented them from achieving a much higher standard of living and a much greater economic success for them and the entire community.

Therefore, it was his intention, as we all know, to undertake a comprehensive programme of tax reform which would remove many of the allowances and incentives which the Chancellor believed distorted the operations of the free market. So we had the leaks which started in the autumn and went right through the winter, to the effect that we had a tax-reforming Chancellor and that there would be big changes in taxation. The pension kite was flown, as were the balloons of VAT impositions.

None of this was a surprise. We have known for a long time what the Chancellor wished to do; we were simply unsure about the details. The leaks did not supply information, they provided confirmation.

When nothing happened on Budget day, we had to ask, what was all the fuss about? What happened to that long shopping list of tax reforms? It seems that even the Treasury was misled by the reforming Chancellor turned conventional politician. In column 794 of *Hansard* of 19 March there is the heading, "Tax Reform", but it is a title without substance. The same heading appeared in last year's Budget, but it related to stamp duties, life assurance, friendly societies, investment income surcharge, composite rate, corporation tax, capital allowances, stock relief and much more. That was tax reform. This time we had the same heading, but there was nothing there.

We know what the Chancellor wished to do because we know him. He wanted to abolish capital gains tax, to tax pensions—especially lump sums—to broaden the base of VAT and to reduce or even end stamp duties, and he would dearly love to make inroads into mortgage relief. For the latter, he would find much sympathy in parties other than the Conservative party.

Many of those exemptions, totalling about £14 billion, were expected to be challenged so that the Chancellor could begin to achieve his dream and his destiny of a fundamental change in personal taxation. That did not happen, and the question must be, why not? He said that he was boxed in, and we must ask, who boxed him in? It was not the miners' strike; it is only a small cost for 1985-86. Was he boxed in by the problems related to international confidence? Would international confidence wane if VAT was placed on pension lump sums? Would overseas investors withdraw their funds from London if VAT was placed on food? Of course not. The confining of the Chancellor had nothing to do with miners or with overseas investors. The person who boxed him in was the Prime Minister, with her political instinct that tax reform has had its day.

Nicholas Kaldor, now Lord Kaldor, used to say that tax reform was of interest to Governments for a maximum of two years, and after that time, they started thinking about the next Parliament and lost interest. Therefore, instead of the tax reform we expected from the Chancellor, we got a Green Paper or White Paper that will enable him to do nothing at all. Every Government reach a point when electoral politics takes over from economic doctrine. The interesting aspect of this case is that the economic doctrine was so firmly embedded. This Budget is a marker that this point has been reached.

At each Conservative Budget, we have had the ritual chant about the monetary aggregates. The more sophisticated they become, the less the Government and everybody else believe them. Who cares what sterling M3, PSL1 or the money GDP are, or what they are as criteria? They are not the guide to future levels of inflation.

Although the Chancellor happened to throw a bone to Sam Brittan by including a further monetary table of money GDP, will he take any notice of it? He will not. That is all past. This is all said to ease his conscience and the transition from what he believed in the past to what he has to do in the future. Monetarism was meant to do everything to exclude Governments from unpleasant decisions on pay, prices and the exchange rate. Instead, the Chancellor is busy exhorting the trade unions and everybody else, as previous Governments have always done.

The best quote of last week came from the right hon. Member for Chesham and Amersham (Sir I. Gilmour):

> "Professor Phelps Brown put it a shade ironically a year or so ago: 'Monetarists urge trade unionists to make monetarism work.' Not surprisingly, they are not wildly enthusiastic about ding that." — [*Official Report*, 21 March 1985; Vol. 75, c. 1037.]

We have to get rid of the talk and start the real action. We must turn our attention to that.

I am able to deal with only one other aspect of the Budget—national insurance contributions. Here, I can offer the Chancellor a few plus marks. After all, he has turned what used to be a regressive tax into a mildly progressive one. I am pleased about that. However, the Chancellor is expecting rather too much from these changes in their effect on employment. Had they been allied with other positive measures to expand the economy, they would have found a useful and sensible place.

I hope that eventually there will be an amalgamation of national insurance contributions and income tax; the hon. Member for Croydon, South (Sir W. Clark) mentioned this. Perhaps the Chancellor will now turn his attention to progression in the rates of income tax and say that he will introduce reduced rates in income tax as computerisation allows it. If it is sensible to reduce rates for national insurance contributions, it is also sensible to have reduced rates for income tax. All this is being delayed until the computers are installed, and we look forward to seeing it then.

This is a sad and unimaginative Budget, which will do nothing for the unemployed. It is the second Budget that has been heralded as a Budget for jobs. The last one increased unemployment by 100,000. This one is likely to increase it still further. Eventually, we shall have to have a real Budget for jobs, and when we do, which is not likely to be in the lifetime of this Government, the unemployed can take hope from a Government who realise the true importance of unemployment as it exists today.

7.24 pm

Mr. Lewis Stevens (Nuneaton): This Budget is more practical and progressive than it has been given credit for. In particular, with its effect on national insurance contributions and training and its approach to high technology demand, it is a good one. I commend it more than many hon. Members have as being a useful Budget. The right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) spoke about my right hon. Friend the Chancellor being boxed in. No one would question the fact that over the past 12 months there have been many difficulties and events the effects of which could not have been foreseen, nor the extent to which they would affect Government spending.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor's consistent approach should not be confused with being in a straitjacket. It is the disciplined approach to how Budgets are introduced and monitored, which many Labour Members have thought was a straitjacket, and which many previous Chancellors have refused to carry out. In many past Budgets, previous Chancellors have attempted to inflate. When that did not work, there was panic action to do something different. However, with this Budget, as the

[Mr. Lewis Stevens]

year goes on, with a reasonable, stable and disciplined approach, changes will take place just as the Chancellor has decided. That should not be overlooked, as it is one of the most important parts of my right hon. Friend's approach. It has been called dogma, but many people do not like the word "discipline".

The measures on high technology and the encouragement of more graduates are a small beginning. Various hon. Members, including my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), have set out the things that they think should be done. My right hon. Friend said that after the last world war we did not want to see the 1930s return. What happened in the 1950s, the 1960s and the 1970s? Our share of world trade dropped by over 50 per cent., but successive Governments took few measures to introduce and encourage the new technologies. It is to the credit of this Government that they have recognised the great dependency of new technology on training and more graduates. Something has been done about it. However, in the past 10 or 15 years, under previous Governments, nothing happened. It is hypocritical to claim that the Chancellor has not done anything.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry told the House how many things have been covered in the Budget and spoke about recent steps taken by the Government. It is not good enough for the Opposition and some of my right hon. and hon. Friends to say that what the Government have done is not enough. It may not be all that we should like to see and it may not be sufficient at this stage, but it is all that we can expect at the moment and more than has been done by many in recent years.

The same responsible approach will help some of our industries. The most troubled industries are in manufacturing. That has already been said this afternoon. Government measures should be extended to that sector. However, claims have been made for more money for infrastructure. Manufacturing, the depth of the recession and the wilderness in the west midlands have all been mentioned, but always money is asked for infrastructure. Future Budgets and measures by the Government should be aimed, first, at manufacturing, where jobs could be created, and then at infrastructure.

If we release the money that, by the disciplined approach, we may have, it should go directly to manufacturing, with direct help to manufacturing industries so that they may produce the wealth first and we can follow by investing in the infrastructure. The reverse process is a gamble. The Government should try to help the high-risk industries, but unless the Government have a reasonable, stable money approach, they will gamble, as past Governments have done, by putting money in. Governments are not there to take such risks with taxpayers' money. They are there to control the money carefully and to release it when necessary. That is not what we expected before, but we can expect it with the Chancellor's approach to this Budget.

It is also said that we need high-wage, high-productivity manufacturing industry. That is absolutely true, but during the past 10 years we have been moving from high-wage, low-productivity manufacturing industry. That is why we face so many problems and why many doubt whether we can reap the full benefit of any release of money into the economy. To do so will require further dramatic changes in the style and approach of industry. The trade union movement has a part to play in that change—a point that has already been made in today's debate. The Budget strategy will allow such a change to take place. Low wages will not bring about that change, but less restrictive controls upon industry will lead to industrial progress.

The abolition of the wages councils has been severely criticised. To abolish the wages councils without providing alternative protection for those who are protected by the wages councils would be wrong. Many of the industries in which they work are fragmented. Very little protection is provided, other than by means of the wages councils. The trade unions are unlikely to be able to provide protection. In certain instances it would be difficult for this group of people to join trade unions. Unless an alternative to the wages councils is provided, it would be wrong to abolish them. They ensure that modest levels of income are fixed. Without the protection provided by the wages councils, there will be further exploitation. There is a certain amount of exploitation now, but it is small. The abolition of the wages councils would provide an opportunity for further exploitation. Therefore, it would be a backward step to remove such protection.

I welcome the fact that the Budget demonstrates that we are beginning to gain control over borrowing. The Government have been criticised for not spending as much as they ought to spend. Their critics say that credit is a good thing and that businesses survive by credit. That is true, but all borrowing has to be contained within limits that can be measured. If one continues to borrow, there comes a time when it has to be paid back, which can be very difficult if one has borrowed too much. Many right hon. and hon. Members would gamble on a high risk strategy, with no guaranteed results. I believe that the Chancellor has followed a disciplined approach, in a difficult set of circumstances, which will provide this country with an opportunity to build a flexible strategy which will create jobs. I am far more optimistic about the results of this Budget than I would be about anything that has been advocated by the Opposition.

7.33 pm

Mr. A. E. P. Duffy (Sheffield, Attercliffe): The Chancellor's second Budget is a missed opportunity. It may have nudged anti-unemployment incentives in a more sensible direction, but politically it is a cautious Budget, and that is likely to prove its main mistake. Under the Prime Minister, Britain is going into a fifth successive year of growth with low inflation and has pulled up the European Community's league of economic performance, but this has been achieved on the back of unemployment which is far too high. This year, therefore, if only for electoral reasons and the Government's own timetable, a dramatic assault on unemployment is clearly called for.

The House will welcome the cut in national insurance contributions and the raising of the level at which people start to pay income tax. However, that is pretty small beer. Anybody coming off the dole to take a job for over £35·50 a week will still be paying 5 per cent. national insurance, not just on the pounds that he earns above £35·50 but on his whole meagre income. Worse, these changes will not reduce hard-core unemployment very much. Therefore, the jobs that the Chancellor will create will typically go

to school leavers and part-timers—no bad thing—but the growing problem of families with no breadwinner is scarcely touched by this Budget.

The well-off are the only significant beneficiaries. The Chancellor has left a man on the dole marginally worse off if he smokes and enjoys a pint. Whitbreads in my constituency, as well as my working men's clubs—one of them was fearing the bailiffs only today—will find unacceptable the raising of duty on beer by 7·5 per cent. compared with inflation of 5 per cent.

Although almost everyone in a job is better off than when the Conservatives took office in 1979, the gap between rich and poor has widened considerably. The council manual worker finds his spending power down by 1 per cent. and an unemployed man has to make do with 18 per cent. less than in 1979. The senior manager, on other hand, has 22 per cent. more to spend and the company director 35 per cent. These are examples of "typical" people included in the 1985 version of the annual Budget survey of household income conducted by the Institute for Fiscal Studies.

Moreover, the Budget give-away of £730 million contrasts rather sadly with the £2 billion predicted in the last Budget and with the £6 billion we might have hoped for after the revised forecasts for North sea oil revenue. The Chancellor would have had more room for tax cuts if the had tackled the tax privileges of the pension funds and mortgage holders. The proceeds could have been used to take more of the lower paid out of tax and national insurance claims altogether and to finance some worthwhile public investment. Instead, the Government were frightened off by the rumblings of their own Back Benches where the Conservative middle classes are too well represented, as we heard in the speech of the hon. Member for Croydon, South (Sir W. Clark).

As a result, the Chancellor has to confine himself to tinkering at the bottom end of the labour market. But Britain faces an unemployment crisis which requires more drastic measures, as the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) argued, if the country is not to be saddled with an army of the permanently unemployed. The emphasis instead has been almost wholly on the supply side, with the recipe of better training, greater labour mobility and providing opportunities for people to price themselves into work. But there is nothing in the Budget in the way of encouraging demand through public works programmes or public investment of any kind.

The problems to which the Chancellor should have addressed himself take two forms. One—already with us—is the socially divisive level of unemployment. The second is the threat to the living standards generally of both the employed and the unemployed. The latter, if not faced, will guarantee that the level of unemployment goes on growing even higher.

The present threat to living standards is obvious in the case of the unemployed, less so in the way that the rundown in the standards of the public sector affects everybody to some extent. Further investment in the public sector would protect standards of service in everything from health to education to sewerage.

The major defects of the Budget are, first, that it fails to make an impact on the 4 million or so without real jobs, and, secondly, that it fails to prevent a remorseless rise in future years while industry continues to shed labour as the effects of the microchip take over from recession. Meanwhile, Britain's infrastructure, already in a serious state of decline according to the National Economic Development Office, will be in an even worse state.

The problem will have to be tackled some time. It will not go away. Why not do so now while there is so much unemployment and when the cost to the state will be less? Reduced borrowing will not build roads and bridges; nor will it restore devastated industrial areas such as my own constituency in the east end of Sheffield or throughout the whole of south Yorkshire. We heard from the right hon. Member for Taunton (Sir E. du Cann) a catalogue of similar infrastructure needs in Taunton and Somerset. Let me offer to the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, just a few from south Yorkshire. The economy of that area has suffered as a result of the recent coal strike. Its spirit and people have suffered. That comes on top of a decline in the traditional industrial base of the area and a larger than the national average unemployment figure.

It is difficult to exaggerate the scale of industrial devastation in the lower Don valley. Special steels and heavy engineering dominated the east end of Sheffield for 100 years. The collapse of those sectors and the faltering attempts to rationalise for survival have been principally to blame for the state of the valley today. Of the 42,000 jobs, nearly 19,000 have been lost since 1977. Factory closures have left large tracts of vacant and despoiled land and millions of square feet of empty, often semi-derelict buildings. The immense economic problems so apparent in those 2,000 acres of industrial Sheffield have been caused nationally and internationally.

It is right that the people of that area should be able to ask for help in their predicament. Much of that predicament is not of their own making. It is right that they should look to the Government to come to their aid. What the area needs quickly is some major investment, some help with its immediate problems, and some aid to rebuild our once strong local communities. That could come with Government help.

The area was once a proud powerhouse of the nation's economy. It has made enormous efforts to cope with the problems of decline, market forces, world-wide recession and all the other problems affecting it. It deserves some help in its great struggle, whether it be cash for inner-city projects, for roads and for hospitals or a benevolent Government attitude to grants and benefits. It is within the power of the Government to help. Why will they not do so?

The Chancellor's PSBR of £7 billion is too little to provide for the restoration of these areas by about £3 billion. He could still permit a modest public works programme and, incidentally, underpin his supply-side approach. Instead, he has turned his back on public sector borrowing, even for eminently sensible infrastructure projects that would produce major gains in terms of economic and social welfare. He has abandoned old, honoured, now devastated industrial areas such as south Yorkshire.

7.41 pm

Mr. David Atkinson (Bournemouth, East): There was so much hysteria in advance of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor's Budget this year that when he stood up to make his statement last Tuesday I was reminded of the opening words of Rudyard Kipling's excellent poem "If". It is on my wall in my office in Norman Shaw north. It begins:

[Mr. David Atkinson]

"If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you . . .
You'll be a Man, my son!"

I congratulate my right hon. Friend on keeping his cool, as his predecessor always did, and introducing a sound, businesslike Budget that can only enhance our economic recovery. I am particularly pleased that he has not even partially attempted, in the words of my right hon. Friend the Member for Waveney (Mr. Prior), to weave and turn to satisfy those who have urged higher public expenditure and/or borrowing to creat jobs which would last only until the money ran out.

Nothing could be more damaging to our prospects. It would have shown that we had learnt nothing from the lessons not just of the past 20 years in Britain but of more recent experience across the Channel in Mitterrand's France. I realise, in saying that, that the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins) rightly anticipated that, as a loyal Back Bencher, I was playing the French card.

Instead, my right hon. Friend has chosen to take further measures to create a more favourable climate for enterprise to flourish. He has removed even more obstacles and disincentives to employment and we are promised a package of further measures to help small businesses and the self-employed. In all those respects, this is a Budget for jobs.

Small business men in my constituency have particularly welcomed the VAT relief on bad debts, the tax relief on clause 4 contributions by the self-employed, the two-year qualifying period for unfair dismissal, and the forthcoming consultation document on the future of wages councils. Those are all measures that small business men have been urging on me for years.

My right hon. Friend was right to say that wage councils have contributed to the present unemployment. I have in the past in the House referred to evidence which I have received from small businesses and traders in my constituency, particularly bakers, caterers and those in the entertainments industry, about the effect that over-inflated wages council awards have had on the numbers that they employ. Their business judgment will not allow them to pass on the extra costs in higher prices, so they have had no choice but to shed labour.

Like others in the debate, I am not calling for the outright abolition of wages councils. We should consider the alternatives outlined in the Green Paper. We should also take into account the recommendation of the Auld report on late night and Sunday trading that if all legal restrictions on opening hours were abolished, as the report recommends, the existing wages councils machinery could be extended to ensure satisfactory conditions of employment.

I welcome the additional £43 million over the next three years for the provision of engineering and technology places in higher education to meet the anticipated shortfall of graduates, as foreseen by the Alvey directorate. Has similar consideration been given to the education and training of those preparing to enter the British tourist industry?

During the debate on Wednesday, my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) reminded the House that the tourist industry is not just the largest employer in the country but one that creates jobs in other industries. It also offers one of the greatest potentials for expansion, because Britain is one of the world's most attractive holiday islands. We are still not offering the kind of service and value for money in our tourist industry which satisfies foreign visitors and which will keep more British people from going abroad. It is not just the British climate and it is not VAT, as many in the industry suggest, which encourage people to go abroad. We are still short of professionalism and service in our tourist industry. I want to see more resources going towards training and education in our tourist industry, as well as increased funds for section 4 grant aid.

I welcome the raising of income tax thresholds by 5 per cent. more than inflation so that many more people will no longer pay tax at all, but I regret that my right hon. Friend did not have enough scope to reduce the basic rate of income tax this year. He would have had more scope if he had broadened the base of VAT. I shall be honest enough to say that, if he had done that, he would have had my support.

There is speculation that my right hon. Friend may have more to play around with next year. If so, I hope that he will adopt the same strategy that he adopted last year with the phased reduction of corporation tax, and introduce a phased reduction in the basic rate of income tax from the present 30 per cent. over a stated period to a basic rate of 25 per cent. That will enable working people to benefit in a perceived and measured way in our growing prosperity.

Perhaps such an option could figure in the forthcoming Green Paper on the opportunities for reform of personal income tax arising out of computerisation. I hope that that Green Paper will also refer to two opportunities which computerisation will make possible—the introduction of a tax credits scheme, which it will be recalled was the subject of a Green Paper as long ago as 1972, subsequently endorsed by a Select Committee the following year; and the introduction of local income tax as a replacement for domestic rates, for which so many of my hon. Friends have been calling and which, certainly until recently, was the official policy of the Labour party.

It will be recalled that the 1982 Green Paper on alternatives to rates pointed out that a local income tax could be introduced only following computerisation of the income tax system. Local income tax offers by far the fairest and most efficient alternative to rates.

I end on a whinge which I have repeated in all previous Budget debates. Instead of raising the VAT threshold by £750 as a mere adjustment for inflation, as my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has done, he should have displayed his characteristic boldness by raising it to a far more realistic £50,000 or even £100,000. In so doing, he would have relieved about half of the businesses currently registered for VAT, as well as all those new businesses to come, from the hours that have to be spent filling in forms for the VAT man when those business men should be working to start or expand their businesses.

Such a measure, along with the higher thresholds announced last Tuesday in income tax and the lower national insurance contributions, would go a long way towards reducing the black economy. In so doing, it would reduce the need to employ quite so many VAT inspectors to investigate evasion and abuse and would reduce the amount of time taken up by courts in dealing with offenders. It would not result in any significant reduction in revenue, since the administration cost of collecting

VAT on those businesses is more than 80 per cent. of the yield. Any revenue lost would be more than made up for in extra income and corporation taxes on increased profits and by the fact that people would come out of the black economy.

I shall be reminded, as I always am, that we have to obey article 24.2(c) of the EEC sixth directive. But what have my right hon. Friend the Chancellor and his team done to try to change that directive on behalf of all the small businesses in the Community? I am talking about one measure that he could introduce next year, which would cost him virtually nothing, but which would, at a stroke, free thousands of small businesses from the requirement of having to satisfy bureaucratic red tape in order to get on with making a success and a profit from which more jobs can flow. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor will bear that point in mind when considering what can be done in next year's Budget.

7.51 pm

Mr. Bruce Millan (Glasgow, Govan): The hon. Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson) is the only Member to have shown any enthusiasm today for the Budget. There is little enthusiasm for the Budget outside, and there is an overwhelming feeling in the country that the first priority of any Government must be to tackle the appalling and increasing level of unemployment.

The Budget, which is ironically described as a Budget for jobs, will do nothing to reduce the level of unemployment. The Chancellor of the Exchequer made some play of the increases in personal allowances being above the rate of inflation, but from the individual taxpayer's point of view, those increases are trivial. We are talking about literally pence per week. Given the increase in mortgage interest rates, the increases in rates, particularly in Scotland where there will be an increase of more than 20 per cent. this year for domestic ratepayers, and the increases in charges for the NHS, electricity, gas and so on, even if someone is lucky enough to be in work, he will be a net loser as a result of the Government's actions in the Budget and in other announcements.

The Government say that they have not got a pay policy, but they should tell that to the teachers in England, Wales and Scotland who are on strike precisely because the Government have a pay policy that is applied extremely stringently and unfairly in the public sector. But as I have said, for the individual taxpayer, the increases in the tax allowances are trivial.

However, our major complaint is that the Chancellor's terms of reference were completely wrong. In particular, he allowed himself to be constrained, or boxed in, by attempting to reduce the PSBR in 1985-86. Given the general needs of the economy, what he is doing is not only economically but morally wrong, and quite shameful. The sooner we get away from the Government's absurd preoccupation with the PSBR — which is now found practically nowhere else — the better. One of its absurdities is that it is in any case only a balancing operation for the vast amounts of expenditure and receipts that total about £150 billion per year.

In 1984-85, the PSBR stood at £10·5 billion. We were told that that was not intended by the Government, and that it was the result of the miners' strike. Yet the Government boast at the same time that that strike was a worthwhile investment. In any event, the increase in the PSBR has had no significant effect in terms of inflation or of affecting confidence in the money markets, and so on. The Chancellor argues that it is perfectly possible to run a PSBR of £10·5 billion by default in 1984-85 without any real damage being done to the economy, while at the same time saying that he must reduce it to £7 billion in 1985-86. As a result, he is unable to make available the public expenditure that is desperately needed if we are to get the economy moving in a way that holds out any prospect of reducing the appalling level of unemployment.

If we can spend £2·5 billion to £3 billion on combating the miners, we can spend more than that on putting productive resources back into the economy. That is what the Budget should have done. However, the Chancellor was unwilling to do that, so the Budget, far from reducing unemployment, will considerably increase it in the next year or so.

There is no lack of ideas even on the part of Conservative Members. Hon. Members have put forward their ideas for spending money on essential public facilities such as housing, roads, hospitals and so on. In addition, we could get the Government off the backs of local authorities. We also need to spend more on industrial development. Yet in 1985-86 there are to be cuts in regional aid. As a result, about £450 million will be saved. All that money will come from areas with high unemployment, where additional rather than reduced expenditure is vital if we are to get people back to work.

The manufacturing sector of the economy shows the extent of the decline in the past five years. We need additional expenditure and additional schemes for that sector of the economy. The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry announced several items today, but when he was challenged about the announcements on, for example, industrial innovation he had to admit that in 1985-86 Government expenditure would be lower rather than higher on such innovation. It is positively offensive that a Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, who is supposed to be responsible for industry in this country, should be so complacent about the decline that has taken place in the past few years in our manufacturing sector.

The Chancellor has boasted about investment being at record levels in 1984-85. But investment in manufacturing industry is still considerably below the 1979 level, despite the fact that particular incentives were written into the 1984 Budget. They should have meant a considerable increase in investment in 1984-85 at the manufacturing end of our economy. That increased investment has not happened, despite the taxation changes in the 1984 Budget. When the changes work their way through, they will damage, rather than improve manufacturing investment in 1985-86 and in subsequent years. According to the Red Book, investment is estimated to increase less in 1985-86 than in 1984-85.

I am using the Red Book and not selecting extracts from Government statistics as the Secretary of State did earlier. It is estimated that the deficit in 1985 in manufacturing on the balance of payments will be £4·5 billion. That is after the miners' strike has ended. In 1984, the figure was £4 billion and in 1983 it was £2·5 billion. If it were not for the oil contribution to the balance of payments — estimated at £10 billion in 1985—we should be running a deficit of about £7 billion.

The Secretary of State talked about the increase in exports in 1984. He did not say that that was the same as the increase in the level of world trade in 1984. All we did,

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despite devaluation, was to keep pace with world trade. In spite of the mere 5 per cent. increase in domestic demand, there was a 10·5 per cent. increase in imports in 1984.

The picture for manufacturing is gloomy, basically because much of our industry has been destroyed. Even when an upturn in the world economy arrives — the sooner the better—much of our industry will no longer be there to benefit.

All this has happened despite the advantages of North sea oil. Ministers in particular tend to devalue the contribution made by North sea oil but, as the Red Book demonstrates, North sea oil accounts for about 6 per cent. of GNP. That is not a trivial contribution. Despite all the advantages of North sea oil, manufacturing is declining. The economy as a whole is declining, and the Budget holds out no hope for the unemployed.

8.2 pm

Mr. Ralph Howell (Norfolk, North): I have looked forward to a truly radical reforming Budget for nearly 15 years and I do not pretend that I am very enthusiastic about this Budget. However, I am grateful to the Chancellor for certain aspects. I am grateful to him for standing his ground, for maintaining his firm policy and for ignoring the false advice from Opposition Members and from some of my misguided right hon. and hon. Friends.

This has not been an easy year. Not only have we had to bear the cost of the miners' strike, but also the distraction caused by it. The Chancellor has tried to give as much help as possible, within the money available, to provide tax relief and to change the national insurance system.

The big problem is that we have not got on top of public expenditure. During the censure debate in January, the Prime Minister said that the United States devoted 10 per cent. less than we did to public expenditure as a proportion of GDP. In the Macmillan era, when we knew that we had never had it so good, we were spending 10 per cent. less. The Prime Minister reminded us that the last Labour Government, when they were being manipulated and ruled by the IMF, made a cut of £10 billion in today's terms in public spending. Until we can think in such terms we shall be over-taxed and, because of the sheer weight of government, less competitive.

I shall explain what the Chancellor should have done despite the problems confronting him. He is not as hedged in as he thinks. The problem is that he feels he is hedged in by a number of sacred cows. One of these is child benefit. Why on earth do we tax people so heavily and give child benefit across the board? If we gave child benefit only to those who need it—those who earn only two thirds of the national average wage—another £3 million could be found for tax cuts. That would hurt no one. We take £25 a week in tax and national insurance from a family with an income of £110 a week and give £25 back in child benefit, housing benefit, and so on. There can be no sense in that.

If we means-tested child benefit so that those who earn more than two thirds of the national average wage did not receive it, and made corresponding tax cuts, everyone would be better off and bureaucracy could be reduced.

The same applies to housing benefit. Why do we give housing benefit to people who earn £10,000 or £12,000, and even as much as £17,000 a year? Why do we over-index benefits? We over-index special security benefits, for instance. That means that a person dependent on social security receives a 4·7 or 5 per cent. tax-free increase. To keep up, the low-paid must receive an increase in pay of at least 7·5 per cent. It should be no surprise to the Government that wages are going up by 7·5 per cent. That is what is necessary, taking taxation into acount, to keep up with the basic income fixed by index-linked supplementary benefit.

Another sacred cow is local government. I do not know how my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) has the nerve to criticise the Government when he did so much to cause today's problems by his reform of local government.

Today, 1 million more people are employed in local government than in 1960. That costs at least £12·5 billion a year. The Government are responsible for all expenditure, including that on local government. Some of the nonsense talked about the autonomy of local government does not bear examination.

A moratorium should be imposed upon local government recruitment until local government employment comes more into line with employment in the rest of the community where labour has to be shed to make undertakings more efficient and viable. Why should local government have to shed only 4 per cent. when the Civil Service has managed to shed 14 per cent. of its labour force?

I welcome the reform which is to come in a Green Paper on taxation. I also look forward to the promised reforms in welfare benefit reviews. I urge the Government not to do anything in isolation. All these matters should be brought together. We should have one reform; we should have one taxation benefit system; we should change the position at the earliest possible moment — there is no need to wait for a computer or for two or three years— and preferably in the next Budget, in which no one pays tax and receives benefit. It is an absurd and bureaucratic waste. The only people who gain from the present system are the bureaucrats.

Although we claim that we have tried to do something to help unemployment, unless we take a radical stance we shall not succeed. The expenditure on the youth training scheme, job creation and so on has risen from £180 million in 1974 to more than £2,000 million today. That is achieving nothing very much, but is adding to the burden of taxation. The time has come for a radical reform of our unemployment system. If we had put the Beveridge report into operation, the unemployment problem would never have confronted us.

The Government must be more firm with young people. Why do we insist on giving them the choice of either receiving benefit and doing nothing or accepting training? They must accept training. Beveridge said that no young person should leave school and immediately join the dole queue. He said that they should have training and acquire a skill. I urge the Government to be more bold in that area.

Sooner or later we will have to put a stop to this something-for-nothing society. Why cannot we turn the jobcentres into work centres? Why cannot we offer £1·75 or £2 an hour to all those out of work to do some environmental work? If people do not want to work, that is up to them. We could give all who want to work a job for less than £12 billion per year, while we are currently

spending in excess of £15 billion in supporting unemployment, in regional aid and in the other measures to alleviate unemployment.

8.13 pm

Mr. Stan Thorne (Preston): I assure the hon. Member for Norfolk, North (Mr. Howell) that I have never met anyone who expects something for nothing from this Government. On the contrary, they have ceased to expect anything.

Conservative Members have shown mixed interpretations of the Budget. It was supposed to have been about the creation of jobs, but it is obvious that Conservative Members are highly sceptical whether it will achieve that aim. It could be argued that those on the Treasury Bench have said on previous occasions that they could do nothing about unemployment and that they cannot create competitiveness in industry. Yet earlier this afternoon the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry catalogued a whole series of measures that he claimed would improve the competition in the market place by investment in small businesses and so on. The notion that the Government cannot do anything about unemployment while at the same time trying to persuade people that they are doing something only creates absolute confusion about the Government's policies. The Government certainly do not provide a service to the people. They do not meet people's needs—they have made it clear that that is not the job of Government.

The hon. Member for Norfolk, North said that he was opposed to child benefit for certain sections of the community. I believe that child benefit is wholly inadequate for the millions of people who are in desperate circumstances because of the lack of employment. Indeed, it is in the meeting of people's needs that jobs can be created. Conservative Members talk about growing prosperity, but it is apparent that they are talking about the manufacture of consumer goods and selling more of them. They do not see the meeting of people's needs in terms of prosperity. Planning our resources to meet the needs of people will, to a large extent, solve the problem of unemployment while filling those tremendous gaps throughout the country, especially in the urban areas.

How do we plan our capital, our land, our equipment, our factories? Do we plan them on the basis that they will produce for use or produce for profit? It is clear that in our society we plan them somewhat inefficiently on the basis of profit. The one resource that we waste, and have done for many years, is the human resource. They are wasted because we are unable to grasp the need to produce for use. We could have a shorter working week of, say, three or four days. There is little prospect of that now, but it must come at some time if we are to avoid having 5 million or 6 million unemployed in the early 1990s.

I, like other hon. Members, am concerned about my area. In the Preston travel-to-work area, 19,000 people are unemployed—12·4 per cent. of the potential working population. The position in Lancashire as a whole is deteriorating and there is an inflow of population to the new town. The current unemployment figure is 21,467 for those out of work for more than six months; for more than 12 months it is 40,280 and for more than two years it is a miserable 7,534. That is an area where industrial growth is a real prospect. Lancashire Enterprise Ltd. is attempting to create jobs by attracting enterprises to Lancashire. It is not aided by the Government's economic policies or their attitude to local authority spending.

Local authorities are starved of the funds that they need to undertake the investment that we need. In Preston and other parts of Lancashire we have an appalling housing situation. We still have young families living in multi-storey blocks of flats. There is an enormous backlog of repairs to council property. We need to spend several million pounds over four or five years to overcome that problem and to deal with the housing shortage. Undertaking that work would have an enormous impact on jobs, and there would be a multiplier effect in terms of companies in other than building which produce for the construction industry.

The North-West regional health authority has announced that it is running down hospital places for people with mental handicaps. It hopes to send those people out into the community. I hope that the authority is making it clear to the Government that people who go into the community from that type of care need to be catered for. Accordingly, more jobs and services must be provided to meet that need.

We still hear too many reports of people waiting three or four years to undergo minor operations, yet doctors are waiting for hospital positions. There are shortages of kidney machines and other types of equipment. Meeting those needs would help to reduce the numbers of those unemployed. Reductions are being made, we are told, in the overall cost of the drugs bill. Recently on television there was a programme about tranquillisers. One that concerns me is Ativan, because it meets an initial need but then becomes addictive.

What has happened to the Trethowan report? That has not been discussed in the House, although it dealt, among to other things, with the employment of clinical psychologists and the number of psychologists needed in the Health Service.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman *rose*——

Mr. Thorne: I shall not give way to the hon. Lady because my time is up and I am anxious to enable other hon. Members to take part in the debate.

8.22 pm

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): It is a tragedy that the Chancellor's freedom of action was drastically curtailed by the wasteful and unnecessary political strike in the mining industry, but the cost to the country of not standing firm would have been very great. In those circumstances, and given that constraint, the Chancellor has put forward a package of measures that is well designed in the long term to encourage enterprise and jobs.

I welcome the encouragement that the Chancellor has given to research and development, to the reform and integration of the income tax and benefits system and to the community programme. As time is short, however, I shall concentrate on the measures that have been designed to remove obstacles to jobs in the small business sector because in my view most new jobs will come from that sector.

When one talks to small business men of their problems, the subject that always comes first and foremost is VAT. Many people in the shoe and clothing trades, in newspapers, in the retailing of books and those who

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manage pension funds will be wondering whether the large sums of money that they spent on parliamentary consultants, lobbyists and postage were justified. For them, if not for the professional lobbyists, the assurances of the Chancellor will be a welcome respite. I hope, however, that the assurances he has given not to extend the VAT base do not mean that he is no longer thinking about further reform of the VAT system.

My right hon. Friend announced in the Budget useful and welcome changes in VAT procedures on temporary imports and on bad debts, and those will be helpful to small businesses. However, the one action that he could take which would help them most of all, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson) pointed out, would be to increase massively the threshold for VAT.

The Chancellor said that he was fighting his corner vigorously in the EEC on zero rating. I hope that he is fighting vigorously also for a £50,000 threshold. It would not be an expensive operation to change the system. But should he need extra revenue, it could come from the introduction of a new luxury rate of VAT. Indeed, if we are to continue to switch from direct to indirect taxation, the VAT system must be more flexible and we must look again at the number of rates that exist.

Another major inhibition on employment in small businesses is the employment protection legislation. For many people it means the difference between having a job which is not quite so secure and having no job at all. In this important area, the judgments that were made at the time of the 1971 Act were sound. Therefore I support the reintroduction of the two-year qualification period which now brings the unfair dismissal and redundancy qualifications into line with each other. They should never have parted company.

One action of even more significance in this connection must be the removal of small businesses from the employment protection net. It was the original judgment of the 1971 Act that companies employing fewer than four people should not be subject to the employment protection legislation.

That follows naturally, because these are companies in which personal relationships between the few people who work in them are especially important. In those companies there is often limited management expertise or experience. A large award of damages to someone who has been unfairly dismissed can result in the redundancy of his colleagues and the complete collapse of the business.

Another area which affects small businesses is that of wages councils. I have long advocated the deratification of the ILO convention. We should consider this whole subject in the context of our national needs. I was delighted, therefore, with the announcement of the Secretary of State for Employment last Thursday.

Circumstances have changed substantially since wages councils were introduced at the beginning of the century. In future, wages councils and their continuation must be judged on the effectiveness with which they perform their functions and whether they operate beneficially for the industries which they serve. Their history for the best part of the century has, at best, been chequered. Wages councils have undoubtedly contributed to pricing young people out of work by eroding differentials and denying training to them.

Wages councils have undoubtedly inhibited recruitment by small businesses as a result of their complexity and rigidity. There is a widespread feeling that wages councils and those who serve on them are too academic and out of touch with the realities of industrial life.

It is clear that the status quo is unacceptable. There are a number of alternatives for reform—not just abolition—and there is no need for a uniform response to each industry. Our response can and should be different to meet the particular needs of individual industries.

For example, I am anxious that Sunday trading should be introduced, and I am mindful of the comments of the Auld committee that looked into the matter. We must look at each industry in the context of its own circumstances. Above all, however, it must be appreciated that the status quo is unacceptable. If we are to continue with wages councils, they must address the problems that I have described.

The intention substantially to extend the youth training scheme was one of the most welcome announcements in the Budget. It is impressive to note the way in which the scheme can pick up people who have been drop-outs at school, who have been demotivated by the education system, but who can be remotivated and given fresh interest by worthwhile and relevant training. The new scheme will require a great deal of increased employer participation financially and in extending the number of places that are available. In considering the future of the scheme, most employers will be looking for enthusiasm rather than compulsion in those whom they recruit. I probably reflect the views of many hon. Members on both sides of the House when I say that the scheme must succeed.

But there is one concern. We have compulsory education up to the age of 16 years. Why should it be wrong, if we have compulsory education up to that age, to extend the system for the next two years? If a person has the option at the ages of 16 and 17 to go into employment, further education or youth training, is it right, sensible, or even moral, that we should present him with the fourth option of unemployment? This is a serious matter which we shall have to address when the new scheme is in place. The new scheme, as extended, must be one that enjoys the widest possible support in the House and the country. That is an essential ingredient for its success.

I support the Budget because the measures that it proposes are necessary steps in the way forward. They will take us in the right direction in creating an enterprise culture. It is only within such a culture that the additional jobs that we need will be created. By the time that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer comes to make his decisions next year, I hope that he will have much more room for manoeuvre. I have tried to signpost the directions that I hope he will be taking, especially for small businesses. It is clear that there are too many avoidable obstacles to employment and enterprise, and they must be removed.

8.32 pm

Mr. Gordon Brown (Dunfermline, East): The hon. Member for Elmet (Mr. Batiste), in speaking in support of the Budget, forgot—this is something that Ministers have been careful to omit from their remarks—to say

that no previous Chancellor of the Exchequer in contemplating a Budget this century has had the financial advantages that are available to the present incumbent.

Oil revenues amounted to £12 billion last year and there will be £13·5 billion in the year to come. There was a windfall bonus of £2 billion last year merely because of the decline in value of the pound and there will be a windfall bonus of £3·5 billion in the year to come. However, in a Budget that the Chancellor describes as a budget for jobs, a Budget that he says will deal with the scourge and evil of unemployment, the best that he can contribute directly in this year to his declared priority, the creation of jobs, from the windfall of North sea oil revenues of £4 billion is £0·075 billion. That is 2p for every pound of the windfall from revenues that he has received.

There will be nothing extra this year for the youth training scheme. There will be nothing extra to improve our infrastructure. Only £75 million is to be spent on the community programme and only half of that sum is to be spent by Christmas of this year. There is £75 million for the right hon. Gentleman's priority, the unemployed, but there is more than £200 million for the handful of hard-pressed millionaires, who are to be relieved of the burden of capital gains tax and capital transfer tax. There will be £50 million for the land speculators, who are to be relieved of the burden of development land tax.

There is £75 million for the right hon. Gentleman's priority, the unemployed, but the lion's share of his £800 million in tax concessions will be for those rich enough not even to worry about work. The £75 million is not even new money. It is merely a restoration of a cut in the budget of the Department of Employment of £70 million, which was imposed in the autumn statement last November. That is the measure of the Government's concern for the unemployed.

Officially, there are 1·3 million who have not worked for a year or more but the real figure, by any objective standard, is nearly 2 million. Even the CBI argues that thousands could be returned to work by spending £1 billion on an infrastructure programme. The National Economic Development Council asserts that, without such measures, and even more extensive ones, there can be no solid improvement in unemployment for the rest of the decade.

Against this background, the best that the Chancellor can do for his priority, the unemployed, this year is to provide the cheapest possible places on the community programme for 100,000—not by the summer of this year but by the summer of next year. These will be temporary placements, at a cost of only £63 a week. This means that 90 per cent. of the unemployed will be left with absolutely nothing. Yet this is the Budget for jobs. At its best, it will create in my constituency, and in the constituencies of every Member of this place, only 150 new community jobs by the summer of 1986.

The Chancellor referred in his Budget statement to the tragedy of youth unemployment. Only one in three of this summer's school leavers will find work and there will be fewer jobs and fewer college places for young people in 1988 than there are now. The Chancellor is offering nothing extra to the youth training scheme this year. The recurring element in the tragedy of youth unemployment is the feebleness of the Chancellor's attempts to do anything to relieve it.

Last year, the right hon. Gentleman set aside £1 billion for a one-year youth training scheme. He tells us now that the £1 billion will have to suffice for a two-year training scheme that is to be provided on the cheap. The real proposal, which has been carefully omitted in the Budget —the Chancellor is ashamed to tell us what he already knows—is to take away benefit from young people. It is not proposed to give them jobs.

I expect the Chancellor to answer this accusation directly. The Chancellor and his ministerial colleagues have decided — the decision was reaffirmed by the Cabinet committee only last Wednesday — that the Department of Health and Social Security should abandon all financial responsibility for 16 and 17-year-olds, no matter what their circumstances are.

The Conservative party makes a fetish of individual liberties but is prepared to debar teenagers by law from the right even to claim benefit. The established responsibilities to 16 and 17-year-olds are about to be abolished by means of the social security reviews, with incalculable consequences for nearly 200,000 families, who will lose £17 a week. A new and chilling wind of poverty will sweep through thousands of families which are already poor. The measure is defended by the Government as part of their strategy to create prosperity.

What is the Chancellor's long-term solution to the problem of unemployment? His first measure to create jobs — this was mentioned by the hon. Member for Elmet—was to make it easier for employers to destroy them by the amendment of the unfair dismissal provisions, even after a private report commissioned by the Department of Employment stated that not one job would be created as a result of the proposed change.

How does the Chancellor propose to create the real jobs that he talks about? How will he reverse the cuts which have left British industrial investment £3 billion less than it was three years ago? We do not match the spending of our competitors on research and development, which has fallen over the past six years. We do not improve our infrastructure or re-equip industry. We do not take the extraordinary measures that are needed to deal with the extraordinary problem of a manufactured trade deficit which is projected at £4·5 billion in the year to come. We do not stimulate investment in information technology, which is in deficit by £2 billion officially, or in electronics which has a £3 billion deficit. It is projected that that deficit will be £8 billion by 1993.

We do not even invest in the petrochemical industry, which was the subject of a recent Neddy report. That report shows that we, alone of all oil producers, have lost capacity in the petrochemical industry in recent years. We do not modernise our adult training. Half as many British workers have recognised qualifications as their counterparts in America, Germany and Japan.

Having denied ourselves, on the narrowest of ideological grounds, all positive, rational and empirically validated measures to improve the economy, the Chancellor now seeks to diminish unemployment by increasing poverty, whether one is in work or out of it. The right hon. Gentleman's solution to unemployment is quite simply poverty. If he has his way and the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has his, they will abandon any protection for the low paid by destroying the wages councils. They were created in 1909 as a result of public agitation. They were born of moral indignation at poverty.

We are to have nine weeks' consultation to destroy a 76-year-old system. That is nine weeks' consultation on the basis of a White Paper that is silent about the immorality and indignity of low pay. It is nine weeks'

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consultation to remove a law that was the handiwork of Sir Winston Churchill, who recognised that poverty was not simply degrading but inefficient, who told the House that low pay was a national evil leading to progressive industrial degeneration, and who understood that, when the state intervened to create a national minimum wage, it was not violating the rights of employers but was righting the wrongs inflicted against employees.

Now that the spirit of Sir Winston Churchill joins the clerics and the teachers and the other trade unionists as part of the enemy within, now that his views are the unacceptable face of modern Conservatism, we are up against not the one nation Toryism, represented in an elequent way in this debate, nor even the Toryism of the aristocracy or the grouse moors—the old Tories at least had the excuse that, for them, Toryism was a sort of hereditary disease — but the new Tory party which dogmatically worships free enterprise, whether it is enterprise or not, and which would rather that people starved, shivered and froze in the pursuit of free market forces than that they were assisted by state intervention.

Is it not the case that all the evidence available to us during the past six years, when the incidence of low pay and poverty have grown, is that no amount of unemployment, low pay or poverty pay will create the economic recovery about which the Chancellor talks? This is the Chancellor who set out not to create thousands of jobs but to save his own, whose Budget leaves not only a divided nation but a divided party and who says that he cannot afford the poor and the unemployed. The truth is that the nation cannot afford the price that it has paid for this Chancellor.

8.41 pm

Mr. Tim Eggar (Enfield, North): Sometimes last Tuesday one could almost feel the frustration of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor coming through his excellent presentation of the Budget as he tried to steer the course between reassuring the financial markets and adjusting to political pressures. Within those two constraints, my right hon. Friend was just as imaginative this year as last year.

Were those constraints self-imposed? On the revenue side, they were not in any sense self-imposed. I am sure that my right hon. Friend, when he set out at the beginning of the year thinking about what he would do in his Budget, did not want to exclude the options for the extension of VAT or to be prevented by political pressures from tackling pensions. If we are honest, we would say that political pressures from Conservative Members acted as a constraint on the revenue side. I regret the fact that during this Parliament we shall not take any further steps towards fiscal neutrality, but I recognise reality.

Was the constraint of the PSBR self-imposed? Every year since 1980 I have argued that the Chancellor could have lived with a higher PSBR than he accepted. This year was different. The markets were extremely nervous. If we had gone for a higher PSBR and there was some relaxation on the expenditure side, there would have been an over-reaction. We might have found ourselves in a greater exchange crisis, with interest rates rising sharply. A higher PSBR than that chosen by the Chancellor was never a serious option. It is not fair to say that the constraints under which my right hon. Friend was operating were self-imposed.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor rightly stressed the importance of supply side measures. I hope that the new measures that he has announced will be added to during the coming weeks. For instance, the abolition of development land tax was welcome. It should produce more land for housing and industrial development, especially in the cities and suburbs. If we really want to tackle labour mobility, we should encourage the private rented sector and scrap rent controls for future tenancies. If we really want to free land, we should give the private sector the right to go to public sector entities, which own the land that the private sector wants to buy, and serve notices on them to put that land up for public auction, because there is still too much public sector hoarding of land.

I have serious reservations about one supply side measure mentioned by my right hon. Friend. He called for the abolition of wages councils. That was radical stuff. During his speech, I reflected on the fact that that move contrasted sharply with his cautious attitude to tax reforms that affect the more articulate. I accept that wages councils probably adversely affect young people's employment and that they may be unnecessary in certain industries and intervene too much across the board of conditions of employment. That adds up to a case for radical reform of the wages councils, and not for their outright abolition. There is still a role for the Government in protecting the vulnerable in society.

The Budget not only sets an economic framework for next year but will have a dramatic influence on the political climate between now and the next general election. The options are closely circumscribed by the figures in the Red Book. On the revenue side, we have all noted how the fiscal adjustment, or room for tax cuts, disappeared this year. I am not too optimistic that the £6·5 billion that is left to the Chancellor over the next two financial years will not disappear as well. It would be dangerous politically for us if we held out much hope of tax cuts during the remainder of the Parliament.

The outlook on the expenditure side is not much more encouraging. Last year's expenditure round was especially fierce and the political fallout was not helpful to the Government. Next year's round will not be much easier. The £2 billion addition to the contingency reserve is a recognition of how difficult the round will be and of the fact that the political support for further public expenditure restraint is slowly ebbing away.

The Chief Secretary will be fortunate if he can protect the fiscal adjustment from departmental raids. It needs to be protected not only because it would be nice to have the option of reducing taxes but because we shall want to introduce other measures for employment creation and shall need the room created by the fiscal adjustment.

The message is clear: radical reforming instincts for this Government can be allowed their play only when they cost little money and command general support. That is true in two respects—denationalisation and supply side employment measures.

What does that mean for economic management during the next couple of years? We should aspire to nothing more dramatic than careful, prudent and well-managed stewardship of our finances. Our preoccupation should be the provision of a stable economic environment, with the aim of doing everything we can at the margin to assist with employment.

The Chancellor and his team are now cast as pragmatic managers, not as radical innovators. That is not necessarily a criticism of them, nor should they be ashamed of that role. After all, pragmatism is a major strand of the Conservative tradition. The Chancellor may find this an unexciting prospect, but to offer the electorate stability, low inflation, consistent economic growth and measures aimed at increasing employment is not a bad record. It is not a bad manifesto. It is one that I, for one, would willingly settle for.

8.50 pm

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): I sat through the Budget presentation by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and at no time did I witness any sincerity that it was a Budget to create jobs and reduce unemployment. Furthermore, listening to some of the speeches by Conservative Members, I still feel that we are witnessing a charade of an oath to reduce unemployment, and provide jobs and job opportunities. Indeed, tonight we have heard Conservative Members say that the Budget does not reflect any enthusiasm to create jobs and reduce unemployment. That feeling is prevalent throughout the country.

This afternoon we heard the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry present his case as to why the Government should pursue their strategy in this Budget to reduce unemployment. The right hon. Gentleman referred to the recovery of the economy. I invite him and any other Minister to come to Yorkshire and the north of England and explain where the recovery is taking place. In that area unemployment is rising and there is a decline in job opportunities. No recovery is imminent. The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) said that more energy should be put into helping the regions and that there should be more regional grants to help industry in the areas of high unemployment. The Chancellor should consider the loss of jobs in the areas where there has been a rundown of the textile, engineering and foundry industries. Such industries in Yorkshire, as well as throughout the north of England, have collapsed.

Reference has been made more than once in the debate to the miners' strike and to the fact that it had an effect on the Budget and the wherewithal to provide more resources. I remind the Chancellor and other Ministers that the Government had been prepared to take the miners on. When they took them on they did not realise that it would be so long and hard a battle. The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry referred to winning the battle. The Government may have won this first stage, but the argument is not over. There is still the question of what will happen to the communities after pit closures. In my constituency, where several pits have been closed and unemployment has increased, what are the Government doing about it? There must be some recognition of the fact that further hardship and greater problems will be caused when the mining communities are left without additional employment when colleries close.

The Secretary of State also said that people must accept that there is a recovery. He is a political ostrich. He has his head buried in the political sand if he thinks that there is a recovery of the nature that he outlined. We need regional aid. The Chancellor must give regional aid to areas where there has been a rundown of industry, especially in the north of England.

There must be capital spending on infrastructure if we are to prepare for further industrial development. I know from my experience in local government that, when industrialists were contemplating a development, they were concerned about road communications. If the Government do not develop and maintain roads, industry will not develop. Industrialists are also concerned about street lighting when they contemplate development.

There is also public transport. The Government are abolishing it in many areas. If we do not get assistance from the Government in maintaining and developing public transport, there will be a further reduction in industrial development. The same applies to sewerage and sewage treatment. We need that capital expenditure if there are to be real development and job opportunities in the regions.

There is also housing. Industrialists in many areas ask, "Can you provide houses for employees?" The Government are not allowing local authorities the capital to develop housing in the regions. I appeal to the Chancellor to take that matter on board, because it is important to the north of England and particularly to Yorkshire.

Hon. Members have referred to the revenues and windfalls to which the Chancellor and the Government have had access in the form of North sea oil revenues. Those revenues should be spent on developing job opportunities, not on maintaining rising unemployment. We have been advised that employment will deteriorate, not improve, over the next 12 months. We have heard that serenade for the past six years.

Rising interest rates are creating problems for industry and for people with mortgages. The tax concessions that the Chancellor outlined in his Budget statement were swept away within 24 hours by the announcement by building societies that interest rates were to increase. Extra taxes on water, gas and electricity are being levied, so there is no concession in the Budget to anyone, whether employed or unemployed, unless they are in the very high income bracket.

The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry mentioned wage claims. The extra taxes that I have outlined will help increase wages beyond the norm that the Government are setting, because trade unions will demand larger increases. We have heard much about the extra support for small industries. I do not know where Conservative Members find that support, as I see none in my constituency. Small industries there are at a loss to understand what the Government are doing to help them, although many promises have been made.

We have also heard about assistance to charities in the form of equipment and services. Charities want some help when they are assisting people on low incomes, and the Chancellor should consider the VAT that is charged on their collections. I hope that they will be assisted.

9 pm

Mr. Terry Davis (Birmingham, Hodge Hill): During this debate, we have heard several powerful speeches from a succession of right hon. and hon. Members who have called for a change in the Government's policy. It could have been said that it was predictable that my right hon. Friends the Members for Lewisham, Deptford (Mr. Silkin), for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) and for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) and my other hon. Friends would call for a change in the Government's policy, but we had a similar call from the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins). Perhaps even more

[Mr. Terry Davis]

impressive was the fact that we heard strong calls for changes in policy from right hon. Members on Conservative Benches. The right hon. Members for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), for Waveney (Mr. Prior) and for Taunton (Sir E. du Cann) were critical of both the Budget and the Government's economic strategy.

As the right hon. Member for Hillhead said, there was a great deal of common ground among them. However, I must tell him that his call for united action in opposition to the Government's policy—a sort of new popular front —would be better received by the Labour party if it came from a different quarter. In particular, it would have been better received if it had not come from someone who was personally responsible for much of the disunity in opposition to the Conservative Government at the last general election and therefore directly responsible for the overwhelming majority enjoyed by the Government, which enables them to regard double digit unemployment with equanimity and which they interpret as an endorsement of the very policies that have produced that level of unemployment.

I suspect that the speech which will be most widely reported tomorrow was that of the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup. He delivered a devastating indictment of the Government's economic policy. He convinced me that he cares deeply—*[Laughter.]* I am sorry that the Chancellor chooses to laugh. I have major political differences with the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup. Indeed, I originally came to this House after campaigning in an election almost personally against him. Nevertheless, in spite of our differences, the right hon. Gentleman convinced me that he cares deeply and sincerely about unemployment. The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup also demonstrated to us all the extent of the disagreement—the fairly wide spectrum, as I think the right hon. Member for Waveney described it—in the Conservative party.

The real significance of the speeches of the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup and his right hon. Friends could be found in the fact that they are not supported by many of their hon. Friends. Indeed, they have received rather more cheers from this side of the House. The importance of their speeches lies in the fact that they are virtually isolated within their own party. A change in economic policy can come only from the Labour party.

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) has made clear on several occasions, the Labour party judges the Budget on two tests: what it does to alleviate poverty, and what it does to reduce unemployment and both provide and encourage the provision of more jobs.

We welcome the increase in personal tax allowances to the extent that it benefits the low paid, and we also welcome the reduction in national insurance contributions paid by some people on low wages. On the other hand, the Chancellor tends to talk, especially on television, as if he had at one swoop abolished poverty. He has done no such thing.

According to the Low Pay Unit, the number of families in the poverty trap has increased threefold since the Government came to office. In 1979, there were 90,000 families — a shameful figure — in 1984, there were 270,000. The Budget will take between 5,000 and 10,000 families out of the poverty trap—fewer than one in 27 families.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer also seems to forget that people who are liable to pay national insurance contributions are required to pay them on the whole of their income. The Budget means that a person who receives wages of £37 a week will still have take-home pay which is less than that of a person who receives £35·49 a week. Previously, we had the poverty trap at one threshold for national insurance contributions. The Chancellor has introduced three rates and, therefore, created three traps.

Indeed, the introduction of four separate rates for employers has increased the number of poverty traps from one to four. My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) mentioned a young man whose wages had been held to £33·99 a week to avoid the payment of national insurance by him and his employer. In future, wages will be held to £35·49, £54·99, £89·99 and £129·99. The Chancellor of the Exchequer should have raised the threshold, but instead he has replaced one threshold with four, which will result in the wages of the low paid being held down.

The Chancellor also fails the test of fairness in the distribution of his bounty. Indeed, we would not expect him to pass it. The Chancellor has wholly failed to concentrate the benefit of his changes in income tax and national insurance contribution on the low paid. Again according to the Low Pay Unit, most low-paid people will continue to pay proportionately more tax than in 1979, and an average family on average earnings will pay proportionately more tax than before the Government came to office. Only those earning or receiving more than £18,000 a year have been given a significant reduction in the amount that they pay in tax.

This part of the Budget can be summarised in two figures. As a result of the Budget changes in income tax and national insurance contributions, families on average earnings—£170 a week—or less will find their weekly income increased by £1·73, whereas a Cabinet Minister on £827 a week will be better off by nearly £9 a week.

If the Chancellor was serious about helping people afflicted by poverty, he would not only have announced changes in income tax and national insurance contributions but increased social security benefits which directly affect people on the lowest incomes.

He would have begun by announcing an increase in child benefit. One of the most dishonourable parts of the Government's record is their deliberate and repeated refusal to honour the pledge that they gave when in opposition to increase child benefit in line with increases in tax allowances. Of course, the Chancellor will say that it is not for him to do so. He will tell us, as he did last year, to wait for an announcement from the Secretary of State for Social Services. But we all know that the Chancellor's silence is more eloquent than words. If the Government intended to increase child benefit in real terms, the Chancellor would not leave it to his right hon. Friend to announce it. It is precisely because any increase in child benefit is a flat rate increase, and because the same amount is given to the mother of every child, that it gives most help to the families who need it most. That is why the Chancellor will not increase child benefit.

We should also consider those who pay no income tax. There will be no real increase for pensioners. We actually heard this evening from the hon. Member for Norfolk,

North (Mr. Howell) that pensioners and those who receive social security benefits had been over-indexed. He complained that the increases were too large. In our view, the Chancellor should have announced a real increase in pensions so that pensioners can share in any improvement in the standard of living.

Another group of people who have lost out are those who have been unemployed for a long time—those who are on short-term supplementary benefit on long-term unemployment. They are too old to go on a youth training scheme, and they will get nothing from this Chancellor who only pretends to alleviate poverty.

I repeat that we welcome the higher tax allowances for people with low incomes and the lower national insurance contributions for the low paid. We criticise the Chancellor for having ignored so many others.

We can judge the depth of the Chancellor's concern about poverty by the fact that he is providing only £270 million for the reduction in national insurance contributions from employees. As my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) said, that compares with the Chancellor's ability to find £50 million to abolish development land tax and to find £155 million to reduce the amount paid in capital gains tax by only 15,000 taxpayers. It also contrasts with tax cuts during the past six years, amounting to £3 billion, for the top 5 per cent. of recipients of income. That sum is apart from the other small gifts that the Chancellor has made, such as the money he gave in last year's Budget to those who own stud farms, the money he gave to those who own woodlands, and the money he gave to parents who send their children to private schools.

The money is there for a genuine attack on poverty. The money is there all right. If the Government wished, they could get the money. What they have not got is the will.

The story is similar with regard to jobs. The Budget does little—almost nothing—for jobs during the coming year. The centrepiece of the Chancellor's claim to have provided a Budget for jobs is the expansion of the youth training scheme and the community programme. Both measures were welcomed by my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott), but the youth training scheme will be extended to two years from April next year, and the community programme will be increased to provide another 100,000 places by June next year. How many jobs will be provided this year? I suspect the answer is very few.

Who will pay for the scheme? The Chancellor has made it clear that most of the cost of the youth training scheme will be borne by employers. I remember a time when the Chancellor told us that increases in employers' costs were antipathetic to increased employment. A document was published by the Treasury a few weeks ago about the relationship between wages and employment, urging pay restraint because employers would then be able to spend more money and create employment. The burden of that document is not that employers would create more employment by paying more money to the Chancellor.

Perhaps the most shabby part of this Budget is the attack on the wages councils, which has been deplored even by many Conservative Members who otherwise support the Chancellor. We do not know yet whether there will be abolition or emasculation of the wages councils, but we know that the Government will encourage employers to provide new jobs at low wages by abolishing or reforming — certainly by attacking — the wages councils. The effect will be to increase poverty by encouraging low wages for people already employed at very low wages. They will now receive lower wages if the wages councils disappear, and there are 2·75 million people in that category. Bad employers will drive out good employers and wages will undercut.

Who are the 2·75 million people who are protected by the wages councils? Some of them work in the clothing factories, which will once again become sweatshops, but the attack on the wages councils will not only affect people in the clothing and tailoring trade, but others such as shop assistants who are paid as adults £71 a week, people in catering, and people in hairdressing on only £65 a week for an adult worker. The Chancellor says that to attack the wages councils will provide more jobs. However, it is not employers who create such jobs but the market. I should have thought that the Chancellor who believes in market forces would recognise the truth of that argument. Effective demand has the most influence in this sector.

Reducing the wages of the people who work in the hairdressing trade will not increase the number of people who want their hair cut. Presumably, the Chancellor thinks that abolition or reform of the wages councils, leading to lower wages and lower prices, will mean that people will get their hair cut more frequently. I have heard of elasticity of demand, but this is ridiculous.

It was no coincidence that the reference in the Chancellor's Budget statement to wages councils was preceded by his announcement that the Secretary of State for Employment would be extending the rights of the employer to dismiss someone unfairly. That is what it is about, not about the right of the employer to dismiss someone fairly. The employer will be able to dismiss any employee, however unfair it may be, provided that that is done within the first two years of employment.

The hon. Member for Croydon, South (Sir W. Clark) says that he knows employers who are reluctant to take people on — he gave the game away — because they cannot get rid of them. It is important to emphasise that the employer is already protected against mistakes in recruitment. He can dismiss someone unfairly within one year of taking that person on. The Chancellor wants to enable him to dismiss someone up to two years after he has been taken on—dismiss someone unfairly. That move is connected with the attack on wages councils because employers will be able to dismiss people after nearly two years so they can employ someone else on a lower wage.

This Budget is not about attacking unemployment, poverty and low pay but about attacking the low paid.

It is not only people who are protected by wages councils who will be vulnerable to this attack, but everybody else as well.

We must also note that the employers' national insurance contribution has been reduced for low-paid employees but, as with the youth training scheme, almost the entire cost will be borne by employers as a group. In that respect, the Budget involves redistribution, but redistribution from some employers to other employers. A question must be asked: as the Chancellor used to describe the national insurance surcharge as a tax on jobs, why is this move not a tax on jobs? We must ask whether this measure will provide low-paid jobs at the expense of existing higher-paid jobs.

In fact, it may provide jobs at £35.49 a week for one year and 11 months.

[Mr. Terry Davis]

As for the tax cuts, the Chancellor will not provide the same benefit for pensioners and parents. That is exactly what happened last year. In fact, the increase in allowances is proportionately the same as last year when the Chancellor also doubled the allowances, and during the past year unemployment has risen by 120,000.

The Chancellor described last year's Budget as a Budget for jobs. He has used the same description this year. Last year he also used the phrase "the scourge of unemployment," and he repeated that phrase during this year's Budget statement. It only goes to show that there is nothing new in this Budget, not even the language.

The Chancellor says that we should look not at unemployment but at employment. In his Budget statement he suggested that employment had risen by 500,000 during the last two years. On "Weekend World" he was more forthright and more definite. He said that the number of people in work had risen by 500,000 over the last two years. That was not a suggestion but a statement of plain fact by the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry repeated that claim today.

I understand that the Chancellor and the Secretary of State were referring to the February issue of the *Employment Gazette*. The Secretary of State told us that between March 1983 and September 1984 there had been an increase of 480,000 in the labour force. During the debate on public expenditure three weeks ago I drew attention to the adjustments made by the Government statisticians and explained that the employment figures had been increased by 76,000 each quarter from the middle of 1983. Therefore the Government's employment figures included no fewer than 450,000 assumed, imaginary jobs. In fact, although I was absolutely right about the statisticians adjusting their figures by 76,000 each quarter throughout last year, I under-estimated the Government's skill with figures, because the 480,000 new jobs — the latest claim in the February issue of the *Employment Gazette* — are based upon a new set of adjustments. We now have not only revised statistics but also revised adjustments, and they are revised upwards. For some quarters the Government have adjusted the figures not by 76,000 a quarter but by 114,000 assumed extra jobs. The total adjustment for the 18 months from March 1983 to September 1984 is not 450,000 new jobs, as I suggested in our previous debate, but 580,000 new, assumed, imaginary jobs.

That adjusted figure of 580,000 assumed new jobs includes an increase of 317,000 in the number of self-employed. I accept that some of the unemployed will have started up their own businesses and become self-employed, but this Government are asking us to believe that no fewer than 317,000 people have become self-employed during this period of 18 months. I do not believe it and I do not think that the British people will believe it.

The inescapable point about this Government's employment record is that however much they fiddle about with the figures, and whatever adjustments they make to the quarterly statistics, they cannot escape the fact that fewer people are employed today than were employed in June 1979. Even on their own adjusted figures there are 1·3 million fewer people in employment—employed by employers and in self-employment—than there were in 1979.

The Prime Minister is fond of blaming the increase in unemployment on the increase in the population. But not even the Prime Minister can find a statistician to make adjustments that are big enough to hide the truth. There are 1·3 million fewer people employed today than when she became Prime Minister.

What is the Budget doing about that? Virtually nothing. It does nothing to provide real jobs directly, as the Government can. Everyone knows that they can. It does nothing to increase public expenditure, particularly on capital investment. The hon. Member for Croydon, South complained about the impression being given that the Government are spending nothing on capital investment. The hon. Gentleman has missed the point. No one is pretending that the Government are spending nothing. Our case, which has been accepted and urged by others as well, is that the Government should and could spend more than they are spending on capital investment. The level of capital expenditure is simply inadequate compared with the need.

There is no shortage of work to be done. As the right hon. Member for Taunton told us, there is no shortage of hospitals which need to be rebuilt. As my hon. Friend the Member for Preston (Mr. Thorne) told us, there is no shortage of houses which need to be repaired, and there is no shortage of people needing somewhere to live.

There is also no shortage of people to do the work. On the Government's own admission 3·25 million people are looking for work — unemployed people who can not only improve their standard of living by receiving wages instead of supplementary benefit, but restore their self-respect and dignity and obtain the personal satisfaction that they have been taught to derive from going to work. Finally, there is no shortage of money. The right hon. Member for Taunton pointed out that there is no conflict between an increase in public expenditure and cutting taxes. The money is there for both.

I hope that the hon. Member for Croydon, South does not think that I am being unfair in referring specifically to him. I regard his speech as important, more important in political terms than that of the right hon. Members for Taunton and for Old Bexley and Sidcup, or even those of Treasury Ministers. After all, the hon. Member for Croydon, South is the elected chairman of the Conservative Back-Bench finance committee. Ministers are appointed, but the hon. Gentleman has been elected by a majority of Conservative Members. He is the real representative of the Conservative party today.

It follows that we should not be surprised that the Chancellor is so unwilling to bring in a real Budget for real jobs. But it does not follow automatically that the Chancellor should indulge in such hypocrisy, standing at the Dispatch Box and pretending that he regards unemployment as a scourge. He goes further and tells us that "unemployment is unacceptably high". But as my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East drew to the attention of the House, only threee months ago the same Chancellor told an American newspaper that Britain—or the Government, I am not too sure which—could get along adequately with double digit unemployment. When is a scourge not a scourge? It all depends on the Chancellor's audience.

If that is what the Chancellor is telling foreigners, it is not surprising that he has done so little for jobs in the Budget.

The Chancellor has admitted that his Budget is not exciting, and he is right. But the Chancellor, too, misses the point. We condemn his Budget not for lack of excitement, but for lack of commitment. This Budget pays lip service to the alleviation of poverty and is half-hearted in its attack on unemployment. Compared with the scale of poverty and unemployment in Britain, this Budget is completely inadequate and deserves to be rejected by the House of Commons.

9.28 pm

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Nigel Lawson): The hon. Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis) always makes up in volume for what he lacks in cogency of argument. But at least he discussed the Budget, which is a great deal more than the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) did. Indeed, the right hon. and learned Gentleman avoided discussing not only the Budget, but the alternative produced by the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) about a fortnight ago. As the House will recall, that included as a central point restoring all the higher rates of tax which this Government have abolished over the past six years and adding, on top of that, by the abolition of the upper earnings limit for employees, a further 9 per cent. In other words, the 83 per cent. top rate on earned income under the last Labour Government was not good enough for him; it has to be 92 per cent. That is how he thinks that he will restore this country's economy to health.

The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East also seemed to think that North sea oil revenue should somehow not be counted as part of the economy. In that respect, he was properly rebuked by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. However, it is interesting to look at the figures that include and exclude North sea oil. During the six years of Labour Government, from 1973 to 1979, the total rate of growth for the economy was 8 per cent., which is almost exactly the same as from 1979 to 1985, in the forecasts that we published in the Red Book. But although the total figures are the same, if North sea oil is left out, the rate of growth from 1979 to 1985 falls to 5·5 per cent., whereas the rate of growth under the Labour Government between 1973 and 1979 falls to 3·5 per cent. In other words, North sea oil had a greater impact on the rate of growth during the Labour party's period in office than during ours.

The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East accused us of deliberately creating the present high levels of unemployment. That is offensive nonsense, and he knows it. He knows that unemployment has risen sharply during the past few years, not merely in this country but in France, Germany, Italy, Holland, Belgium and many other countries. Is he saying that we, or the Governments of those countries, are responsible for that? Of course not. He is talking nonsense, and offensive nonsense at that. I hope that he will withdraw what he has said.

Mr. John Smith: Did any representative of any other country say in the United States or anywhere else that the people of this country could dodge along with double digit unemployment? Now that the right hon. Gentleman has had a chance to think about it, does he deny that he said that we could politically and economically dodge along with double digit unemployment?

Mr. Lawson: I have already said that that speech was made not in America but in the United Kingdom. I said that unemployment was a matter of profound concern—of social and human concern. That is what I said. Of course, the right hon. and learned Gentleman's quotation was completely wrong. I said that unemployment had not prevented the economy from growing at a very satisfactory rate. That is what I said, and that is a fact. There is no point in the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East trying to wriggle out of things in that way.

Britain is the only country in the European Community, and the only country in the whole of Europe, in which employment in the past two years has grown by half a million. The Government are doing everything that a Government can do to defeat the scourge of unemployment. That should be made perfectly clear.

During the debate, we also heard speeches from the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins), who is in his place, and from my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), who is not now in his place. There was very little difference between the two speeches, so perhaps that does not matter. Indeed, I think that it was the right hon. Member for Hillhead who pointed out that there was no gulf between them. When he went on to remark about the shallowness of the gulf between him and Labour Members, I watched the expression on the face of the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen). I know that that comment caused him considerable agony. The argument — *[Interruption.]* The argument by the right hon. Member for Hillhead was that the PSBR should be increased to £10·5 billion, the same as this year, to boost demand through spending on infrastructure. He said that if that were done all would be well. That is a bit rich coming from someone who frequently boasted when he was Chancellor that he achieved a surplus on the Budget — a PSBR of less than zero. To call the Budget deflationary, as the right hon. Gentleman did, when the projected rate of growth is 3·5 per cent. in 1985 is to turn words on their head. The Budget is certainly not inflationary. It is anti-inflationary.

Mr. Roy Jenkins: The Chancellor apparently does not understand the difference between a negative PSBR with unemployment at under 600,000 and a larger PSBR with unemployment at 3·5 million. It is therefore difficult to engage in economic argument with him.

My point was not that £10·5 billion was perfect, but, as he says that the last year was so successful, why is it necessary now to reduce PSBR to £7 billion?

Mr. Lawson: Let me develop the argument. The £10·5 billion PSBR this year has not solved all our problems, so why does the right hon. Member think that it will solve them next year? The £10·5 billion PSBR has been accompanied by employment finance at a higher rate of interest than the right hon. Gentleman or anyone else would wish. That is why it is of first importance to keep the borrowing requirement down.

Other countries are pursuing the same policy. As the right hon. Gentleman acknowledged, other countries are trying to bring down borrowing and monetary growth and to remove the rigidities in the economy from the supply side. There is a gulf—*[Interruption.]* I see that my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup has arrived. He had to change and he is now in his place. I should like to put that on the record.

[Mr. Lawson]

There is a gulf between the right hon. Member for Hillhead and some of my right hon. and hon. Friends and reality. The gulf is between the reality of the policies pursued by responsible Governments throughout the Western world and the policies which they espouse—which are totally different. There is a gulf between their views and the response to the Budget by Mr. Roy Close of the British Institute of Management, who said:

"Limited resources have been used wisely with some useful measures, particularly to produce a better qualified work force through the expansion of the YTS and through the encouragement of small business."

The director-general of the CBI, Sir Terence Beckett, said:

"The Chancellor has got it right; interest rates should fall because he is keeping a grip on inflation and on borrowing. This budget ought to be good for growth and jobs."

The House will agree that that is what matters.

The House will also agree that a more thoughtful and constructive speech was made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Waveney (Mr. Prior). I am grateful to him for his endorsement of many of the measures in the Budget, notably the restructuring of the national insurance scheme, his recognition of the vital importance of the supply side and of the measures that we have taken on the trade union front, in which he played an important part in the early days.

My right hon. Friend mentioned with approval the youth training scheme changes, the community programme, the changes in the Employment Protection Act, and, with some qualifications, the proposal radically to reform the wages councils. I am grateful to him for endorsing a number of the measures in the Budget.

The Budget statement emphasises one of the two key aspects of the Government's economic policy — the overall macro-economic policy directed towards achieving growth of demand in money terms, which is consistent with lower inflation, and the micro-economic supply policy which is aimed, through a reduction of disincentives created by the tax system and a reduction of regulation and an increase in competition, to improve the supply performance of the economy. The expansion of the YTS will also bring about improved supply performance.

It is important to make clear the different roles of the two aspects of Government policy. There has been a great deal of confusion during the debate about the prospects for demand and the Government's ability to sustain it. Many right hon. and hon. Members have not yet realised—and this was clear in the speeches of my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup and of the right hon. Member for Hillhead — that the Government cannot, other than in the very short term, directly increase the level of real demand in the economy. Reflation increases the growth of demand in money terms—in other words, in the cash of the day — and the Government, like individuals, spend cash. Lower interest rates boost cash spending and a lower exchange rate increases demand in cash terms. Of course demand can be useful in money terms, but that is not the matter of concern —it is an increase of demand in real terms. Given an adequate growth of money demand, which is what we have in the economy, the real question is to see how that extra spending divides between real demand and inflation and improving the performance of the economy so that the largest proportion comes from real demand and the smallest proportion from inflation.

That was a mistake made by the previous Labour Government, which is why they now languish on the Opposition Benches. Demand grew rapidly in cash terms during their period of office—it increased by no less than 120 per cent. However, real demand increased by only 8 per cent. The increase in prices was well over 100 per cent. Incredibly, those who are espousing that same course today believe that if money demand had risen by another 50 per cent. to 170 per cent., the outcome for employment would have been more favourable. Would it have stopped unemployment doubling, as it did then? If so, why was that not the course? The Labour Prime Minister of the time knew that it would be disastrous, and he said so.

What was the limit of that benign process of demand expansion for which we have heard the siren call today? It has been suggested that demand expansion should be combined with an incomes policy, so that the problem of expansion of demand being dissipated by higher inflation would be removed. I do not need to remind the House that during most of the time that the Labour Government were expanding demand, an incomes policy was in force. The numbers that I have quoted are after, not before, the effect of the so-called incomes policy.

The Government are pursuing a responsible path for the growth of money demand. During the past few years it has grown by 8 per cent. a year. That is more than adequate for any reasonable increase in demand in the economy. It provides ample scope for both inflation and unemployment to fall. There might be an inadequate real demand, but the notion that the solution is an increase in money demand is a profound fallacy. Money demand is the only instrument on the demand side that the Government can manipulate.

That is why it is so important to deal with the problems on the supply side. One of the main problems that we have seen there has been the failure of pay and prices in the economy to adjust to the growth of money demand, leaving more room for output and employment to rise. The tragedy is that too much of this growth of demand has gone in higher living standards for those in work at the expense of those without jobs. I repeat my claim that there is no shortage of demand.

"Action taken by the Government to maintain expenditure will be fruitless unless wages and prices are kept reasonably stable. This is of vital importance to any employment policy and must be clearly understood by all sections of the public. If we are to operate with success a policy for maintaining a high and stable level of employment, it will be essential that employers and workers should exercise moderation in wages matters".

Those words were used in the 1944 White Paper on employment policy, and they hold good today.

Mr. Ian Wrigglesworth (Stockton, South): Is it not a fact that unit labour costs rose by 4 per cent. last year? What will the Government do if workers do not exercise the restraint for which the right hon. Gentleman has been appealing?

Mr. Lawson: If restraint is not exercised, the level of employment will be less than it would otherwise be and less than it should be, but there are measures in the Budget, to which I shall come, directed to helping on that front.

In my Budget speech I emphasised the undertaking that I gave to the National Economic Development Council, last month, that the medium term financial strategy is as firm a guarantee against inadequate money demand as it is against excessive money demand. I hope that Opposition Members fully understand the implications of those remarks and will now unreservedly endorse the benefits that will flow from wage moderation.

This year's PSBR turned out to be higher than was planned, but I believe that it was right to borrow to finance the costs of the coal dispute. Those effects were only temporary, and now it is important to get back to the path of the PSBR. *[Interruption.]* It was worth while to save the country from the damage that that dispute could have caused and to reduce the ambitions of the leaders of that strike.

The right hon. Member for, Sparkbrook argued that if we could spend £2·75 billion to resist Mr. Scargill, why should we not spend a similar amount to defeat unemployment. The plain fact is that one cannot create jobs simply by spending money. That was not why money was spent to resist the effects of the coal strike. Jobs cannot be created that way, and the right hon. Gentleman does a great disservice to the unemployed to pretend otherwise.

The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook must know that if unemployment could be solved simply by increasing Government spending, there would have been no unemployment when the Government under whom he served were in power or, indeed, under any Government in the world today.

The costs of the coal dispute are a once-and-for-all cost. They are temporary, and it was right to borrow to spread the cost over future years. The NUM leadership forced its members into a loss of £1 billion in wages in a vain attempt to overthrow the democratic process.

Now that that is behind us, the prospects for the economy are much better than they would have been—*[Interruption.]*—and it would have been the height of irresponsibility not to have incurred those costs, which were necessary to keep our people at work.

As for incurring a higher PSBR now, that could only mean, among other things, higher interest rates. There could be circumstances in which that would be to some extent appropriate, but certainly not now in the present state of the financial markets.

I come to the measure to which I alluded — the restructuring of national insurance contributions. This is a major change indeed—something that has never been done before. For people at the bottom of the earnings scale we have made a direct attack on what is for them an even greater burden than income tax. For their employers, national insurance contributions are a significant part of the costs of employment. Reducing contributions on both sides was the most direct measure that I could take to improve job prospects for the young and for the unskilled.

The impact of these changes is not to be underestimated. Indeed, it is very great. The total benefit of the national insurance contribution measures to the low-paid and to their employers combined is well over £1 billion. It will be about £1·15 billion in a full year. Of this, nearly £900 million will go to employers of those earning less than £130 a week. In other words, the cost of employing 8·5 million of the least well paid employees —about 40 per cent. of all employees—will be cut substantially by up to £3 a week per employee. That will increase the take-home pay of nearly 3·5 million earning up to £90 a week by as much as £2·18 a week. Of those, 1·2 million are single aged 25 years or less. About 1 million families will benefit, including 300,000 with gross family earnings under £90 a week. About 1·75 million self-employed will be better off also as a result of the Budget changes in national insurance and tax treatment. They will benefit by £155 million in a full year. That is an expanding sector of the economy that will be increasingly important in the years ahead.

Combining changes in income tax, employees' national insurance contributions and employers' national insurance contributions will mean a cut of nearly 30 per cent. in the total payments of a married man on £80 a week. The same man on £50 a week will see his payments cut by almost half.

I had to find the money to finance those changes in a difficult situation. I recognise that the abolition of the upper earnings limit is not universally welcomed. However, it will not have an adverse impact on job prospects for the higher paid. Those people's skills are in great demand, and the increase is small in percentage terms. The changes have been made possible because we cleared the ground first by abolishing the national insurance surcharge, which was the Labour Government's tax on jobs. Of course Labour Members do not like that. It is no wonder that they do not. We are introducing measures that will improve job prospects and living standards. They will reduce pressure for wage inflation and help the low paid. It is no wonder that Labour Members do not like them.

Meanwhile, the British economy is doing well both absolutely and especially by comparison with our main European competitors. Despite the coal strike, growth last year was 2·5 per cent. above the average for the Common Market countries. The OECD forecasts show Britain next year at the top of the European growth league, whereas under the Labour Government we were right at the bottom. That is the extent of the turn-round that the Government have produced.

We have now had four years of uninterrupted growth, and this summer we shall enter our fifth. Output is now at its highest level ever and exports, too, are at a peak. That is not merely because of oil, because this extends outside the oil sector. Non-oil exports grew by 9 per cent. in 1984 to reach a new record level. Business investment rose by 13 per cent. last year. That, too, was an all-time high. Profitability—the engine of growth—was also substantially higher.

Of course, Labour Members do not like this, but it is the truth. The hon. Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Duffy) was conspicuous as the only Labour Member who was prepared to concede that there was a pronounced upswing in the economy. He gave full credit to it, and I give due credit to him.

The real rate of return on non-North sea oil companies is now about 7 per cent.—twice the level of four years ago. Of particular importance is the quality of this growth. It has been achieved with large improvements in productivity.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup expressed considerable concern about the fact that we were becoming a low-productivity economy. I should like to reassure my right hon. Friend. During the three and three quarter years when he was Prime Minister, productivity on manufacturing grew by 3·1 per cent. a year

[Mr. Lawson]

—not bad. During the most recent three and three quarter years for which we have statistics, productivity in manufacturing grew not by 3·1 per cent. a year, but by 6·2 per cent. a year. My right hon. Friend need not be concerned about the growth in productivity in the economy. Under Labour, the growth in manufacturing productivity was 1 per cent. a year. That is the reality of our achievement. The reduction in inflation is also a major triumph.

What of employment and jobs? Clearly we cannot relax until we make greater progress. I say "greater" progress because progress is being made. In the 18 months to September 1984, total employment was up by nearly 500,000 — an increase of 2 per cent. in total employment. How did our competitors do? It is true that the United States did better, but employment in Japan grew by only 1 per cent., and total employment during the same period fell in France and Germany. The experience of the 1970s utterly refutes the doctrine that the higher the deficit and the faster the increase in money spending, the more rapid the growth in output. There is no correlation whatever. That is not the case.

During the 1970s as a whole, fuelled by an ever-increasing public sector borrowing requirement, total money spending rose by 15 per cent. a year, yet real demand in output rose by only 2 per cent. a year. This year and next year the underlying growth in money demand will be 7 or 8 per cent.—half the growth during the 1970s. Far from that proving to be inflationary, the underlying growth rate in real demand has risen to about 3 per cent. a year.

The notion that the key to faster growth is to borrow more and to spend more is certainly not a belief shared by any other Government. Governments from Socialist Spain to Republican America are striving to reduce, not to increase, their deficits. Have the Leader of the Opposition or the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook spoken to their Socialist brothers in France of late? They might be able to tell them a thing or two about the practicality of Labour's alternative Budget. Have the leaders of the two alliance parties tried to persuade their namesakes in Sweden, Germany or Japan of the virtues of bigger deficits and uncontrolled public spending? I suspect that their replies would have been phrased in terms that would be regarded by you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as unparliamentary.

In the whole of Europe, the two major countries with the smallest budget deficits as a percentage of GDP—Germany, which has the smallest deficit, and Britain, which comes second—have continued to have the most rapid rate of economic growth in the European Community.

We shall stick to the course we are on, not out of dogma but out of common sense. We shall stick to it because it is delivering the goods better than any other policy could. We shall stick to it because there is no alternative, because the Opposition are bankrupt of ideas and all we hear are the tired nostrums of the 1960s and 1970s which led us into inflationary disaster, low growth, low productivity and low profitability — the problems from which this Government have succeeded in liberating the economy and the energies of our people.

Of course, there is much still to be done in creating a better supply side and better economic prospects for our people. That is what this Budget is about. This Budget has been an important further step on the road to more jobs and a more successful economy. We shall continue with this policy. It is proving the most successful that could be produced, and it will continue to bring further success. I commend the Budget to the House.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 355, Noes 202.

Division No. 163] **[10 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Rt Hon Sir Frederic
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Hon Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(N Luton)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, E. *(B'y St Edm'ds)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(SW N'folk)*

Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irving, Charles
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(W Herts)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Gregory *(Derby N)*
Knight, Mrs Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parris, Matthew
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Prior, Rt Hon James
Proctor, K. Harvey
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spence, John
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(N Hertf'dshire)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, J.
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Carol Mather and
Mr. Robert Boscawen.

NOES

Abse, Leo
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Rt Hon J.
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Concannon, Rt Hon J. D.
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cowans, Harry
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
Garrett, W. E.
Golding, John
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Central Fife)*
Hancock, Mr. Michael
Hardy, Peter

Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon.Greville
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McCrea, Rev William
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
Mackenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Paisley, Rev Ian
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Redmond, M.
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robinson, P. *(Belfast E)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ryman, John
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Mrs R.*(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'kl'ds E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wainwright, R.
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John Maxton and
Mr. Robin Corbett.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That it is expedient to amend the law with respect to the National Debt and public revenue and to make further provision in connection with finance; but this Resolution does not extend to the making of any amendment with respect to value added tax so as to provide—

(a) for zero-rating or exempting any supply;

(b) for refunding any amount of tax, otherwise than by a provision relating to the insolvency of a person to whom goods or services have been supplied;

(c) for varying the rate of that tax otherwise than in relation to all supplies and importations; or

(d) for any relief other than relief applying to goods of whatever description or services of whatever description.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I am now required under Standing Order No. 114 to put successively, without further debate, the questions on each of the Ways and Means motions Nos. 2 to 43 and the motion of procedure, on all of which a Finance Bill will be brought in. The House will be relieved to know that I do not intend to read out the motions. I propose to follow the procedure used in recent years: that is to say, I shall first state the number of the motion or blocks of motions and put the question. I understand that Divisions are desired on motions Nos. 8 and 10, in which case, with the leave of the House, I will put motions Nos. 2 to 7 together.

2. SPIRITS

Motion made, and Question,

That, as from 20th March 1985, the rate of duty specified in section 5 of the Alcoholic Liquor Duties Act 1979 shall be increased from £15·48 per litre of alcohol in the spirits to £15·77 per litre of alcohol in the spirits.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 114 (Ways and Means motions), and agreed to.

3. BEER

Motion made, and Question,

That, as from 20th March 1985, the rates of duty specified in section 36 of the Alcoholic Liquor Duties Act 1979 shall be increased—

(a) from £24·00 for each hectolitre to £25·80 for each hectolitre; and

(b) from £0·80 for each additional degree of original gravity exceeding 1030 degrees to £0·86 for each such additional degree.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 114 (Ways and Means motions), and agreed to.

4. WINE AND MADE-WINE

Motion made, and Question,

That, as from 20th March 1985, the rates of duty under sections 54 and 55 of the Alcoholic Liquor Duties Act 1979 shall be as follows—

Budget Resolutions and Economic Resolutions

Description of made-wine	Rates of duty per hectolitre
	£
(1) Wine or made-wine of a strength less than 15 per cent. and not being sparkling	98·00
(2) Sparkling wine or sparkling made-wine of a strength of less than 15 per cent.	161·80
(3) Wine or made-wine of a strength of not less than 15 per cent. but not exceeding 18 per cent.	169·00
(4) Wine or made-wine of a strength exceeding 18 per cent. but not exceeding 22 per cent....	194·90
(5) Wine or made-wine of a strength exceeding 22 per cent....	194·90 plus £15·77 for every 1 per cent. or part of 1 per cent. in excess of 22 per cent.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 114 (Ways and Means motions), and agreed to.

5. Blending of wines subject to different duty rates

Motion made, and Question,

That, with respect to the blending or otherwise mixing of wines on or after 26th March 1985, section 54 of the Alcoholic Liquor Duties Act 1979 (charge of excise duty on wine) shall have effect with the insertion, after subsection (3), of the following subsections:—

"(3A) For the purposes of this Act, the process of blending or otherwise mixing two or more wines (in this subsection and subsection (3B) below referred to as "the constituent wines") constitutes the production of wine if—

(a) the rate of duty applicable to one of the constituent wines is different from that applicable to the other or, as the case may be, at least one of the others; and

(b) the rate of duty applicable to the wine which is the product of the blending or other mixing is higher than that which is applicable to at least one of the constituent wines; and

(c) the blending or other mixing is with a view to dealing wholesale in the wine which is the product thereof;

and for the purposes of this subsection the rate of duty applicable to any wine is that which is or would be chargeable under subsection (1) above on its importation into the United Kingdom or, as the case may be, on its production as mentioned in paragraph *(b)* of that subsection.

(3B) Where, by virtue of subsection (3A) above, wine is produced in the United Kingdom, duty shall be chargeable on that wine by virtue of paragraph *(b)* of subsection (1) above whether or not duty was previously charged on all or any of the constituent wines by virtue of paragraph *(a)* or paragraph *(b)* of that subsection; but nothing in this subsection shall affect the operation of any regulations under section 56 below giving relief from duty on wine so produced by reference to duty charged on all or any of the constituent wines."

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 114 (Ways and Means motions), and agreed to.

6. Cider

Motion made, and Question,

That, as from 20th March 1985, the rate of duty specified in section 62(1) of the Alcoholic Liquor Duties Act 1979 shall be increased from £14·28 per hectolitre to £15·80 per hectolitre.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 114 (Ways and Means motions), and agreed to.

7. Tobacco Products

Motion made, and Question,

That, as from 22nd March 1985, the rates of duty on cigarettes and hand-rolling tobacco specified in Schedule 1 to the Tobacco Products Duty Act 1979 shall be increased—

(a) in the case of cigarettes, to an amount equal to 21 per cent. of the retail price plus £26·95 per thousand cigarettes, and

(b) in the case of hand-rolling tobacco, to £43·73 per kilogram.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 114 (Ways and Means motions), and agreed to.

8. Hydrocarbon oil

Motion made, and Question,

That, as from 6 o'clock in the evening of 19th March 1985, the rates of duty specified in section 6(1) of the Hydrocarbon Oil Duties Act 1979 shall be increased—

(a) in the case of light oil, from £0·1716 a litre to £0·1794 a litre; and

(b) in the case of heavy oil, from £0·1448 a litre to £0·1515 a litre.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interests that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

As Amendments to Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer's proposed Motion (Hydrocarbon oil):

Mr Albert McQuarrie

Line 3, leave out '£0·1794' and insert '£0·1735'.

[Mr. Deputy Speaker]

Mr Alben McQuarrie
Line 4, leave out '£0·1515' and insert '£0·1465'.
—[Mr. Lawson.]

put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 114 (Ways and Means motions):—

The House divided: Ayes 354, Noes 183.

Division No. 184] **[10.15 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Ames, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Rt Hon Sir Frederic
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Hon Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(N Luton)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, E. *(B'y St Edm'ds)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(SW N'folk)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hume, John
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irving, Charles
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(W Herts)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Gregory *(Derby N)*
Knight, Mrs Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parris, Matthew
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Prior, Rt Hon James
Proctor, K. Harvey
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spence, John
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor

Stanley, John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(N Hertf'dshire)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, J.
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Carol Mather and
Mr. Robert Boscawen.

NOES

Abse, Leo
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'rmline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Rt Hon J.
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Concannon, Rt Hon J. D.
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cowans, Harry
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llan)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Garrett, W. E.
Golding, John
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Central Fife)*
Hardy, Peter
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McCrea, Rev William
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
Mackenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paisley, Rev Ian
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Redmond, M.
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robinson, P. *(Belfast E)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Rowlands, Ted
Ryman, John
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Mrs R. *(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'kl'ds E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John Maxton and
Mr. Robin Corbett.

Question accordingly agreed to.

9. HYDROCARBON OIL (MIXING)

Motion made, and Question,

That provision may be made allowing the Commissioners of Customs and Excise to charge a duty of excise on hydrocarbon oil which has become mixed with other hydrocarbon oil.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 114 (Ways and Means motions), and agreed to.

10. VEHICLES EXCISE DUTY

Motion made, and Question,

That the Vehicles (Excise) Act 1971 and the Vehicles (Excise) Act (Northern Ireland) 1972 shall have effect, in relation to licences taken out after 19th March 1985, with the amendments set out below.

But this Resolution shall not authorise the making of amendments which would result in different provisions being in force in different parts of Great Britain.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

(1) For the provisions of Part II of Schedules 1 to 5 to each of the Acts of 1971 and 1972 (annual rates of duty) there shall be substituted the provisions set out below:

PROVISIONS SUBSTITUTED FOR PART II OF SCHEDULE 1 TO ACT OF 1971 AND ACT OF 1972

Description of vehicle	Rate of duty
	£
1. Bicycles and tricycles of which the cylinder capacity of the engine does not exceed 150 cubic centimetres	10·00
2. Bicycles of which the cylinder capacity of the engine exceeds 150 cubic centimetres but does not exceed 250 cubic centimetres; tricycles (other than those in the foregoing paragraph) and vehicles (other than mowing machines) with more than three wheels, being tricycles and vehicles neither constructed nor adapted for use nor used for the carriage of a driver or passenger	20·00
3. Bicycles and tricycles not in the foregoing paragraphs	40·00

PROVISIONS SUBSTITUTED FOR PART II OF SCHEDULE 2 TO ACT OF 1971 AND ACT OF 1972

Description of vehicle	Rate of duty
Hackney carriages	£ 50·00 with an additional £1·00 for each person above 20 (excluding the driver) for which the vehicle has seating capacity.

PROVISIONS SUBSTITUTED FOR PART II OF SCHEDULE 3 TO ACT OF 1971 AND ACT OF 1972

1.	Weight unladen of vehicle		Rate of duty	
	2.	3.	4.	5.
Description of vehicle	Exceeding	Not exceeding	Initial	Additional for each ton or part of a ton in excess of the weight in column 2
			£	£
1. Agricultural machines; digging machines; mobile cranes; works trucks; mowing machines; fishermen's tractors	—	—	16.00	—
2. Haulage vehicles, being showmen's vehicles	—	7¼tons	151·00	—
	7¼tons	8 tons	180·00	—
	8 tons	10 tons	212·00	—
	10 tons	—	212·00	32·50
3. Haulage vehicles, not being showmen's vehicles	—	2 tons	179·00	—
	2 tons	4 tons	322·00	—
	4 tons	6 tons	465·00	—
	6 tons	7¼tons	608·00	—
	7¼tons	8 tons	743·00	—
	8 tons	9 tons	869·00	—
	9 tons	10 tons	995·00	—
	10 tons	11 tons	1,138·00	—
	11 tons	—	1,138·00	142·00

PROVISIONS SUBSTITUTED FOR PART II OF SCHEDULE 4 TO ACT OF 1971 AND ACT OF 1972

TABLE A

RATES OF DUTY ON RIGID GOODS VEHICLES EXCEEDING 12 TONNES PLATED GROSS WEIGHT
GENERAL RATES

Plated gross weight of vehicle		Rate of duty		
1. Exceeding	2. Not exceeding	3. Two axle vehicle	4. Three axle vehicle	5. Four or more axle vehicle
tonnes	tonnes	£	£	£
12	13	410	320	320
13	14	570	340	340
14	15	740	340	340
15	17	1,030	340	340
17	19	—	490	340
19	21	—	660	340
21	23	—	900	490
23	25	—	1,610	690
25	27	—	—	1,000
27	29	—	—	1,470
29	30.49	—	—	2,420

TABLE A(1)

RATES OF DUTY ON RIGID GOODS VEHICLES EXCEEDING 12 TONNES PLATED GROSS WEIGHT
RATES FOR FARMERS' GOODS VEHICLES

Plated gross weight of vehicle		Rate of duty		
1. Exceeding	2. Not exceeding	3. Two axle vehicle	4. Three axle vehicle	5. Four or more axle vehicle
tonnes	tonnes	£	£	£
12	13	175	145	145
13	14	215	150	150
14	15	255	150	150
15	17	335	160	150
17	19	—	190	150
19	21	—	240	160
21	23	—	295	195
23	25	—	475	245
25	27	—	—	325
27	29	—	—	445
29	30.49	—	—	725

TABLE A(2)

RATES OF DUTY ON RIGID GOODS VEHICLES EXCEEDING 12 TONNES PLATED GROSS WEIGHT
RATES FOR SHOWMEN'S GOODS VEHICLES

Plated gross weight of vehicle		Rate of duty		
1. Exceeding	2. Not exceeding	3. Two axle vehicle	4. Three axle vehicle	5. Four or more axle vehicle
tonnes	tonnes	£	£	£
12	13	105	90	90
13	14	145	90	90
14	15	185	90	90
15	17	260	90	90
17	19	—	125	90
19	21	—	165	90
21	23	—	225	125
23	25	—	405	175
25	27	—	—	250

Plated gross weight of vehicle		Rate of duty		
1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
Exceeding	Not exceeding	Two axle vehicle	Three axle vehicle	Four or more axle vehicle
tonnes	tonnes	£	£	£
27	29	—	—	370
29	30.49	—	—	605

TABLE B(1)

SUPPLEMENTARY RATES OF DUTY ON RIGID GOODS VEHICLES OVER 12 TONNES USED FOR DRAWING TRAILERS EXCEEDING 4 TONNES PLATED GROSS WEIGHT

RATES FOR FARMERS' GOODS VEHICLES

Gross weight of trailer		Duty supplement
Exceeding	Not exceeding	
tonnes	tonnes	£
4	8	80
8	10	100
10	12	130
12	14	180
14	—	355

TABLE B

SUPPLEMENTARY RATES OF DUTY ON RIGID GOODS VEHICLES OVER 12 TONNES USED FOR DRAWING TRAILERS EXCEEDING 4 TONNES PLATED GROSS WEIGHT

GENERAL RATES

Gross weight of trailer		Duty supplement
Exceeding	Not exceeding	
tonnes	tonnes	£
4	8	80
8	10	100
10	12	130
12	14	180
14	—	355

TABLE B(2)

SUPPLEMENTARY RATES OF DUTY ON RIGID GOODS VEHICLES OVER 12 TONNES USED FOR DRAWING TRAILERS EXCEEDING 4 TONNES PLATED GROSS WEIGHT

RATES FOR SHOWMEN'S GOODS VEHICLES

Gross weight of trailer		Duty supplement
Exceeding	Not exceeding	
tonnes	tonnes	£
—	—	80

TABLE C

RATES OF DUTY ON TRACTOR UNITS EXCEEDING 12 TONNES PLATED TRAIN WEIGHT AND HAVING ONLY 2 AXLES

GENERAL RATES

Plated train weight of tractor unit		Rate of duty		
1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
Exceeding	Not exceeding	For a tractor unit to be used with semi-trailers with any number of axles	For a tractor unit to be used only with semi-trailers with not less than two axles	For a tractor unit to be used only with semi-trailers with not less than three axles
tonnes	tonnes	£	£	£
12	14	470	420	420
14	16	590	440	440
16	18	690	440	440
18	20	810	440	440
20	22	940	550	440
22	23	1,000	620	440
23	25	1,150	780	440
25	26	1,150	870	530
26	28	1,150	1,090	720
28	29	1,210	1,210	820
29	31	1,680	1,680	1,050
31	33	2,450	2,450	1,680
33	34	2,450	2,450	2,250
34	36	2,750	2,750	2,750
36	38	3,100	3,100	3,100

TABLE C(1)

RATES OF DUTY ON TRACTOR UNITS EXCEEDING 12 TONNES PLATED TRAIN WEIGHT AND HAVING ONLY 2 AXLES

RATES FOR FARMERS' GOODS VEHICLES

Plated train weight of tractor unit		Rate of duty		
1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
Exceeding	Not exceeding	For a tractor unit to be used with semi-trailers with any number of axles	For a tractor unit to be used only with semi-trailers with not less than two axles	For a tractor unit to be used only with semi-trailers with not less than three axles
tonnes	tonnes	£	£	£
12	14	190	175	175
14	16	225	180	180
16	18	250	180	180
18	20	280	180	180
20	22	310	205	180
22	23	325	225	180
23	25	370	265	185
25	26	370	285	210
26	28	370	345	260
28	29	380	380	285
29	31	525	525	355
31	33	755	755	550
33	34	990	990	950
34	36	1,155	1,155	1,155
36	38	1,300	1,300	1,300

TABLE C(2)

RATES OF DUTY ON TRACTOR UNITS EXCEEDING 12 TONNES PLATED TRAIN WEIGHT AND HAVING ONLY 2 AXLES

RATES FOR SHOWMEN'S GOODS VEHICLES

Plated train weight of tractor unit		Rate of duty		
1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
Exceeding	Not exceeding	For a tractor unit to be used with semi-trailers with any number of axles	For a tractor unit to be used only with semi-trailers with not less than two axles	For a tractor unit to be used only with semi-trailers with not less than three axles
tonnes	tonnes	£	£	£
12	14	120	105	105
14	16	150	110	110
16	18	175	110	110
18	20	205	110	110
20	22	235	140	110
22	23	250	155	110
23	25	290	195	110
25	26	290	220	135
26	28	290	275	180
28	29	305	305	205
29	31	420	420	265
31	33	615	615	420
33	34	615	615	565
34	36	690	690	690
36	38	775	775	775

TABLE D

RATES OF DUTY ON TRACTOR UNITS EXCEEDING 12 TONNES PLATED TRAIN WEIGHT AND HAVING 3 OR MORE AXLES

GENERAL RATES

Plated train weight of tractor unit		Rate of duty		
1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
Exceeding	Not exceeding	For a tractor unit to be used with semi-trailers with any number of axles	For a tractor unit to be used only with semi-trailers with not less than two axles	For a tractor unit to be used only with semi-trailers with not less than three axles
tonnes	tonnes	£	£	£
12	14	420	420	420
14	20	440	440	440
20	22	550	440	440
22	23	620	440	440
23	25	780	440	440
25	26	870	440	440
26	28	1,090	440	440
28	29	1,210	440	440
29	31	1,680	640	440
31	33	2,450	970	440
33	34	2,450	1,420	550
34	36	2,450	2,030	830
36	38	2,730	2,730	1,240

TABLE D(1)

RATES OF DUTY ON TRACTOR UNITS EXCEEDING 12 TONNES PLATED TRAIN WEIGHT AND HAVING 3 OR MORE AXLES

RATES FOR FARMERS' GOODS VEHICLES

Plated train weight of tractor unit		Rate of duty		
1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
Exceeding	Not exceeding	For a tractor unit to be used with semi-trailers with any number of axles	For a tractor unit to be used only with semi-trailers with not less than two axles	For a tractor unit to be used only with semi-trailers with not less than three axles
tonnes	tonnes	£	£	£
12	14	175	175	175
14	20	180	180	180
20	22	205	180	180
22	23	225	180	180
23	25	265	180	180
25	26	285	185	180
26	28	345	200	190
28	29	380	225	200
29	31	525	270	220
31	33	755	405	240
33	34	805	595	300
34	36	935	855	455
36	38	1,145	1,145	680

TABLE D(2)

RATES OF DUTY ON TRACTOR UNITS EXCEEDING 12 TONNES PLATED TRAIN WEIGHT AND HAVING 3 OR MORE AXLES

RATES FOR SHOWMEN'S GOODS VEHICLES

Plated train weight of tractor unit		Rate of duty		
1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
Exceeding	Not exceeding	For a tractor unit to be used with semi-trailers with any number of axles	For a tractor unit to be used only with semi-trailers with not less than two axles	For a tractor unit to be used only with semi-trailers with not less than three axles
tonnes	tonnes	£	£	£
12	14	105	105	105
14	18	110	110	110
18	20	110	110	110
20	22	140	110	110
22	23	155	110	110
23	25	195	110	110
25	26	220	110	110
26	28	275	110	110
28	29	305	130	110
29	31	420	160	110
31	33	615	245	110
33	34	615	355	140
34	36	615	510	210
36	38	685	685	310

PROVISIONS SUBSTITUTED FOR PART II OF SCHEDULE 5 TO ACT OF 1971 AND ACT OF 1972

Description of vehicle	Rate of duty
	£
1. Any vehicle first registered under the Roads Act 1920 before 1st January 1947, or which, if its first registration for taxation purposes had been effected in Northern Ireland, would have been so first registered under the Act as in force in Northern Ireland	60·00
2. Other vehicles...	100·00

(2) In section 2(1)*(b)* of each of the Acts of 1971 and 1972 (six month licence for vehicles with annual rate exceeding £18) for "£18" there shall be substituted "£35".

(3) In section 16 of the Act of 1971 (rates of duty for trade licences) in subsection (5), including that subsection as set out in paragraph 12 of Part I of Schedule 7 to that Act, for "£44" there shall be substituted "£46".

(4) In section 16 of the Act of 1972 (rates of duty for trade licences) in subsection (6), including that subsection as set out in paragraph 12 of Part I of Schedule 9 to that Act, for "£44" there shall be substituted "£46".

(5) In the heading of Schedule 1 to each of the Acts of 1971 and 1972 and in paragraph 1 of Part I of each of those Schedules (annual rates of duty on certain vehicles not exceeding 425 kilograms) for "425 KG." and "425 kilograms" there shall be substituted respectively "450 KG." and "450 kilograms".

(6) In each of the Acts of 1971 and 1972, in paragraph 6(1) of Part I of Schedule 4, for "£67" there shall be substituted "£75".

(7) The following shall be substituted for paragraph 6(2) of Part I of Schedule 4 to the Act of 1971—

"(2) If a farmer's goods vehicle or a showman's goods vehicle has a plated gross weight or a plated train weight, the annual rate of duty applicable to it shall be—

(a) if that weight does not exceed 7·5 tonnes, £90;

(b) if that weight exceeds 7·5 tonnes but does not exceed 12 tonnes, £135 in the case of a farmer's goods vehicle and £90 in the case of a showman's goods vehicle; and

(c) if that weight exceeds 12 tonnes, the appropriate Part II rate."

(8) The following shall be substituted for paragraph 6(2) of Part I of Schedule 4 to the Act of 1972—

"(2) If a farmer's goods vehicle or a showman's goods vehicle has a relevant maximum weight or a relevant maximum train weight, the annual rate of duty applicable to it shall be—

(a) if that weight does not exceed 7·5 tonnes, £90;

(b) if that weight exceeds 7·5 tonnes but does not exceed 12 tonnes, £135 in the case of a farmer's goods vehicle and £90 in the case of a showman's goods vehicle; and

(c) if that weight exceeds 12 tonnes, the appropriate Part II rate."

(9) In each of the Acts of 1971 and 1972, in paragraph 7 of Part I of Schedule 4, for "£90" there shall be substituted "£100".

—[Mr. Lawson.]

put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 114 (Ways and Means motions):—

The House divided: Ayes 351, Noes 197.

Division No. 165] **[10.30 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Rt Hon Sir Frederic
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Hon Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(N Luton)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, E. *(B'y St Edm'ds)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(SW N'folk)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irving, Charles
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(W Herts)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Gregory *(Derby N)*
Knight, Mrs Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Miscampbell, Norman

Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parris, Matthew
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Prior, Rt Hon James
Proctor, K. Harvey
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Renton, Tim
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spence, John
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(N Hertf'dshire)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, J.
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Terlezki, Stefan
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Carol Mather and
Mr. Robert Boscawen.

NOES

Abse, Leo
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Rt Hon J.
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Concannon, Rt Hon J. D.
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cowans, Harry
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Garrett, W. E.
Golding, John
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Central Fife)*
Hancock, Mr. Michael
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr. Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McCrea, Rev William
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
Mackenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Paisley, Rev Ian
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robinson, P. *(Belfast E)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Mrs R. *(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Cyril *(Rochdale)*

Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'kl'ds E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Rt Hon John David
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wainwright, R.
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. A. J. Beith and
Mr. John Cartwright.

Question accordingly agreed to.

11. GAMING MACHINE LICENCE DUTY

Motion made, and Question,

That provision may be made extending to Northern Ireland the provisions of the Betting and Gaming Duties Act 1981 relating to gaming machine licence duty.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 114 (Ways and Means motions), and agreed to.

12. VALUE ADDED TAX (NEWSPAPER ADVERTISEMENTS)

Motion made, and Question,

That, with respect to supplies made on or after 1st May 1985, Schedule 5 to the Value Added Tax Act 1983 shall have effect with the omission of Group 5 (newspaper advertisements).

This Resolution shall not authorise the making of amendments that would make value added tax chargeable at a rate other than either nil or the rate specified in section 9 of the Value Added Tax Act 1983.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 114 (Ways and Means motions), and agreed to.

13. INCOME TAX (CHARGE AND RATES FOR 1985-86)

Motion made, and Question,

That—

(1) Income tax for the year 1985-86 shall be charged at the basic rate of 30 per cent. and, in respect of so much of an individual's total income as exceeds £16,200 (the basic rate limit as determined under subsection (4) of section 24 of the Finance Act 1980—indexation), at such higher rates as are specified in the Table below (in which the higher rate bands are those as so determined):

TABLE

Higher rate bands	*Higher rate*
The first £3,000...	40 per cent.
The next £5,200...	45 per cent.
The next £7,900...	50 per cent.
The next £7,900...	55 per cent.
The remainder	60 per cent.

(2) This Resolution shall not require any change to be made in the amounts deductible or repayable under section 204 of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1970 (pay as you earn) before 18th May 1985.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 114 (Ways and Means motions), and agreed to.

14. INCOME TAX (PERSONAL RELIEFS)

Motion made, and Question,

That—

(1) Section 24(5) of the Finance Act 1980 (increase of personal reliefs) shall not apply for the year 1985-86.

(2) In section 8 of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1970 (personal reliefs)—

(a) in subsection (1)*(a)* (married) for "£3,155" there shall be substituted "£3,455";

(b) in subsections (1)*(b)* (single) and (2) (wife's earned income relief) for "£2,005" there shall be substituted "£2,205";

(c) in subsection (1A) (age allowance) for "£3,955" and "£2,490" there shall be substituted "£4,255" and "£2,690" respectively; and

(d) in subsection (1B) (income limit for age allowance) for "£8,100" there shall be substituted "£8,800".

(3) This Resolution shall not require any change to be made in the amounts deductible or repayable under section 204 of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1970 (pay as you earn) before 18th May 1985.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 114 (Ways and Means motions), and agreed to.

15. RELIEF FOR INTEREST (LIMIT FOR 1985-86)

Motion made, and Question,

That, for the year 1985-86, the qualifying maximum referred to in paragraphs 5(1) and 24(3) of Schedule 1 to the Finance Act 1974 (limit on relief for interest on certain loans for the purchase or improvement of land) shall be £30,000.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 114 (Ways and Means motions), and agreed to.

16. ADVANCE CORPORATION TAX (RATE FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 1985)

Motion made, and Question,

That the rate of advance corporation tax for the financial year 1985 shall be three-sevenths.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 114 (Ways and Means motions), and agreed to.

17. CAPITAL ALLOWANCES (MACHINERY AND PLANT)

Motion made, and Question,

That provision may be made with respect to allowances for machinery and plant under Chapter I of Part III of the Finance Act 1971.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 114 (Ways and Means motions), and agreed to.

18. CAPITAL ALLOWANCES (DREDGING, AGRICULTURAL LAND AND HOTELS)

Motion made, and Question,

That charges to income tax may be imposed by provisions—

(a) terminating initial allowances under section 67 of the Capital Allowances Act 1968 (dredging);

(b) terminating initial allowances and reducing writing-down allowances under section 68 of that Act (agricultural land and buildings); and

(c) terminating initial allowances in respect of capital expenditure incurred in respect of qualifying hotels, within the meaning of section 38 of the Finance Act 1978.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

put forthwith pursuant to Standing order No. 114 (Ways and Means motions), and agreed to.

19. CAPITAL ALLOWANCES (SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH)

Motion made, and Question,

That provision may be made with respect to allowances for capital expenditure on scientific research under Part II of the Capital Allowances Act 1968.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

put forthwith pursuant to Standing order No. 114 (Ways and Means motions), and agreed to.

20. Interest paid on deposits with banks etc.

Motion made, and Question,

That provision may be made amending Schedule 8 to the Finance Act 1984.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

put forthwith pursuant to Standing order No. 114 (Ways and Means motions), and agreed to.

21. Securities

Motion made, and Question,

That charges to income tax, capital gains tax and corporation tax may be imposed by provisions about transactions occurring on or after 28th February 1985 in relation to securities.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

put forthwith pursuant to Standing order No. 114 (Ways and Means motions), and agreed to.

22. Friendly societies

Motion made, and Question,

That provision may be made with respect to—

(a) the conditions to be fulfilled in order that friendly societies and branches thereof may be entitled to claim exemption from tax;

(b) the application of the limits on tax exempt business of friendly societies and branches thereof in relation to contracts for annuities made before 1st June 1984;

(c) the conditions under which policies issued by friendly societies and branches thereof on or after 19th March 1985, or issued before that date and varied on or after it, are to be regarded as qualifying policies within the meaning of Part I of Schedule 1 to the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1970; and

(d) the application of Chapter III of Part XIV of the said Act of 1970 in relation to contracts for annuities entered into by friendly societies and branches thereof on or after 1st June 1984.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 114 (Ways and Means motions), and agreed to.

23. Offshore life assurance

Motion made, and Question,

That provision may be made amending Part III of Schedule 15 to the Finance Act 1984.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 114 (Ways and Means motions), and agreed to.

24. Business expansion scheme

Motion made, and Question,

That provision may be made excluding property development, in certain circumstances, from the trades which are treated as qualifying trades for the purpose of Schedule 5 to the Finance Act 1983.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 114 (Ways and Means motions), and agreed to.

25. Partnerships (basis of assessment)

Motion made, and Question,

That provision may be made for altering the basis of assessment relating to partnerships.—*[Mr. Lawson]*

put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 114 (Ways and Means motions), and agreed to.

26. Limited partners (reliefs)

Motion made, and Question,

That provision may be made with respect to reliefs from tax available to limited partners and persons in a similar position. —*[Mr. Lawson]*

put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 114 (Ways and Means motions), and agreed to.

27. London Regional Transport

Motion made, and Question,

That in computing for the purposes of corporation tax the profit or loss of London Regional Transport for any accounting period beginning on or after 1st April 1985, the loss of the London Transport Executive for any earlier accounting period shall be computed as if section 16(1) *(b)* of the Finance Act 1970 had not been enacted.—*[Mr. Lawson]*

put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 114 (Ways and Means motions), and agreed to.

28. Valuation of oil (income tax and corporation tax)

Motion made, and Question,

That provision be made, for the purposes of income tax and corporation tax, with respect to oil appropriated in certain circumstances to refining or to any use except production purposes of an oil field.—*[Mr. Lawson]*

put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 114 (Ways and Means motions), and agreed to.

29. Commodity futures, financial futures and traded options

Motion made, and Question,

That provision may be made for bringing gains on certain disposals of commodity futures, financial futures and traded options within the charge to capital gains tax or corporation tax on chargeable gains.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 114 (Ways and Means motions), and agreed to.

30. Capital gains (retirement relief)

Motions made, and Question,

That provision may be made restricting the offices and employments which are relevant to the giving of relief from capital gains tax on the disposal by a person retiring from an office or employment of assets provided or held for the purposes of that office or employment.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 114 (Ways and Means motions), and agreed to.

31. Capital gains (series of transactions)

Motion made, and Question,

That charges to capital gains tax and corporation tax may be imposed by provisions relating to assets disposed of in a series of transactions.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 114 (Ways and Means motions), and agreed to.

32. Capital transfer tax (conditional exemption)

Motion made, and Question,

That charges to capital transfer tax may be imposed by provisions relating to conditional exemption.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 114 (Ways and Means motions), and agreed to.

33. Stamp duty (takeovers)

Motion made, and Question,

That the following provisions shall have effect for the period beginning 26th March 1985 and ending 31 days after the earliest of the dates mentioned in section 50(2) of the Finance Act 1973—

(1) Paragraph (2) below applies where a company (company A) issues relevant securities (but issues or transfers no other property) in exchange for shares in another company (company B) and company A—

(a) has control of company B, or

(b) will have such control in consequence of the exchange or of a general offer as a result of which the exchange is made.

(2) Stamp duty under the heading "Conveyance or Transfer on Sale" in Schedule 1 to the Stamp Act 1891 shall not be chargeable on an instrument transferring the shares in company B (by way of the exchange).

(3) Where paragraph (2) above would apply but for the fact that company A not only issues relevant securities but also issues or transfers other property (whether or not it is or includes money) by way of the exchange, the value of the relevant securities shall be ignored in calculating stamp duty under the heading mentioned in that paragraph on an instrument transferring the shares in company B (by way of the exchange).

(4) In this Resolution "securities" includes shares, and "relevant securities" means securities which may be registered in a register kept by or on behalf of company A and in relation to which the terms of the general offer or other arrangement providing for the exchange make no provision for partial or total conversion directly or indirectly into money (whether by way of redemption, sale or otherwise) at a time which falls or may fall before the expiry of the period of three years commencing with the day on which the exchange is completed.

(5) For the purposes of this Resolution relevant securities shall not be taken to have been issued unless they are registered in a register kept by or on behalf of company A, in the name of the person tranferring the shares in company B by way of the exchange.

(6) References in this Resolution to shares in company B include references to convertible loan capital of the company; and "convertible loan capital" means loan capital mentioned in section 126(2) of the Finance Act 1976.

(7) For the purposes of this Resolution company A has control of company B if company A has power to control company B's affairs by virtue of holding shares in, or possessing voting power in relation to, company B or any other body corporate.

(8) In this Resolution "general offer" means an offer made to members of company B or any class of them, and—

(a) includes an offer made wth exceptions for persons connected with company A, but

(b) excludes an offer made with exceptions for persons who are not connected with Company A,

and a person is connected with a company if he would be so connected for the purposes of the Capital Gains Tax Act 1979.

(9) An instrument in respect of which stamp duty is not chargeable by virtue only of paragraph (2) above shall not be taken to be duly stamped unless it is stamped with the duty to which it would be liable but for that paragraph or it has, in accordance with section 12 of the Stamp Act 1891, been stamped with a particular stamp denoting that it is not chargeable with any duty.

(10) An instrument in respect of which reduced stamp duty is chargeable by virtue of paragraph (3) above shall not be taken to be duly stamped unless it is stamped with the duty to which it would be liable but for that paragraph or it has, in accordance with section 12 of the Stamp Act 1891, been stamped with a particular stamp denoting that it is duly stamped.

(11) Paragraphs (1) to (10) above shall apply to—

(a) instruments executed on or after 26th March 1985, and

(b) instruments executed on or after 19th March 1985 which are stamped on or after 26th March 1985.

(12) For the purposes of section 14(4) of the Stamp Act 1891 (instruments not to be given in evidence etc. unless stamped in accordance with the law in force at the time of first execution), the law in force at the time of execution of an instrument falling within paragraph (11)*(b)* above shall be deemed to be that as varied in accordance with this Resolution.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of section 50 of the Finance Act 1973. — *[Mr. Lawson.]*

put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 114 (Ways and Means motions), and agreed to.

34. STAMP DUTY (VOLUNTARY WINDING UP: TRANSFER OF SHARES)

Motion made, and Question,

That the following provisions shall have effect for the period beginning 26th March 1985 and ending 31 days after the earliest of the dates mentioned in section 50(2) of the Finance Act 1973—

(1) Paragraph (2) below applies where a company is being wound up altogether voluntarily and there is an arrangement under section 287 of the Companies Act 1948 or section 257 of the Companies Act (Northern Ireland) 1960 whereby—

(a) its liquidator transfers to another company (company A) shares in a company (company B) which is a subsidiary of the company being wound up,

(b) company A issues relevant securities (but issues or transfers no other property) to the liquidator or a member or members of the company being wound up, and

(c) company A acquires control of company B (in consequence of the transfer of shares in company B).

(2) Stamp duty under the heading "Conveyance or Transfer on Sale" in Schedule 1 to the Stamp Act 1891 shall not be chargeable on an instrument transferring the shares in company B to company A.

(3) Where paragraph (2) above would apply but for the fact that company A not only issues relevant securities but also issues or transfers other property (whether or not it is or includes money) the value of the relevant securities shall be ignored in calculating stamp duty under the heading mentioned in that paragraph on an instrument transferring the shares in company B to company A.

(4) In this Resolution "securities" includes shares, and "relevant securities" means securities which may be registered in a register kept by or on behalf of company A and in relation to which the terms of the arrangement make no provision for partial or total conversion directly or indirectly into money (whether by way of redemption, sale or otherwise) at a time which falls or may fall before the expiry of the period of three years commencing with the day on which the arrangement is completed.

(5) For the purposes of this Resolution relevant securities shall not be taken to have been issued unless they are registered, in a register kept by or on behalf of company A, in the name of the liquidator or member concerned of the company being wound up.

(6) References in this Resolution to shares in company B include references to convertible loan capital of the company; and "convertible loan capital" means loan capital mentioned in section 126(2) of the Finance Act 1976.

(7) For the purposes of this Resolution company A has control of company B if company A has power to control company B's affairs by virtue of holding shares in, or possessing voting power in relation to, company B or any other body corporate.

(8) In this Resolution "subsidiary" has the same meaning as in the Companies Act 1948 or the Companies Act (Northern Ireland) 1960, as the case may be.

(9) An instrument in respect of which stamp duty is not chargeable by virtue only of paragraph (2) above shall not be taken to be duly stamped unless it is stamped with the duty to which it would be liable but for that paragraph or it has, in accordance with section 12 of the Stamp Act 1891, been stamped with a particular stamp denoting that it is not chargeable with any duty.

(10) An instrument in respect of which reduced stamp duty is chargeable by virtue of paragraph (3) above shall not be taken to be duly stamped unless it is stamped with the duty to which it would be liable but for that paragraph or it has, in accordance with section 12 of the Stamp Act 1891, been stamped with a particular stamp denoting that it is duly stamped.

(11) Paragraph (1) to (10) above shall apply to—

(a) instruments executed on or after 26th March 1985, and

(b) instruments executed on or after 19th March 1985 which are stamped on or after 26th March 1985.

(12) For the purposes of section 14(4) of the Stamp Act 1891 (instruments not to be given in evidence etc. unless stamped in accordance with the law in force at the time of first execution), the law in force at the time of execution of an instrument falling within paragraph (11)*(b)* above shall be deemed to be that as varied in accordance with this Resolution.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of section 50 of the Finance Act 1973. — *[Mr. Lawson.]*

put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 114 (Ways and Means motions), and agreed to.

35. Stamp duty (gifts inter vivos)

Motion made, and Question,

That the following provisions shall have effect for the period beginning 26th March 1985 and ending 31 days after the earliest of the dates mentioned in section 50(2) of the Finance Act 1973—

(1) The stamp duty chargeable by virtue of section 74 of the Finance (1909-10) Act 1910 (gifts inter vivos) is abolished.

(2) In section 58(7) of the Stamp Act 1891 (valuation by reference to value for purposes of section 74 of 1910 Act) for the words from "the value" to the end there shall be substituted "the value at any time of any property, that value shall be taken to be the price which the property might reasonably be expected to fetch on a sale at that time in the open market."

(3) An instrument—

(a) in respect of which stamp duty would be chargeable by virtue of section 74 of the 1910 Act apart from paragraph (1) above, and

(b) on which stamp duty is not chargeable under the heading "Conveyance or Transfer on Sale" in Schedule 1 to the Stamp Act 1891,

shall not be deemed to be duly stamped unless it has, in accordance with section 12 of the 1891 Act, been stamped with a particular stamp denoting that it is duly stamped or that it is not chargeable with any duty.

(4) Paragraphs (1) to (3) above shall apply to—

(a) instruments executed on or after 26th March 1985, and

(b) instruments executed on or after 19th March 1985 which are stamped on or after 26th March 1985.

(5) For the purposes of section 14(4) of the Stamp Act 1891 (instruments not to be given in evidence etc. unless stamped in accordance with the law in force at the time of first execution), the law in force at the time of execution of an instrument falling within paragraph (4)*(b)* above shall be deemed to be that as varied in accordance with this Resolution.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of section 50 of the Finance Act 1973 — *[Mr. Lawson].*

put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 114 (Ways and Means motions), and agreed to.

36. Stamp duty (transfers in connection with divorce etc.)

Motion made, and Question,

That the following provisions shall have effect for the period beginning 26th March 1985 and ending 31 days after the earliest of the dates mentioned in section 50(2) of the Finance Act 1973—

(1) Stamp duty under the heading "Conveyance or Transfer on Sale" in Schedule 1 to the Stamp Act 1891 shall not be chargeable on an instrument by which property is conveyed or transferred from one party to a marriage to the other if the instrument—

(a) is executed in pursuance of an order of a court made on granting in respect of the parties a decree of divorce, nullity of marriage or judicial separation, or

(b) is executed in pursuance of an order of a court which is made in connection with the dissolution or annulment of the marriage or the parties' judicial separation and which is made at any time after the granting of such a decree, or

(c) is executed at any time in pursuance of an agreement of the parties made in contemplation of or otherwise in connection with the dissolution or annulment of the marriage or their judicial separation.

(2) An instrument in respect of which stamp duty is not chargeable under the heading mentioned in paragraph (1) above by virtue of that paragraph shall be chargeable under the paragraph with stamp duty of 50p.

(3) Paragraphs (1) and (2) above shall apply to instruments executed on or after 26th March 1985.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of section 50 of the Finance Act 1973. — *[Mr. Lawson.]*

put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 114 (Ways and Means motions), and agreed to.

37. Stamp duty (death: varying dispositions, and appropriations)

Motion made, and Question,

That the following provisions shall have effect for the period beginning 26th March 1985 and ending 31 days after the earliest of the dates mentioned in section 50(2) of the Finance Act 1973—

(1) Where, within the period of two years after a person's death, any of the dispositions (whether effected by will, under the law relating to intestacy or otherwise) of the property of which he was competent to dispose are varied by an instrument executed by the persons or any of the persons who benefit or would benefit under the dispositions, stamp duty under the heading "Conveyance or Transfer on Sale" in Schedule 1 to the Stamp Act 1891 shall not be chargeable on the instrument.

(2) Paragraph (1) above does not apply where the variation is made for any consideration in money or money's worth other than consideration consisting of the making of a variation in respect of another of the dispositions.

(3) Paragraph (1) above applies whether or not the administration of the estate is complete or the property has been distributed in accordance with the original dispositions.

(4) Where property is appropriated by a personal representative in or towards satisfaction of a general legacy of money, stamp duty under the heading mentioned in paragraph (1) above shall not be chargeable on an instrument giving effect to the appropriation.

(5) An instrument in respect of which stamp duty is not chargeable under the heading mentioned in paragraph (1) above by virtue only of paragraph (1) or (4) above shall be chargeable under this paragraph with stamp duty of 50p.

(6) But an instrument which is chargeable under paragraph (5) above shall not be treated as duly stamped unless it has, in accordance with section 12 of the Stamp Act 1891, been stamped with a particular stamp denoting that it is duly stamped.

(7) Paragraphs (1) to (6) above shall apply to instruments executed on or after 26th March 1985.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of section 50 of the Finance Act 1973. — *[Mr. Lawson.]*

put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 114 (Ways and Means motions), and agreed to.

38. Stamp duty (repeal of certain fixed duties)

Motion made, and Question,

That the following provisions shall have effect for the period beginning 26th March 1985 and ending 31 days after the earliest of the dates mentioned in section 50(2) of the Finance Act 1973—

(1) The following headings specified in Schedule 1 to the Stamp Act 1891 shall be omitted—

(a) The heading beginning "Agreement or contract made or entered into pursuant to the Highways Acts".

(b) The headings beginning "Appointment of a new trustee, and appointment in execution of a power of any property".

(c) The heading beginning "Charter of resignation".

(d) The heading beginning "Covenant. Any separate deed of covenant".

(e) The heading "Deed of any kind whatsoever, not described in this schedule".

(f) The heading beginning "Letter of allotment and letter of renunciation" and "Scrip certificate, scrip".

(g) The heading beginning "Letter or power of attorney, and commission, factory, mandate".

(h) The heading beginning "Precept of clare constat".

(i) The heading "Procuration, deed, or other instrument of".

(j) The heading beginning "Resignation", together with the heading "instrument of resignation of any lands or other heritable subjects in Scotland not of burgage tenure".

(k) The heading "Revocation of any use or trust of any property by any writing, not being a will".

(l) The heading beginning "Seisin" and the heading "Notarial instrument to be expeded and recorded in any register of sasines".

(m) The heading "Warrant of attorney of any other kind".

(n) The heading beginning "Writ".

(2) In section 7 of the Finance Act 1907 (stamping of hire-purchase agreements) for the words from "shall only be charged" to the end there shall be substituted "shall not be charged with any stamp duty".

(3) Paragraphs (1) and (2) above shall apply to—

(a) instruments executed on or after 26th March 1985, and

(b) instruments executed on or after 19th March 1985 which are not stamped before 26th March 1985.

(4) For the purposes of section 14(4) of the Stamp Act 1891 (instruments not to be given in evidence etc. unless stamped in accordance with the law in force at the time of first execution), the law in force at the time of execution of an instrument falling within paragraph (3)*(b)* above shall be deemed to be that as varied in accordance with this Resolution.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of section 50 of the Finance Act 1973. — *[Mr. Lawson.]*

put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 114 (Ways and Means motions), and agreed to.

39. Stamp duty (abolition of duty on contract notes)

Motion made, and Question,

That the following provisions shall have effect for the period beginning 26th March 1985 and ending 31 days after the earliest of the dates mentioned in section 50(2) of the Finance Act 1973—

(1) Subsections (1) and (2) of section 77 of the Finance (1909-10) Act 1910 (duty on contract notes) shall cease to have effect.

(2) Paragraph (1) above shall apply to contract notes made and executed on or after 26th March 1985.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of section 50 of the Finance Act 1973. — *[Mr. Lawson.]*

put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 114 (Ways and Means motions), and agreed to.

40. Stamp duty (exchange rates)

Motion made, and Question,

That provision may be made for the application to certain instruments of section 6 of the Stamp Act 1891 instead of section 12 of the Finance Act 1899.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 114 (Ways and Means motions), and agreed to.

41. Oil taxation (limit on tax payable)

Motion made, and Question,

That provision may be made with respect to the chargeable periods which are relevant for the purposes of section 9(1) of the Oil Taxation Act 1975.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 114 (Ways and Means motions), and agreed to.

42. Oil taxation (exploration and appraisal expenditure)

Motion made, and Question,

That provision may be made limiting expenditure qualifying for relief under section 5A of the Oil Taxation Act 1975—

(a) by restricting the areas relevant to subsection (2) of that section; and

(b) by treating certain expenditure as reduced by the value of oil won in the course of operations to which the expenditure relates.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 114 (Ways and Means motions), and agreed to.

43. Relief from tax (incidental and consequential charges)

Motion made, and Question,

That it is expedient to authorise any incidental or consequential charges to any duty or tax (including charges having retrospective effect) which may arise from provisions designed in general to afford relief from tax.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 114 (Ways and Means motions), and agreed to.

Procedure Resolution

Motion made, and Question,

That, notwithstanding anything to the contrary in the practice of the House relating to matters which may be included in Finance Bills, any Finance Bill of the present Session may contain the following provisions taking effect in a future year—

(a) provisions with respect to the deduction of tax from interest on certain loans;

(b) provisions with respect to allowances under Chapters IV and V of Part I of the Capital Allowances Act 1968 (dredging and agricultural land and buildings);

(c) provisions amending section 343 of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1970 (building societies);

(d) provisions with respect to allowances under Chapter I of Part XIV of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1970 (patents and know-how);

(e) provisions with respect to allowances and charges under Chapter I of Part III of the Finance Act 1971 (machinery and plant);

(f) provisions with respect to initial allowances in respect of expenditure on qualifying hotels, within the meaning of section 38 of the Finance Act 1978; and

(g) provisions amending section 56 of the Finance Act 1978 (capital receipts in respect of shares subject to approved profit sharing schemes).

put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 114 (Ways and Means motions), and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in upon the foregoing resolutions by the Chairman of Ways and Means, Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer, Secretary Sir Geoffrey Howe, Mr. Secretary Jenkin, Mr. Secretary Tebbit, Mr. Secretary King, Mr. Secretary Ridley, Mr. Michael Jopling, Mr. Peter Rees, Mr. John Moore, Mr. Barney Hayhoe, and Mr. Ian Stewart.

FINANCE

Bill to grant certain duties, to alter other duties and to amend the law relating to the National Debt and the Public Revenue, and to make further provision in connection with finance, presented accordingly by Mr. John Moore and read the First time; to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 111.]

National Health Service (Charges)

10.44 pm

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): I beg to move,

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the National Health Service (Charges for Drugs and Appliances) Amendment Regulations 1985 (S.I., 1985, No. 326), dated 5th March 1985, a copy of which was laid before this House on 11th March, be annulled.

Mr. Speaker: It will be for the convenience of the House also to discuss the following motions:

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the National Health Service (Dental Charges—Variation) Regulations 1985 (S.I., 1985, No. 352), dated 7th March 1985, a copy of which was laid before this House on 11th March, be annulled.

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the National Health Service (Charges for Drugs and Appliances) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 1985 (S.I., 1985, No. 353), dated 7th March 1985, a copy of which was laid before this House on 11th March, be annulled.

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the National Health Service (Increase of Dental Charges) (Scotland) Regulations 1985 (S.I., 1985, No. 354), dated 7th March 1985, a copy of which was laid before this House on 11th March, be annulled.

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the National Health Service (Charges to Overseas Visitors) Amendment Regulations 1985 (S.I., 1985, No. 371), dated 11th March 1985, a copy of which was laid before this House on 11th March, be annulled.

Mr. Meacher: Before I come to the substance of this matter, I wish to register a strong protest at the manner in which the motions have been handled by the Government. They know that it is an issue of acute public interest and that the £2 prescription charge is an exceedingly unpopular move, so they are trying to smuggle through the orders at a time of maximum distraction by the Budget debate as late at night as possible.

I can give Ministers the assurance that they may control the business management of the House and manipulate it to their purpose, but they will not and cannot stop this issue from being raised on every platform throughout the country as an election issue. It may be that at the next election it is a £3 prescription charge.

We reject these orders first and foremost because, in conjunction with other Government policies now being unveiled, they represent — if they have not already reached this point — a final, decisive break with the principle so valued by the people of this country of an NHS free at the point of service for all who need it, irrespective of income, class, age and gender.

That principle is being smashed this year by a combination of a £2 prescription charge—which is no longer marginal but which is a real, onerous and damaging tax on the sick—a limited list which will, for the first time for thousands of people previously protected in exempt categories, mean that they will pay through the nose for the drugs they need, and a general practitioner voucher scheme now being examined by the DHSS—however much the Secretary of State may ignore it—that will privatise general practice in this country on the American pattern.

I warn the Government that all three measures are bitterly resented by the people of this country who want none of Reagan's health care here and have no intention of returning to poor law medicine when money, vouchers and means tests — not medical needs — determined treatment. We object to the orders——

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): Did not the Labour Government introduce prescription charges in legislation immediately after the last war?

Mr. Meacher: Prescription charges in 1951, when the Labour Government left office, were a minuscule fraction of what they are today. The majority of people in this country would like to return to that level of charge rather then the current £2.

We object to the orders because a 10-fold increase in prescription charges is as harsh and vindictive a symbol of six years of Thatcherite Government as is the trebling of unemployment. It cannot be justified by the actual rise in the cost of drugs. The great majority of drugs prescribed have not shown excessive cost increases, and some have actually become cheaper per unit to the NHS since the mid-1970s. Increased prescription charges cannot be justified in terms of there being no alternative sources of income within the health budget, which the Secretary of State likes to pretend is the excuse.

I shall mention one other single item. How can the Secretary of State—Mr. 1,000 per cent., as we should no doubt dub him—explain putting up charges 10-fold for poor people as well as the better off when his Department this year will still hand out £135 million in tax relief, paid for by the same taxpayers, for the promotional expenses of the drugs companies when, under this Government, they have already had a guaranteed rate of profit of up to 21 per cent.? How can that possibly be justified? I will give way to the Secretary of State if he wishes to answer that question.

This huge prescription charge hype—which this year is five times the annual rate of inflation — can be justified only by the Government's obsession with markets and privatisation and their craven determination to undermine the principles of a National Health Service built on Socialist lines and designed to override the inequalities and injustices of market forces.

But even the Government have gone over the top this time because, according to a parliamentary answer on 16 November 1984, a half of all prescriptions dispensed have a net ingredient cost of below £2. That must mean that millions of people will be forced this year to pay more for their prescriptions than it costs the NHS to dispense them. Patients are being forced to subsidise the NHS in exactly the same way as council tenants are being forced to subsidise the rates through their rents continually being hyped up under the Conservatives. The same principle is being operated, pushing up charges to the point where there is forced distribution from the poor to the better off.

Mr. Tim Eggar (Enfield, North): As the cost of prescription charges makes the same contribution to the NHS budget as it did in 1968, when the then Labour Government reintroduced prescription charges, will the hon. Gentleman confirm that the criticism that he is levelling at the present Government would have been levelled by him at that Labour Government in 1968?

Mr. Meacher: The hon. Gentleman's figures are not quite correct — *[Interruption.]* — but I object to prescription and other charges forming anything like the proportion of total NHS expenditure that they will this

year, and that is the case whatever the Government in power. I wish to be in a Government who will wind down, rather than push up, prescription charges as a proportion of NHS revenue.

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): If the hon. Gentleman were now the Secretary of State, given the present economic conditions, at what level would he fix prescription charges?

Mr. Meacher: I would want them to be much lower than £2. It will be one of the priorities of our manifesto to reduce prescription charges to well below that level. I give that assurance to the people of Britain, though no doubt, by the time of the next election, the charge will not be £2. Indeed, perhaps the Secretary of State would care to say what the charge will be in 1987-88, it having increased 10 times in six years. By that time a prescription will cost between £3 and £4.

Mr. Tim Yeo (Suffolk, South) *rose*——

Mr. Meacher: I will not give way. This is a short debate and I hope that the hon. Gentleman has an opportunity to take part.

The Secretary of State's justification for the increase when he made his statement on 11 March was that extra revenue for the NHS had to come from somewhere. That was his only excuse. There was no alternative, he claimed, but to increase charges. He said:

"If we want to see more resources going to the health service, charges must make a contribution to that growth."—[*Official Report*, 11 March 1985; Vol. 75, c. 22.]

I am glad that the Secretary of State nods his assent. Of course, that statement is untrue. The Government have said that the increase in revenue from all the increased NHS charges this year will be £40 million. A week ago the Chancellor of the Exchequer handed out, predominantly to the rich and better off, £155 million through further concessions in drawing the teeth of capital gains tax and a further £50 million from the abolition of development land tax. I shall give another example of where alternative revenue could come from if only the Government had half a mind to look elsewhere. Ten days ago *The Times* carried this story on its front page:

"It has been estimated that defence contractors made a windfall excess profit of up to £360 million between 1980 and last year because the old 20 per cent. profit rate had been set too high by an independent review board and because the Government had refused to make a unilateral reduction in the rate."

That means that the Government are ready to insist on screwing an extra £40 million out of sick patients but decline to take back from defence contractors a sum that is nine times that figure in excess profits clawed out of the Ministry of Defence by some of the most lucrative contracts in the country.

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow) *rose*——

Mr. Meacher: No, I shall not give way. The hon. Gentleman must seek to make his own speech. If the Government want an example of alternative revenue from within the NHS, the Minister should look no further than his own recent audit of private medicine abuses. I am glad that the Minister nods. His Department audited only one sixth of the district health authorities in England and Wales. It found corruption in private practice that was cheating the NHS of about £10 million a year. If he were now to audit—I should like to know why he is not doing this — the other five sixths of the health authorities, he could save far more for the NHS by making defrauding consultants, rather than sick patients, pay.

The principle of a comprehensive dental service that is free for all has virtually collapsed. Charges have escalated so far over the past six years that after 1 April patients will be obliged to pay an average contribution of about 60 per cent. of the full cost of their dental fees. The damaging features of the latest round of swingeing increases in dental charges and the real risk that they will deter people from seeking treatment and that their manner is such that they offer a price incentive to removing teeth rather than dentists seeking to preserve natural teeth, and that is not desirable.

How much better it would be if instead of there being a tax on dental health the Government attacked the causes of dental disease and not treatment. The Government are already taxing cigarettes and alcohol heavily and surely they should now be taxing sugar. That would be a far better alternative to this attack on dental health.

These huge increases in NHS charges are wrong, unpopular and unnecessary. There are far better ways of raising the money if the Government really need it.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South) *rose*——

Mr. Meacher: No, I shall not give way. These increases are a harsh and damaging tax on the sick. They will hit hardest some of the poorest and most vulnerable in our society. We reject them; we shall vote against them; we shall campaign against them and in the end we shall repeal them.

10.59 pm

The Minister for Health (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): Five sets of regulations are being taken together. They have one point in common—they all raise revenue for the NHS. We make no apologies for raising revenue for patient services in the NHS. The hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), in trying to explain his position, got himself into total confusion about from where he would or would not raise revenue and his attitude towards the NHS.

The hon. Member for Oldham, West began with a ringing declaration on behalf of the National Health Service, committing himself and his party to a free service that was free at the point of delivering treatment, and so on. We would all subscribe to his declaration. He went on, however, to remind us of some of his actions in the House during the past few weeks. He was, once more, against a selective list of drugs. He said that he would deprive the Health Service of £75 million of savings which can be devoted to patient care. The hon. Gentleman is against the charges that are raised in these regulations. He is therefore, against another £70 million of revenue being raised for the Health Service, which it can spend on developing these services. His only suggestion for compensating the Health Service for this loss of income, which would undoubtedly lead to cuts in services, was to introduce taxes on food with a tax on sugar.

We are putting forward the proposals for one reason only—because we support the NHS and think that it is legitimate to carry on raising extra revenue for patient services so long as the revenue is raised from those who can afford to make a reasonable contribution.

Mrs. Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): Did my right hon. and learned Friend notice that the hon. Member

[Mrs. Jill Knight]

for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) said that he believed in this service being free for all, irrespective of income? Would that mean that a considerable number of extremely wealthy people who are well able to pay for what they need would be able to get free dental health services?

Mr. Clarke: It would mean that. The hon. Member for Oldham, West was totally irrational from the beginning to the end of his speech, as the Labour party has been irrational in its approach to a charging policy in the Health Service ever since it introduced charges in 1951. Since then, from time to time, the Labour party has promised to abolish those charges. The Labour Government abolished charges once, and then reintroduced them. The Labour Government froze the level of charges but did not abolish them the last time they were in power. It is unfortunate that we have go through this annual ritual as Labour spokesmen try to produce something that could be called a credible policy.

We make no apologies for raising revenue in this way, because we believe that we are raising only a modest contribution towards treatment from those who can afford to pay. Of course, many of them may not want to pay. Many of us do not like to pay for services that might otherwise be free. We have been concerned to ensure that no one in need is denied necessary treatment on financial grounds.

All of the pleas of the hon. Member for Oldham, West about the burden on the poor or the deterrents to treatment founder on the fact that we maintain the wide-ranging arrangement for exemption and remission which we inherited from the Labour Government when they instated the present pattern of charges. The result is that 72 per cent. of prescription items are dispensed free with a further 6 per cent. going to the holders of prepayment certificates. We are talking about the 22 per cent. of prescriptions paid for by those who can afford to make a modest contribution.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): My right hon. and learned Friend has raised an important point. During the debate on the Budget, we heard from the Opposition nothing but bleatings that those who can afford to pay should pay. Now we hear the opposite—those who can afford to pay should not pay. How on earth can my right hon. and learned Friend explain this?

Mr. Clarke: I agree. It is axiomatic that the votes that the Opposition will cast tonight will mainly benefit people above the incomes level of those who at the moment are entitled to exemption. The Opposition are about to cast a vote on behalf of the better off, against the NHS depriving the Health Service of revenue and putting £2 a time into the pockets of those who do not qualify for exemption.

Because the charges that we raise are from a comparatively small proportion of the population, they make only a modest contribution to the funding of the Health Service. That revenue will account for only 3·2 per cent. of total Health Service spending in the 1985-86 financial year. My hon. Friend was right when he said that in the last year of the Wilson Government, in 1969-70, the then Labour Government raised 3·5 per cent of the income of the Health Service from charges, and relied more on charges than we do.

Mr. Meacher : Why bother?

Mr. Clarke: The modest percentage that we are talking about will amount to £460 million worth of the income of the National Health Service, and that is the scale of the sum that the hon. Gentleman would sweep away if it remains his policy, which was quite obscure, that somehow a Labour Government will give that income altogether.

Mr. Meacher: Before the right hon. and learned Gentleman seeks to make capital out of the intervention of his hon. Friend the Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell), let me quote from the Central Statistical Office series "National Income and Expenditure 1983" which states that in 1968-69 the proportion of NHS revenue coming from charges was 3·1 per cent. According to the same series, in 1982-83, the figure was 6·2 per cent. — exactly double.

Mr. Clarke: I was talking about the last year of that Labour Government — 1969-70 — when the figure was 3·5 per cent. That was a higher proportion than the 3·2 per cent. for which our charges will account.

Mr. Meacher: That is right—3·5 per cent. Only half of what it is now.

Mr. Clarke: I am amazed that we agree on a figure. I am used to Meacherite figures from documents. If the hon. Gentleman looks at the right year, he will find that the proportion was higher.

Mr. Robert C. Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, North): I accept that it was a regrettable step years ago when the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins) —now a Social Democrat—who was our Chancellor of the Exchequer, introduced prescription charges. However, the Minister is now defending the Prime Minister, who said that the Government had no intention of increasing prescription charges. We are now in the £2 ball game, but prescriptions charges were 10p when the right hon. Lady made that statement. Is the Minister aware that two elderly constituents of mine, who came to see me at the weekend, will have to pay for prescriptions for a drug that they have been taking for 35 years?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. Interventions should be brief.

Mr. Clarke: I am sure that there were tears in the hon. Gentleman's eyes as he walked through the Division Lobby to support the reintroduction of prescription charges in 1968-69, and that he was even more distressed when he voted again to put them up the following year, and even more distressed when he failed to vote for their abolition at any time when the Labour party got back into power. The fact is that we are now relying on them to a lesser extent than the Government of whom he was a supporter, if not a member, in the late 1970s.

Let me tell the hon. Gentleman exactly what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said at a press conference on 24 May 1983 during the general election campaign. She said:

> "No responsible Government, no responsible Opposition, no responsible politician could rule out the possibility that prescription charges will rise. So I wouldn't dream of ruling it out."

My right hon. Friend has never at any stage pledged us to the abolition of prescription charges, and she would not dream of doing so now.

I should like to deal with the meat of the regulations. I shall not spend time reminding the Opposition—they

do not like to be reminded—that the Government are spending more on the NHS than ever before, and certainly far more than the last Labour Government or any Labour Government. Our spending is now double in cash terms what it was when we took office. It is 20 per cent. more in real terms, over and above the movement in prices, than was spent by the Labour Government. Therefore, in putting forward the charges, we are merely supporting a policy of increased spending on patient services in the NHS, and that is the only basis on which they are put forward. Increasing the basic charge from £1·60 to £2 will bring in an extra £19 million, from those who can afford it, to help offset the cost of the drugs bill, which now stands at £1·5 billion a year.

The hon. Member for Oldham, West compared the £2 prescription charge with the cost of some of the prescriptions that are dispensed. Of course, a flat rate charge, which is not related to the cost of prescriptions, will mean that the charge is rather more than the cost of some prescriptions and less than the cost of others. That has always been the case. The average prescription will cost about £4.50 next year, so we are imposing a charge that represents well under half of the average total cost of a prescription item. As I have said, 72 per cent. of prescriptions are dispensed free in any event, and we are not changing the exemption arrangements.

The cost of the prepayment certificates has also increased—four monthly ones from £8.50 to £11 and annual ones from £24 to £30.50. They are excellent value for those who think that they will require frequent prescriptions but are not exempt. They help to meet the problems that can arise for those who need frequent medication.

We have made a small concession, the need for which was impressed on us by hon. Members on both sides of the House. If, in future, someone takes out a season ticket —the prepayments certificate—but finds within one month that he is exempt, or if, unfortunately, the patient dies, the cost of the ticket will be reimbursed. It is not a big change, but it shows that we continue to try to be sensitive to the problems that arise for some people when paying prescription charges.

The hon. Member for Oldham, West said that the new charges would have a deterrent effect on people seeking drugs. He and his predecessors have said that every year as we have steadily taken prescription charges back to a reasonable level. That assertion does not square with experience or the facts in any year. The number of prescription items dispensed has increased from 300 million in 1979 to an estimated 320 million in 1984, and I do not expect it to drop in 1985 after these increases. There are fluctuations, but there is no deterrent effect because the charges are imposed only on those who can afford to pay.

I tried to follow what the hon. Member for Oldham, West said when he attempted to put together an argument suggesting that certain types of treatment are now more financially advantageous. I find it hard to take seriously anything that the hon. Gentleman says on this subject. When he last discussed this matter he claimed that more than 90 per cent. of people have to pay the maximum charge when they visit the dentist. In 1983-84, about 85,000 courses of treatment attracted the maximum charge out of a total of more than 30 million. That represents less than 0·3 per cent. The hon. Gentleman's statistics on dental charges are more unreliable than his usual Meacherite statistics. Perhaps he was referring to the routine treatment maximum which we raised from £14.50——

Mr. Meacher: Yes.

Mr. Clarke: He is wrong there, because more than 9 million courses of treatment consist of treatment for which no charge can be levied. That is 30 per cent. of the total. Of the remainder, 46 per cent. are provided free. That means that about 60 per cent. of people pay nothing when they visit the dentist.

Of the remaining courses, for which people pay, about half attract a charge of less than £14·50. There will be no increase in that charge, because such patients are already paying the full cost. The regulations therefore relate to about 20 per cent. only of all visits to the dentist. That is the proportion affected by the changes in the regulations. The increases in many of the charges are modest. The main change is in the charge for routine treatment, such as fillings, scaling, X-rays, extractions, and periodontal and endodontic treatment, where the total cost of the treatment is more than £14·50. I shall describe the effect of the only significant change that we are making after I have given way.

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): The right hon. and learned Gentleman mentioned one third of 1 per cent., over 60 per cent. free and only 20 per cent. paying, but why in heaven's name is anything being charged? It sounds as though it would be much cheaper if it were all free.

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman successfully identifies the dilemma which faces the Opposition. We are raising a perfectly worthwhile sum, which will be spent by those who provide the services of the NHS, but only from a comparatively small section of the population who can afford to make the payments. That is why the Opposition's obsession with how we are persecuting the poor and driving down the level of treatment is consistently contradicted by the facts of what happens each year after we make the changes.

The main change is to routine treatments which cost more than £14·50. I agree that the change being made is a little complicated, but it is a step towards a fairer system of charging for patients who pay. We are raising to £17 the level to which patients must pay the full cost of their treatment. Patients will pay 100 per cent. of the cost up to £17, unless they are exempt. Above that level, patients will now pay 40 per cent. of the extra cost. That means that instead of a sharp cut-off at £17, the charge will be related to the cost of the treatment. That is the only significant change in dental charges. It moves a step towards a fairer system. The increases produced will be modest, and in two thirds of the cases affected by the change the increase will be less than £10.

Hon. Members argue that increases in charges deter people from visiting the dentist. That is contradicted by all experience. Nevertheless the Opposition repeat that claim year in, year out. The number of courses of dental treatment has continued to increase from 28·5 million in 1979 to 32·6 million last year. After the increases last year, which the Opposition vigorously opposed, the increase in the total number of treatments appears to have been about 1·6 per cent. The deterrent effect of which Opposition Members talk is not borne out in practice; nor will it be next year.

Mrs. Renée Short (Wolverhampton, North-East): According to figures issued by the British Dental Association, the cost of having a back tooth root filled will increase to about £36. Under the scheme, if a patient has some exemptions, it can cost £25. Does the Minister not see that the difference between the high cost of having one tooth filled and the cost of having it extracted, which is just more than £3, will not improve dental care for patients who cannot afford to pay the filling charges? They would prefer to have their teeth pulled out.

Mr. Clarke: The change will produce a larger than average increase in the cost of certain routine treatments for which we are moving towards getting charges more closely related to the actual cost of the treatment received. That is fairer between patients. The comparison that the hon. Lady makes has always been the case. The system of dental charges always made it much cheaper to have teeth extracted but, as she knows, in modern dental practice people do not opt to have a tooth extracted if it can be saved. Experience shows that they are increasingly prepared to pay a modest charge to have a tooth saved. Those who cannot afford it and who would be driven by financial extremes to have a tooth extracted which could be saved are protected by the low income exemptions. All who are adversely affected financially have a free choice, because they are exempt from charges.

Finally, I shall deal with overseas visitors' charges, of which less has been made this year. We have raised their charges in line with the new charges for private patients. The hon. Member for Oldham, West wisely did not complain about the level of the increase, because he no doubt approves of the fact that we have increased the charges of private patients in the NHS by about 14 per cent., although the actual rate varies according to the type of hospital.

For the first time, we have improved on the system that we inherited from the previous Labour Government in yet another way, by taking into account capital costs and administrative costs in setting these charges. The overseas visitors charges must match that. I hope that no hon. Member will claim that the overseas visitors charges are discriminatory and racialist; they replace more discriminatory provisions that existed before, and they raise income from visitors who come from countries which charge British patients who visit those countries. We had only six complaints about the system in 1983, and we investigated them all. We are raising about £2 million each year from those charges, which is a worthwhile contribution to the service.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): The Minister said that the charges raise £2 million. Can he tell us what the net profit from those charges is?

Mr. Clarke: We always thought that the administrative costs would be insignificant. Although it is obviously not a net income of £2 million, it is undoubtedly a substantial income to the service. The problems that were allegedly going to occur on the administrative front have not occurred in practice, so far as we are aware.

We are raising the charges, plus the private patients charges, to a reasonable level which we believe can be withstood by patients without deterring anyone from treatment. The effect is that we contribute to our increased spending on the National Health Service. We maintain the exemption arrangements to ensure that the increases do not adversely affect the poor.

We have this debate annually. It is probably as well that it is taken late at night to spare the embarrassment of Labour Members, whose protestations become stranger each year. I hope that by the time we end the debate tonight, the hon. Member for Oldham, West will be a little clearer about the Labour party's policy this year, what the charges would be if the Labour party were in power, and what they might be if it returned to power, the hon. Gentleman said that the Labour party would wind down the charges raised by the service. He would wind down £460 million worth of income to the service if he did so. He may believe that he could take credit for that, just as he may believe that he could take credit for the fact that the Labour Government did not abolish or increase charges, but froze them for their entire period of office. We increased them 10 times because we inherited them at such an artificially low level.

When the Labour Government came to office, they were completely uncertain about what to do, but their decision was foolish and irresponsible. It was a bad decision, taken for politically expedient reasons at the expense of the National Health Service. Did they believe that the NHS did not need the money? It did, if one considers how little they spent on the service compared with what we are spending on it now. Did they believe that the Health Service needed a little money, but not much more, when they maintained the level of charges? Of course, they did not. They were impaled on the horns of a ludicrous political commitment which they knew they could not afford, but to which they clung at the expense of the Health Service. As a result, they deprived it of revenue.

We believe that we should collect all the income that we can reasonably expect to be collected by the National Health Service for the National Health Service. We shall be rigorous in collecting it from private practice. We deplore abuses and lax financial control, and we have taken steps to prevent them. The hon. Member for Oldham, West draws on what we are doing to collect income from private practice to augment his speech. We collect income from private practice, from dental charges, from prescription charges, from overseas visitors and from road traffic accident charges, because we believe that the system is reasonably fair. It exempts the poor and those who cannot pay, and it raises money for an extremely good service that can put it to the benefit of patients.

A vote against the regulations is a vote against the service, unless and until the Labour party can explain from where on earth it will get the money to maintain patient care.

11.23 pm

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton (Fife, Central): We are used to the repetitious speeches of the Minister for Health on the Health Service, but the fact is that the people of the country do not believe that the Government are doing other than decimating the Health Service. I have said before in the House—and I repeat—that the evidence is there for everyone to see.

Tonight, we are debating three further stages in the dismantling of, and the attack on, the fundamental principles on which the Health Service is based. First, the optical services will be dismantled in a few days' time.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman did not mention that, and it may not be strictly relevant to the debate, but only children under 16, students under 19 and those on supplementary benefit, family income supplement, or other low incomes, will, from 1 April, be eligible for NHS glasses. Everybody else will be paying for their glasses, but through the private system of profiteering—or, as the Government call it, competition. If anybody believes that that will lead to reduced prices, he had better think again. They will have a rude shock when they go to pay for their glasses.

Secondly, GPs will no longer be able to prescribe certain drugs on the NHS. We have already been round this course. Only a limited number of generic drugs will be available to treat certain conditions. Some of the drugs will be available over the counter, but elderly people, children and low income families now exempt from NHS prescription charges will have to pay. The latest figure for the Government's estimate of the savings from this is £75 million. I doubt whether that will be achieved.

The main attack is the health charges that we are discussing. After six years of Tory government, in which they say that the nation has progressed, we have had growth and they are on course with their successful economic policies, they have succeeded for the first time in British history in giving us the £2 gallon of petrol and the £2 per item Health Service prescription charge. That is the measure of their success. They may say that they are doing this because they believe that, where possible, people should pay for the service that they get, as that is the gist of the Government's argument not only in health but in other sectors.

The Government always come up with the claim that 70 per cent. are exempt from charges. However, there are always a certain number of people just on the margin, who are just below entitlement for welfare benefits. They will suffer more than somewhat from the imposition of these charges. It is no good the Minister saying, as he did when my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) tackled him about dental charges that mean that it will be cheaper to have a tooth extracted than filled, that that has always been the case. That is not a justification for an extension of the practice. The right hon. and learned Gentleman knows as well as I do that there are already crooked dentists who are extracting and making fortunes. I have the figures, which have been given to me by the Minister and the Scottish Office, in parliamentary answers. This is only a minority, but some dentists make £200,000 gross and more because they are extracting teeth rather than filling them.

Although the British Dental Association has made representations to the Department of Health and Social Security asking the Department to remedy, alter, change or modify the system by which dentist are paid, which is the incentive for engaging is such malpractices, for one reason or another the right hon. and learned Gentleman has not moved to attempt to alter, modify or change that system. If the right hon. and learned Gentleman is looking for savings, there may be minimum savings by this means, but since he does not turn up his nose at saving a million or two in certain other ways, why does he not do so here?

The Opposition have asked questions many times in the House, as I did when I was on the Public Accounts Committee, about the extortionate profits that are made by the drugs companies. If the Government want to make real savings in the National Health Service the right hon. and learned Gentleman ought to be much more ruthless about the drugs companies. I believe that he would like to be. He wants any savings that are made to be transferred to patient care. I believe that far greater savings could be obtained by tackling the drugs companies much more ruthlessly than the Government have done hitherto. Those savings would be far more dramatic than any savings that could be achieved by means of the regulations. I believe the right hon. and learned Gentleman knows that very well. Much more evidence is needed of the Government's determination to move in that direction. Regulations of this kind, which hit those who can ill afford to bear the burden, would not then have to be laid year after year.

If such regulations are considered in the context of the Chancellor's speech only a short time ago—about a low-wage economy and an increase in National Health Service charges—one sees that those on low incomes are continuously bearing all these burdens while people earning £20,000 and more have benefited from Budgets ever since 1979. Such regulations penalise those on low incomes. We are arguing about the basic injustice and unwisdom of it.

I do not know what a future Labour Government would do, but we agreed that the National Health Service is under-funded. Given the likely economic position of this country in three years' time, it will be very difficult to find additional revenue with which to finance the National Health Service. The Labour party set up the NHS in the face of fierce Tory opposition. We are determined as soon as possible to return to the fundamental principles upon which the NHS was based. This Government are willingly, deliberately, eagerly, moving away from that basic principle by imposing heavier and heavier charges and are seeking to excuse themselves by saying that the savings will be transferred to patient care.

I do not know by what method this House could control the direct transfer of such savings to patient care. There is no means by which the House could find that out. This is a smokescreen and the Minister knows that it is a smokescreen. We shall have no hesitation about going into the Lobby tonight to oppose these charges, because we know very will that it is not the end of a story that will continue to be extremely squalid until this Government come to an end.

11.29 pm

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): Once again we have had a collection of ritual words from Labour Members. It was particularly interesting to hear the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), because this time he made a right mess of it, did he not? He started off by saying that he would abolish charges for all. We would all like to abolish charges for everybody. It would be nice to have a free NHS. But it is worth remembering that national average earnings are approaching £200 a week and that would only benefit the best off in our society, including many hon. Members, who can perfectly well afford to pay for those aspects of their care for which the Government are charging them.

Then the hon. Gentleman said that we should tax sugar. Does he realise in just how many thousands of foodstuffs that people eat every day of the week sugar is found? It is found in bread, biscuits, soup, every kind of preservative and canned fruits, not just in food that is sweet. Sugar is a major preservative. I am not held back by any payment from the British Sugar Corporation. It is

[Mrs. Edwina Currie]

in every item that we eat. Therefore, the hon. Gentleman is saying that he would be pleased to see us taxing food. He would be pleased to see us taxing the food that is particularly eaten by people who cannot afford a range of choice. We are against taxing food. We have said clearly that we are against any kind of VAT extension on food. He would like to tax food; clear note should be taken of that.

Thirdly, the hon. Gentleman has a major problem because he tried hard to have a go at the Government's spending on the NHS. Yet the Government's funding of the NHS in real terms and in money terms, their results, the number of patients treated, the ways in which they are treated, the general health of our society and all the other improvements that we have seen since 1979, show that the hon. Gentleman has a real problem on his hands. Therefore, I do not blame him for making a mess of the opposition to the Government on these issues.

Nobody likes charging for prescriptions. It would be nice to have a free NHS. As long as three quarters of the prescriptions go free, we cannot argue that the charges prevent abuse. I am on record as saying in the House this time last year and previously that the wrong people get free prescriptions. It is wrong that every woman in the country from the wealthiest to the poorest should receive free contraceptives when people dying of cancer have to pay for their prescriptions, whether they have pre-payment certificates or not. Once again, I urge my right hon. and learned Friend to put that anomaly right.

As long as the charge bears no direct relation to the cost, we are not telling people what their treatment costs. We have begun to put that right with dental charges, and I urge the Government to see whether we can make the cost of prescriptions relate to the cost of the drugs so that we can tell people that their drugs are expensive and that they will be charged a proportion of their cost, perhaps with a limit, so that they will begin to understand exactly what it costs to treat them.

The charges irritate people and they put some people off, but on the dental side there is no evidence that they put a lot of people off. The number of people receiving dental treatment is well up and we can take the charges in our stride. We must have the charges, because they raise £500 million a year. Without them, the NHS would be in trouble. That is a perfectly adequate reason for having them.

The attitude of Labour Members is opposition for the sake of it, When it comes to the NHS it is sheer humbug. They would not abolish the charges. They would "reduce them below £2". How generous. For how long? Where would they find the rest of the money to make up the income thereby lost to the NHS? They did it once and they brought them back immediately. Harold Wilson, now the noble Lord Wilson of Rievaulx, resigned from the Government in 1951 when charges were introduced and he abolished them when he became Prime Minister in 1965. He then reintroduced them, within a matter of months, in 1968. He was an Oxford graduate who read politics, philosophy and economics, as did many other hon. Members, and if he could not manage without prescription charges, we can be pretty sure that nobody could. I am sure that the hon. Member for Oldham, West could not. The Opposition tried twice to have free prescriptions and they failed twice. They reintroduced those charges twice and they would do the same again.

The Opposition would create even more problems for the NHS, given half the chance, because they would abolish pay beds altogether. When I was responsible for the Queen Elizabeth hospital in Birmingham, which had a budget of about £15 million, £1 million of that was raised by the charges that we made for our pay beds. It was the Labour Government of the 1960s, under the then Secretary of State, Barbara Castle, who did their best to drive pay beds out of the NHS, and almost succeeded. But in reality they only drove private patients away from the NHS into private hospitals, and consequently the NHS lost a great deal of income that we are not likely to get back. We only lost income and the opportunity to treat our people in the way that they deserved.

To deny the NHS—as the Opposition would—the sum of £500 million, or something very close to that this year, would be to deny many people the opportunities for treatment that they now have. If we abolished charges, or even reduced them in the way that has been suggested, waiting lists would be increased, research would be diminished and capital programmes would be destroyed just as they were last time this was tried. The worst off among our people would lose the most.

The Opposition's approach to the whole NHS, and particularly to NHS charges, is one of empty oratory. I am glad to support the Government.

11.40 pm

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): The hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) suggested that one genuine way out of this annual ritual over the increasing of prescription charges might be to relate the prescription charge to the cost or value of the drug. That might be one solution, but it does not commend itself to me, and I do not imagine that it would commend itself to other hon. Members either. We would then be making people pay according to the severity of their illnesses or according to how unlucky they had been in contracting a specific illness. Therefore, although I do not question the hon. Lady's motives in making that suggestion, I do not think it would commend itself to a Government.

The Minister's speech and that of the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) showed that statistics can be used to prove anything. The Minister has performed as one would expect a slick QC to perform, particularly in his deployment of the argument over the NHS drugs bill. In the past few weeks hon. Members have been told that the limited list is necessary and essential because we must reduce the number of prescriptions, and some of the excessive and unnecessary prescribing that goes on. But when it is pointed out that proposals for dental charges and increasing prescription charges may have a deterrent effect, he denies it and says that prescribing is increasing and that that is to be greatly welcomed. He uses the same piece of information to prove one argument one week and another, quite contradictory, argument the next week. I shall be interested to hear the Minister's response to that.

We have also heard that we could tackle the cause of dental problems by taxing sugar. The hon. Member for Derbyshire, South referred to the number of products containing sugar. To be fair, however, to the hon. Member for Oldham, West, I think that he was speaking

specifically about the 2 lb household bag of sugar. But that suggestion might commend itself if the Government guaranteed that the revenue raised would be pumped into preventive medicine, and into putting more emphasis on preventive education. That might be a plus factor for that suggestion, but I by no means endorse the suggestion as it stands.

Mrs. Currie: Does the hon. Gentleman realise that he is suggesting that it is perfectly all right to feed our children on convenience foods, but that he will tax good home baking?

Mr. Kennedy: With great respect, I think that the part of the country that I come from has more distinguished home baking—I think that even the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland who is responsible for health will agree with me about this—than most other areas. That is not a sensible interpretation of the remark.

We oppose the charges, but not because we deny that charges are a fundamental part of health finance. We do not deny that charges have to be increased. The Government should come clean and operate an annual uprating in line with the inflation rate. That is where we part company with Labour spokesmen. I do not know what price the Labour party would put on prescription charges if it were in power, but we favour increasing prescription charges automatically in line with inflation each year. That is fair.

Of course we should like to move towards scrapping prescription charges and towards reducing the burden which they impose, but we must be honest and realistic. We cannot abolish them because of their contribution to funding the Health Service.

Mr. Gerald Malone (Aberdeen, South): From what base would the Alliance calculate prescription charges? If the base is similar to that proposed tonight, will the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends support the Government? If not, what is his base?

Mr. Kennedy: The base is 1979 when the Conservatives came to power and started the round of changes. That is a straightforward answer.

Let us not forget why the Government propose such a massive increase. It is not just that charges were frozen by the last Labour Government, but because the Secretary of State announced that he would save £100 million through the limited list. It was an inadequate list and now the still rosy and optimistic estimate is that £75 million will be saved by that means. A large part of the difference is accounted for by the charges announced in haste before the Budget and shortly after the revised limited list was agreed. That is neither a consistent nor fair way in which to decide NHS prescriptions.

The Minister said that increased dental charges did not appear to deter people from seeking dental treatment. The Government are well known for their faith in market forces. They must see the logic of continuing to increase charges. Ministers tell all Departments that if they do not make themselves commercially attractive customers will not place orders. If the Minister continues to place such a burden through dental charges the service will cease to be attractive, or attainable, and the take-up, which he claims is increasing, will begin to subside.

The optical services have almost been moved out of the NHS. Our worry is that if we proceed with such levels of uprating — which are dictated more by short-term responses to Treasury demands than by a consistent policy for ploughing growing resources into the Health Service —we shall do immense damage. With my right hon. and hon. Friends I shall be joining the Labour Opposition in the Lobby to oppose the proposals.

11.50 pm

Mr. Richard Hickmet (Glanford and Scunthorpe): It is somewhat extraordinary that the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) should say that the Social Democratic party is in favour of prescription charges and will maintain them, yet, when asked at what level prescription charges will be maintained, he says at the 1979 level, plus the retail price index. That is a novel and extraordinary statement. If and when the disastrous day occurs when his party has power, how will he get back to the figures that he mentioned?

Prescription charges are designed to produce £500 million income for the NHS—about one third of the drugs bill. The debate has been about the cost of providing the drugs, the savings to be made and the increased income from raising charges. Therefore, it is legitimate to examine precisely towards what the costs, if we pass these regulations, patients in the limited categories affected will have to pay £2.

In my ignorance and innocence, I thought that we were talking about the costs of manufacture, research and development. But of the £12,069 million 1982 drugs bill, an astounding £182 million was accounted for by sales promotion, distribution and information. It is legitimate to ask how much of the £2 proposed charge will service promotional costs. In 1982, sales promotion accounted for £130 million. That is a quite unacceptable figure if we expect patients to pay £2 for their prescriptions. Of that £130 million, £60 million was spent on representatives. With respect to my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Health, according to a parliamentary answer last month he is unable to provide information about how representatives operating within the pharmaceutical price regulation scheme are paid or remunerated. If we expect people to pay £2 towards prescription costs, it must be legitimate to ask how that figure is made up. It is £60 million on representatives, £32 million on advertising, £17 million on literature and £12 million on information items, such as data sheets, material for medical symposia, and samples. Although the promotional costs have been reduced from 10 per cent. of the 1985 drugs bill to 9 per cent., they will still amount to £135 million.

I wish to make it clear that I believe that it is necessary to find the funds for which the Minister is asking to contribute towards those costs. However, it is not satisfactory that companies operating within the pharmaceutical price regulation scheme should get away with those expenses. If we are examining the charges to patients, we must similarly examine the costs of the drugs being supplied. Inasmuch as the cost of the drugs will be represented next year by £135 million of sales promotion — or 9 per cent. — and if we take into account distribution costs on which £60 million was spent in 1982 —and my right hon. and learned Friend does not have information on how that figure was made up—£200 million of the cost of the 1982 drugs bill of £1,300 million is represented by sales promotion, information items and distribution costs.

[Mr. Richard Hickmet]

If we must increase prescription charges to £2—regrettably, I accept that the increase is necessary—the time has come for the pharmaceutical price regulation scheme to be examined carefully. When I asked the Secretary of State how the items to which I referred were examined and what control existed, I was told in a parliamentary answer that the matter was controlled by an ad hoc formula. May we be told what sort of formula controls expenditure of £200 million? Whatever the formula, it cannot be satisfactory if it is conducted by an ad hoc method.

It is unacceptable that the NHS should have to pay for sales promotion, distribution and information amounting to almost 15 per cent. of the drugs bill, while at the same time we expect patients to pay £2 towards the cost of their prescriptions. There must be a cheaper way to disseminate information to doctors.

I shall support my right hon. and learned Friend tonight, but I urge him to accept that the time has come for a detailed examination of the PPRS, its operation and its cost to the NHS. It is a thoroughly bogus argument to say that research, development and investment in this country will be cut unless we take action of this nature, when such alarmingly high sums are spent to persuade gullible doctors to prescribe the most expensive drugs on the market.

On the subject of doctors and charges to private patients in NHS hospitals, is my right hon. and learned Friend satisfied that all such charges are being levied, that consultants are passing on information to the relevant authorities so that charges can be collected when patients are treated privately in hospital and that waiting lists are not kept artificially long as a result of pressure on consultants to perform private work? The time has come for a thorough review of the manner in which drugs in the NHS are costed.

11.58 pm

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): The hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Hickmet) expressed the fears, worries and doubts of hon. Members on both sides of the House about the advertising and distribution costs of the drug companies in relation to the NHS.

More important, he expressed the deep concern that is felt by many members of the public, for it is becoming obvious that a reason for the size of the drugs bill is the extent of the figures that the hon. Gentleman presented and the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Fife, Central (Mr. Hamilton).

When Conservatives ask Opposition Members, whatever their party, what they would do to reduce prescription charges—at a time when the Government are increasing them to £2—they are insulting the sick. Whatever way the issue is considered, the increased charges are an extra tax on the sick. Any Government who would impose value added tax on the intimation of a death in the press are capable of imposing the tax that we are debating.

I shall explain to the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), the Minister and anyone else who wants to listen why prescription charges need not have risen on this occasion and previously since 1979 when the Government came to power and the prescription charge was 20p. We all remember how Hoffman La Roche had to return millions of pounds to the NHS because it had been bleeding the service dry through overcharging it for the drugs that it was supplying. We remember vividly that millions of pounds had to be returned to the NHS because it was discovered that Hoffman La Roche—I suspect that other drug companies have been involved as well—were supplying a service and making——

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton: Extortionate profits.

Mr. Ewing: As my hon. Friend says, the company was making extortionate profits at the expense of the NHS and, directly, of sick people. There is undoubtedly widespread abuse of NHS facilities by private practice. The hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Hickmet) referred to £159 million when talking about the advertising of products. If that sum were added to the money that Hoffman La Roche returned to the NHS and to the sums that would become available by clamping down on the widespread abuse of NHS facilities by those engaged in private practice, we would be able to fund this increase and every other one that the Government have imposed since coming into power in 1979.

We do not need lectures from Conservative Members on the difficulties of reducing prescription charges.

Mr. Malone: It is important that this issue is clarified. To what level does the hon. Gentleman think that the charges should be reduced? At least the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) was patently honest on this score. By my calculations, he was saying that his party would introduce charges of about 35p that would be based on the rate of inflation. Is that a figure that the hon. Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing) would accept? If not, what figure would he consider reasonable?

Mr. Ewing: The hon. Gentleman is not a lawyer cross-examining a witness now. It is for the Government to defend the £2 prescription charge, which is a tax on the sick. I invite the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Malone) to defend this tax on the sick at Aberdeen over the weekend. If he had listened slightly more carefully—he usually listens quite carefully—to my remarks, he would be aware that I explained that if the Government were to clamp down on the widespread abuse of NHS facilities by private practice, a significant contribution would be made to the move to reduce prescription charges.

The Government commissioned audits of health authorities in England and Wales, but we have not reached that stage in Scotland because of the complacency of the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland who is responsible for these matters. However, we shall come to that. There is evidence of abuse in Scotland as well, including one outstanding case that the Government refuse to do anything about. There is widespread abuse within the NHS as a result of private practice using NHS facilities. Nearly £200 million is spent—that sum has been mentioned by the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe—on advertising and distribution costs.

If the sums that I have mentioned had been brought together, it would not have been necessary to increase the charges. The 35p rate that the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) has talked about in using the formula laid down by the SDP causes me to have a funny feeling that it was thought out on the spur of the moment by the hon. Gentleman. Of course, that is typical of the SDP, the party of instant policy makers. I suspect

that the policy was framed at about five minutes to midnight. I have a funny feeling also that the SDP will live to regret the pronouncement of policy by the hon. Gentleman. We shall come to that in another debate.

Since 1979, there has been no need to increase prescription charges.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Does my hon. Friend agree that one solution to the problems of NHS finances and the way in which prescription charges have increased would be to have a democratic, publicly owned and controlled drug industry? The NHS would not then be like a beggar at the doors of these multinational companies.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That may be, but it is outside the scope of the measure before the House.

Mr. Ewing: I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Figures published by the Government — the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South will be especially interested in them — show that 40 per cent. of prescriptions do not cost £2 an item, yet the Government still impose a charge of £2 an item on the person who is prescribed the medicine. That can only be described as a tax on sickness. The hon. Member for Derbyshire, South said that 70 per cent. of prescriptions were free. That may have been true before the restrictive drug list was introduced. It is certain that that 70 per cent. figure does not now stand examination. Four out of every five of the more than 1,800 items removed from the list of drugs available on prescription from the NHS were prescribed for people who did not pay for their medicine. These drugs are no longer available to doctors to prescribe on the NHS, and those four out of five people will have to buy their medicine across the counter.

I imagine that the percentage of prescriptions that are free is much lower than 70 per cent. Only time will tell whether the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South, who shakes her head in disagreement, is correct or whether I am correct in asserting that, because of the restrictive list, we have prevented many people from obtaining free medicine.

Mrs. Currie: The hon. Gentleman said that the £2 prescription charge is in some cases more than the cost of the item. That may well be true with regard to the cost of the drugs, but as one with an interest in this subject, in the sense that my family are retail pharamacists, I put it to the hon. Gentleman that somewhere along the line some one has to pay the pharmacist as well. A dispensing fee is involved.

Mr. Ewing: I have an interest in this matter as well, because many of my constituents are patients. My interest is only with my constituents, who are patients, and that is why I am arguing their case so forcefully.

I am the first to concede that one of the major improvements in health has been in the dental health of young children and teenagers. It is always a source of great pride to me when I look at young people with excellent teeth, because over the years it has been made relatively easy for them to pursue a course of dental treatment, either from an orthodontist or a dental practitioner. These charges will deter people, especially youngsters—there is no point in the Under-Secretary of State shaking his head —from going to dentists to obtain the treatment that will maintain the improvement in dental health which I am proud we have achieved.

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): Is the hon. Gentleman aware that 50 per cent. of children under the age of 12 in England are now caries-free, and that that is a result of better nutrition, better dental health and the use of fluoride? Therefore, there is no question of them being deterred.

Mr. Ewing: I do not want to digress into the argument about proper eating habits and all that is associated with it. I caution Government supporters about venturing into that debate, because it was the present Government who deliberately sank the report on proper eating habits at the request of the companies that were feeding money into the Tory party funds, the sales of which would have been affected if the proper eating habits report had been adopted by the Government. Therefore, that is not an advisable argument for Tory Members to follow. There is no doubt that as a result of the increase in the charges, dental health will suffer.

The quicker the Government tackle the problem of the dentist's contract, the better they will be able to come to grips with the abuses in dental practice. Ministers know the flaws and defects in that contract. They know that it is easy for a dentist to reduce his NHS output, and because he is on a net target income, he is paid the same net target income for doing less NHS work. Then he increases his private practice, which leads, as my hon. Friend the Member for Fife, Central said, to dentists earning £200,000 a year. Dentists deliberately reduce their NHS output, and while obtaining the same net target income from the NHS, increase private practice output and thus earn those massive sums. Ministers must have the will to tackle that problem.

The effect of the prescription charges will be devastating on patients. I do not know for the life of me how any right hon. or hon. Member can come to the House and seek to defend these substantial increases: this tax on the sick. The Government's unpopularity is now beginning to manifest itself. On Thursday last week the Secretary of State for Scotland had the ignominy of losing a regional seat in his constituency that has been a Tory seat for nearly 80 years. That is only the beginning. It will go on and on until the Government are removed from office and a Labour Government are returned to power, committed as we are to give a free and decent Health Service to the people.

12.12 am

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): The proposal by the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) to impose a tax on sugar as a means of ameliorating prescription charges is quite extraordinary. In making my speech, as always, I declare that I have an outside interest in the sugar industry. Therefore, I am interested to hear the hon. Gentleman attack constituents of his hon. Friends the Members for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) and for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) and apparently attempt to reverse the Labour party's policy by imposing a tax on sugar, which, if it were ever to be approved, would affect the price of every other food product on supermarket shelves. The hon. Gentleman is trying to turn the clock back to the days of Disraeli, who abolished the sugar tax.

Therefore, I hope that the hon. Gentleman will do his homework and that in future he will pay attention to the report of the panel that reported recently on diet and

[Mr. Michael Shersby]

cardiovascular disease, and made no recommendation for a reduction in sugar consumption. Therefore, his arguments are not well founded. They are merely parroting the cries for yet another tax burden on people who can ill afford to pay. The hon. Gentleman should think again before he talks about such taxation.

I should like to refer to the pharmaceutical industry and pick up the remarks of the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. Hamilton), who was a member of the Public Accounts Committee. I am a member of that Committee at present. I remind the hon. Gentleman that the work that he and his colleagues set in hand when he was a member of that Committee, in using the pharmaceutical price regulations scheme to reduce the profit margin on pharmaceutical products, has been carried on by the present Committee. Profit margins on drugs are today even lower than they were when the hon. Gentleman was a member of that Committee.

The remedies thrown out by the Opposition today in their desperation to justify their extraordinary policies do not wash, and the hon. Member for Oldham, West had better do better in future debates.

It being one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 3 (Exempted Business).*

The House divided: Ayes 179, Noes 268.

Division No. 166] **[12.15 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Rad'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Concannon, Rt Hon J. D.
Conlan, Bernard
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cowans, Harry
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Garrett, W. E.
Golding, John
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Central Fife)*
Hancock, Mr. Michael
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McCrea, Rev William
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Paisley, Rev Ian
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Radice, Giles
Redmond, M.
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robinson, P. *(Belfast E)*
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ryman, John
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Mrs R. *(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'kl'ds E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Allen McKay.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Hon Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(N Luton)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*

Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, E. *(B'y St Edm'ds)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(SW N'folk)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(W Herts)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Gregory *(Derby N)*
Knight, Mrs Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parris, Matthew
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Spencer, Derek
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, John
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Terlezki, Stefan
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wilkinson, John
Wolfson, Mark
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Peter Lloyd and
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones.

Question accordingly negatived.

Mineworkers Pension Scheme

12.27 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Industry (Mr. David Hunt): I beg to move,

That the draft Mineworkers' Pension Scheme (Limit on Contributions) Order 1985, which was laid before this House on 11th March, be approved.

The order follows the standard form of earlier orders and concerns only those who left the coal industry before 6 April 1975. It continues the policy, established by the National Coal Board (Finance) Act 1976, whereby the costs of meeting a deficiency in the mineworkers' pension scheme fund resulting from the need to pay pensions to the many people who left the industry before 6 April 1975 is reimbursed through Government grant for the period up to 1995. Each year that the level of pensions is increased, higher deficiency contributions may be required by the fund. Under the Act, the Government may reimburse these to maintain the real level of those pensions if they are satisfied that the National Coal Board's finances do not permit it to take on the additional burden.

The long and damaging strike in the industry—happily now ended, but still casting its shadow—leaves the board in no position to do so. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy has laid before the House a statement giving the reasons why he is satisfied that an increased contribution from the Government is justified. Therefore, I ask the House to approve the order.

12.29 am

Mr. Alexander Eadie (Midlothian): The House must be aware that some of the origins of the order lie in the statement that Mr. MacGregor made at the beginning of the industrial dispute, when he said that it was a little local difficulty outside town. It has been rather an expensive local difficulty. The Chancellor has just wound up the important Budget debate. He is the Minister who said that the dispute was a worthwhile investment. The order shows the price of that local difficulty and worthwhile investment.

Many of my hon. Friends, particularly those associated with the mining industry, understand the history of the order, which concerns the mineworkers' pension scheme. The scheme started off on a voluntary basis. As a local trade union official, I remember extolling to my fellow miners the virtue of having a pension when they were due for retirement. It was perhaps a sad commentary on the times that many of the miners were of the view that they would not live long enough to draw the pension.

It was right that the unions and the National Coal Board decided to make the miners' pension scheme compulsory, but it is a miserable pittance of a pension for many of my fellow miners who have spent 50 years in the industry.

Perhaps I should declare an interest. I am a member of the mineworkers' pension scheme. Having spent 30 years in the industry, most of it at the coal face, I shall get about 50p a week when I retire. My wife and I have not yet decided, when the time comes, whether we shall take it weekly, monthly or quarterly.

I do not cite this example as a diversion from the issues that we are discussing. I am just taking the opportunity to recall that when the pension scheme was set up on a voluntary basis, it provided for a small fixed pension in return for a flat rate contribution. Eventually, that resulted in the introduction of the minimum pension level for men with 10 or more years' service, to which the Minister alluded, being uplifted to the current level of £11·81.

It was one of my more pleasurable moments, as the Minister responsible for the coal industry in 1975, to be associated with the introduction of an earnings-related scheme. I could not understand why miners, in every grade of the industry, should not have a superannuation scheme. I was there to assist in putting it right; and that meant that fortune was shining on me because of my association with the industry.

This point is not an aside, because it illustrates the miserable pittance of a pension provision that miners who retire under the miners' pension scheme have today, compared with what will happen with pension provision for those who retire with the superannuation scheme. That £11·81 after 50 years in the industry is a miserable recognition.

The Minister may be aware that it has been the policy of the NUM to seek the further uplifting of the minimum pension payable to men who retire between January 1952 and April 1975 who, in the majority of cases, have spent a lifetime in the service of the industry.

Last year the National Union of Mineworkers' conference called for the minimum pension to be increased to at least £20 instead of £11·81. I do not believe that that was an extravagant claim. The resolution also called for appropriate increases in widows' pensions. The basis for that claim was that the minimum pension now paid to the pioneers of the pension scheme is totally inadequate in relation to their loyal service to the industry. I ought to point out to the Government that this will not be a continuing financial burden. Some miners have already left us, and time will account for the rest.

The Opposition understand the purpose of the order and do not oppose it. However, I believe it is right to draw these points to the attention of the Government and I hope that they will receive favourable consideration.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Before my hon. Friend sits down, could he deal with the strange anomaly that a miner upon retirement will be able to get his pension but that for some vindictive reason the regional adjudication officers now say that he cannot get the unemployment benefit to which he is entitled for the first 12 months? This Government have apparently given instructions to those who deal with unemployment benefit that, although miners can receive their pension, they are not to be given unemployment benefit because, even though the strike is over, there is still a trade dispute. A thousand and one anomalies spring to mind. A retired miner in my constituency has ended up with a massive shortfall because of Government intervention and their contention that the trade dispute is still in progress.

Mr. Eadie: I take the point raised by my hon. Friend. My intention was to deal with it in more detail next Thursday, and I shall do so. However, my hon. Friend is quite correct. There appears to be a spirit of spite and vindictiveness abroad after the resolution of this dispute and an organised return to work. I understand that it was an adjudicator in Manchester, who perhaps does not have enough work to do or who is acting on behalf of the Government, who decided, despite what has been said in the newspapers and on television and radio, that the mining dispute had not ended. Because of a legal quirk and

case law, he decided that he would not consider this industrial dispute ended until he received notification of its end from the National Coal Board. Last Friday I dealt with such cases. Many of my constituents who have given a lifetime of service to the industry discovered that they have been deprived of their unemployment benefit because this person in Manchester—with perhaps not enough to do, but perhaps in collusion with the Government and in a spirit of vindictiveness — has decided that miners cannot receive unemployment benefit until the National Coal Board reports by letter to him or to the appropriate quarter that the industrial dispute has ended.

There is another anomaly. I hope that the Minister can dispel the fears of Government collusion over the overtime ban. If that person in Manchester does not have enough to do and is seeking to argue that the industrial dispute in the mining industry is continuing because of the overtime ban, and if he thinks that it is possible in law to deprive miners who have sought and received redundancy pay of their unemployment benefit, he had better do his homework a little better.

The overtime ban was in force before the industrial dispute started. In scores of cases men who left the industry or were made redundant have received their unemployment benefit. I hope that the Government will not hang their hat on that peg. If they do, they will be made to look extremely foolish.

There needs to be reconciliation in the mining industry. I hope that the Government will be able to show that there is no spirit of vindictiveness and spite on their part and that this is the result of a foolish civil servant who does not have enough work to do. I hope that before Thursday the Minister will be able to dispel my anxieties and those of my hon. Friends.

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood): I, too, have constituents in a similar position to those of the hon. Members for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) and for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) who are concerned that they are not receiving unemployment benefit. But the hon. Member for Midlothian has not helped the House or the case by making such disparaging remarks about the tribunals which are looking into the matter. He should know that those are matters of law within the tribunal system and that they are trying to go through the process as expeditiously as possible. I understood that the case of one of my constituents had been decided in his favour. We are now awaiting a final decision, and I hope that that will come soon. Would it not be helpful if the president of the NUM, when he returns from Moscow — if he has a return ticket — having had his debriefing, were to say that the dispute is over and that the miners will get on with the business of returning the industry to profit?

Mr. Eadie: I am glad that I gave way to the hon. Gentleman because he has fallen flat on his face. He has sought to argue that what was done by a particular civil servant could be justified. He seeks to argue before the House that miners who retire after a period in the industry with redundancy benefit should be questioned and come under the strictures of law and be deprived of unemployment benefit, just because a civil servant decided that. If the hon. Gentleman wants properly to represent his constituents, he will have to do so in a more positive way than he has demonstrated to the House. Perhaps he should have been a bit more condemnatory of a bureaucrat or of the Government depriving miners of their unemployment benefit.

Mr. Howarth *rose*——

Mr. Eadie: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will contain himself. He asked a question, and I am giving him the answer as I see it. He will find it very difficult to justify to his constituents why they should be deprived of their unemployment benefit. Yet that is what he has sought to do tonight.

Mr. Howarth: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Eadie: I shall not give way.

Mr. Howarth *rose*——

Mr. Eadie: I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Howarth: The hon. Gentleman is scared.

Mr. Eadie: Judging by the hon. Gentleman's face, he is trembling at the faux pas he has made in daring to intervene in something that he knows nothing about.

Mr. Alec Woodall (Hemsworth): Does my hon. Friend remember the issue that we raised a short time ago regarding the adjudicating officer who denied unemployment benefit to miners who had been put out of work? When an adjudicating officer in Yorkshire examined the case and came down in favour of those men, the chief adjudicator pointed out that he was out of step with other adjudicating officers. Thus, the chief adjudicator made the Yorkshire adjudicator change his mind. Is not that Government intervention?

Mr. Eadie *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order Hon. Members are beginning to stray a little from the subject under debate, which is the mineworkers' pension scheme. It is in order to go a little wide, but hon. Members should not pursue the line of argument that is now being put forward.

Mr. Eadie: I suppose that I should accept some responsibility. I gave way quite a lot, but apparently not enough for some hon. Members.

Mr. Howarth: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Eadie: I have already given way once to the hon. Gentleman, and I shall not give way now.

We need more conciliation in the industry rather than obtuse legal tribunals, judgments, and so on. If the conciliation procedure was applied within the industry, we would not need to have recourse to such things. Miners should not be compelled to be subject to these independent tribunals. I make that point in all sincerity, because, if this is to be the future pattern for the industry, the industry will never see a period of reconciliation when the wounds can be healed. We want the industry to return as quickly as possible to producing, and we want the mining industry to expand rather than to contract. However, I fear that in some areas there may be announcements this week that there will be a contraction rather than an expansion of the industry. We would certainly slam the Government for that. I repeat that we should not be involved in legality and so on.

The opposition do not intend to oppose the order.

12.48 am

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood): I rise to speak simply because I fear that the hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) has sought to misrepresent my position.

I may go slightly wide of the order, but I should like briefly to put the record straight. I too have constituents who are in the same position as those of the hon. Member for Midlothian. My hon. Friend the Minister will know, as others of my hon. Friends know, that I have argued strongly in support of my constituents who accepted in good faith voluntary redundancy and the benefits of the redundant mineworkers payments scheme. They and I are upset that they have not been able to obtain the deal that we thought due to them. Therefore, I have argued strongly in support of my constituents, and will continue to do so. The point that I sought to make to the hon. Member for Midlothian was that these matters are governed by a series of laws going back, I understand, to 1911. They are not something dreamed up to deal with the recent dispute.

The tribunals are established to resolve difficult questions of law relating to individual industrial disputes. It is important to understand the role of tribunals and their adjudicating officers.

I have argued with the Lord Chancellor that cases should be speeded up. I shall continue to press the Government to do all that is possible to ensure that these matters are concluded speedily.

The hon. Member for Midlothian has not done the House a service by misrepresenting another hon. Member's position. He can read the *Official Report* to see what I said. He would do the House a favour if he described my position as it is.

12.50 am

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): The hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth) should look back two years to when there was no dispute in the mining industry. People who took voluntary early retirement collected unemployment benefit without any problems. Only in the last 12 months has a difficulty arisen. Tribunals should not make a negative decision in one case and a positive decision in another. That is unfair, but that has been happening since March 1984.

Three sentences in the second paragraph of the statement by the Secretary of State attached to the order could mislead right hon. and hon. Members. It states that for the majority of mineworkers pensions are now £11·81 a week. They went up by 5·1 per cent. last October. The statement says:

"It is estimated that an increase to £11·77 per week would have been required to maintain the real value of these pensions as set in 1974."

All those receiving those pensions retired before 6 April 1975. Many of them are now single ex-miners or miners' widows. Since 1975 state and industrial pensions have been regarded as income for tax purposes. Many miners' widows in my constituency cannot understand why, when they are said to receive £11 a week mineworkers' widow's allowance, they receive only £2 or £3 because of tax. It would be wrong to think that we are talking about a handout from the Conservative Government. It is hard to explain to someone who is 85 why their pension has almost disappeared.

The Secretary of State for Energy says in his statement:

"The strike did not in fact end until the beginning of March, and the outturn loss for the year is therefore likely to be rather higher."

The Secretary of State for Energy should tell the Secretary of State for Employment that the strike ended at the beginning of March because some miners in my constituency have been dismissed without appearing before a court of law. Their families are still being treated as if they were on strike. They have been told to appeal, but in some cases it is months before a date is fixed for the hearing.

It is grossly unfair that people should be told that they must live on supplementary benefit, less £16 a week, when they have been dismissed from the NCB. Such dual standards are disgraceful. Those who have been dismissed are being victimised. For many of my constituents the strike did not end at the beginning of March. Money which is rightly theirs is not being paid to them.

12.55 am

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): The preface to the order states that

"The Secretary of State . . . having reviewed the overall financial position of the National Coal Board . . . have led him to conclude that the following Order should be made."

As my hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) said, the third paragraph refers to the continuing review of

"the Board's finances . . . and the uncertainties generated by the strike in the industry."

Therefore, it is within the terms of the order to debate some of the wider issues of the financial position of the NCB—as we have done on previous orders.

The accounts include provisions for the payments mentioned, but also the general social costs of such matters as compensation for subsidence. I understand that that applies mainly to Mansfield.

Throughout the strike, the Secretary of State for Energy and his underlings have argued about the uneconomic nature of the NCB and the need to sack 20,000 miners and close 20 pits. The basis on which he calculated whether the NCB was profitable included costs that he has now admitted were incurred by people who retired 10 years ago. Social costs such as compensation for subsidence have nothing to do with the cost of producing coal—they are often the costs of not producing coal; of pits that closed 10, 20 or 30 years ago.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): Does my hon. Friend agree that during a meeting Mr. Ian MacGregor of the NCB said that charges for subsidence would devolve upon the collieries or mines that incurred those costs? He said that the collieries in Nottinghamshire that had worked through the strike are those pits likely to close when the subsidence costs become too large.

Mr. Nellist: I fully accept that point.

Mr. Michael Morris (Northampton, South): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am having some difficulty in discovering what the hon. Gentleman's speech has to do with section 2(3) of the National Coal Board (Finance) Act 1976. I should be grateful for some guidance.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The debate is primarily about mineworkers' pension schemes, but it is in order to refer to the general finances of the NCB.

Mr. Nellist: My hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) spoke about the costs of subsidence, and I

agree with him. After the closure of pits, those left will bear a higher burden under the current method of organising the profit and loss accounts of the NCB an will become more uneconomic because of costs outside their control.

Even if the Government decided to close every pit in the country, there would still be social costs — early retirement, pensions, sudsidence and so on. That was spotted during the strike by accountancy professors including, ironically, a professor from Manchester university who is sponsored by Price Waterhouse, the firm the Government sent to chase the miners' money around Europe, and such people as Dr. Andrew Glyn from Oxford university.

Given those criticisms, and the fact that the order shows that such matters are included in the accounts, has the Department looked at the way that the NCB's finances are organised and which items are included? Has the Secretary of State any proposals to bring before the House ways in which the NCB accounts could more accurately reflect the cost of producing coal, not including the costs of not producing coal currently in the accounts?

If that was done, and if the social costs, interest charges and so on were taken out of the accounts for Cortonwood —which is perfectly possible under other parts of Tory legislation in regard to privatisation — rather than making a £6·20 per tonne loss that pit would make £5·20 per tonne profit. Does the NCB intend to re-do its accounts on that basis?

Mr. Rob Hayward (Kingswood): The hon. Gentleman has spoken about the timescale involved in identifying subsidence costs. Is it not a fact—the hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) could confirm this — that that issue was discussed long before the strike and was considered by the Select Committee on Energy before the dispute began?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I said that it was in order to make some reference to general finances, but that such reference must be connected to the mineworkers' pension scheme.

Mr. Nellist: The finances of the NCB make it possible for pensions to be paid to miners. As I explained, the instrument gave the impression that the Department had considered the finances at various times in the last 12 months. I am questioning whether those finances have been considered sufficiently to justify what the Government are proposing.

The Chancellor said when introducing the Budget that the strike had cost about £2·5 billion. That was 10 times more than the Secretary of State for Energy hoped to save by the plan announced by MacGregor. We on the Labour Benches believe that the real cost was between £5 billion and £6 billion. Put in language of bricks and mortar, working people have paid for that dispute the equivalent of 60 large general hospitals, 360 comprehensive schools and over 100,000 new three-bedroom houses. That has been the cost of the 12-month dispute that the Government foisted on the National Union of Mineworkers, and last Tuesday the Chancellor described it as a worthwhile investment.

We should be told more about the financial implications of the companies that supply equipment and machinery to the NCB. An analysis of the profit and loss accounts of those firms in the last few years would show in mirror image terms that when the NCB declared a loss of £200 million to £400 million, those companies together declared profits of £200 million to £400 million. In the last 12 months, workers in the industry have learnt that lesson. They will be demanding of the next Labour Government that those companies be taken into public ownership so that proper planning can take place.

A final cost of the strike must be taken into account. That is the cost of there being no social peace in the mining communities. Apart from the 750 miners who were sacked during the dispute, 11 in my area, many have been downgraded—from, say, face to surface work—as part of the NCB's victimisation policies.

The dispute is not over. The emphasis has changed. The miners are back at work, but the guerrilla war goes on. The social tensions in the pits will have financial implications for the industry. Think of the cost to the NCB of no allowing those 750 men to return to the pits to work with their mates.

As the result of a decision that we on these Benches made last week, Labour Members will continue financially to support those sacked miners to the tune of at least £12 a week because we believe that they have been the victims of Tory policies in the past 12 months. It is all very well for Tories to moan and grumble but they should cast their minds back to the murders that took place under the Smith regime in Rhodesia. Amnesties were granted to those who were guilty of some of the most heinous crimes recorded in history. However, the Tories still refuse to grant an amnesty to those who defended and stood by trade union policy over the past 12 months.

The strike will continue — well, the dispute will continue. Over the past 12 months the miners' struggle has given heart to millions of workers who equally oppose the Government's actions. The Prime Minister thought that it would be a three or four-week dispute. It was thought that it would not cost the coal board or the Government much. The right hon. Lady treated it as an industrial Falklands. She sent in the police equivalent of 2 Para, who were sent in at Goose Green. She thought that it would be an equally short dispute but she was proved wrong, particularly by the youth and the women in the coalfield areas.

It is beholden on the House to re-examine the way in which the Government view the coal board's finances, including the items that they incorporate in the finances when they declare that the board has made a loss. I have described the way in which a new generation of Socialists have been created in the coalfield areas. Young men and women have been brought into industrial and political activity for the first time because of the Government's actions. They are starting to learn the lessons of Socialism. They know now what proper nationalisation and proper public ownership must mean under the next Labour Government. That will not be the sort of public ownership that we have seen under the Tories, and it will not embrace the way in which they have run the coal board's accounts.

1.7 am

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): After the contribution of the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist), I wish to return briefly to the subject matter of the debate.

In the weeks shortly before the commencement of the strike, many of my constituents, accepted terms for early retirement in good faith. They were given a clear definition of the package that they were being offered by the board. The strike intervened during the period of notice

[Mr. Spencer Batiste]

and as a consequence—I accept that the Department of Energy has taken all the necessary steps to deal with its involvement in the package—some of my constituents and the constituents of some of my hon. Friends have not received the money to which they believe themselves to be entitled.

I understand the complexities of the legal situation and the problems and the history of employment law, but it seems that we faced a simple issue. A group of people had promises made to them by the NCB about the package that they could reasonably expect if they accepted early retirement. Having accepted early retirement, however the legal problems may be resolved, we would surely expect them to receive their entitlement.

1.8 am

Mr. David Hunt: The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) talked about entitlement to unemployment benefit and the hon. Members for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) and for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) added their comments. The hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) asked about claims for unemployment benefit, I can tell him that they will be decided by independent adjudication. The adjudicators are specially appointed under the Social Security Act and the Government have no power to intervene.

As soon as the difficulty to which the hon. Member for Midlothian referred became apparent in the Department of Energy, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State moved swiftly to amend the redundant mineworkers payments scheme last November. There was a great deal of pressure from my hon. Friend the Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth), as well as my hon. Friends the Members for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart) and for Elmet (Mr. Batiste) and many other of my hon. Friends and Labour Members, to ensure that those who found themselves disqualified from receiving unemployment benefit for the duration of the dispute by virtue of section 19(1) of the Social Security Act 1975 would not in addition lose the RMPS basic weekly benefit or pension supplement. We responded to that pressure.

In direct response to my hon. Friend the Member for Elmet, I say clearly that I sympathise considerably with the men who took voluntary redundancy after being counselled in good faith, as my hon. Friend the Member for Cannock and Burntwood has said, that in addition to their statutory redundancy benefits and the benefit available under the RMPS they would receive unemployment benefit, and who now find themselves disqualified from that benefit. I understand that an appeal is due to be heard on 16 April by a tribunal of commissioners and that their decision will be binding in similar cases. I shall carefully monitor the position.

The task is made much more difficult by speeches such as the one from the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) who declared, "The strike will continue," but then said, "The dispute will continue." If only the hon. Gentleman would keep quiet—I shall not say "shut up", because it is not the time of night to be rude to him—it would be easier for the NUM to persuade the independent adjudication officers that the dispute is over.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): I am sure that the hon. Gentleman has looked at the Act. If he has not, perhaps he will. If my memory serves me correctly, the word "dispute" is not mentioned. The word "stoppage" is mentioned, and the stoppage is over.

Mr. Hunt: I understand that, under section 19(1) of the Social Security Act 1975, entitlement cannot be established until normal working has resumed at the redundant miner's former place of employment. In certain collieries, there is no doubt that normal working is being hindered by the NUM prolonging the dispute through the imposition of the continuing overtime ban. This is a matter not for the Government but for the independent adjudication authorities. It is a matter that finds more relevance in the debate we shall have on Thursday, when I have no doubt we shall discuss it in more detail.

Mr. Barron: One of the five coal faces at a colliery in Maltby in my constituency is now ready for production, but work has been prevented by the management. Presumably, there would be earnings under the incentives scheme if that mine were in production and the other coal faces were not because they were getting over the problems of the past 12 months. The NCB is stopping normal work at that colliery. That has far-reaching consequences not only for redundant miners but for miners who have been dismissed by the coal board but can receive either unemployment benefit or full supplementary benefit for themselves and their families.

Mr. Hunt: This is the first time that I have heard that accusation, and I shall look into it most carefully.

Mr. Woodall: Is the hon. Gentleman aware, when warning my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) about keeping quite so that the dispute will end, that there was a stoppage and, as my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay) said, the stoppage has finished? Is the hon. Gentleman aware that two of my constituents have been dismissed by the colliery manager? Striking miners who went back to work before the strike ended have accused those men of using foul language about them. One of those men was dismissed today. It is all very well for the Under-Secretary of State to tell us to tread softly, softly; we want an amnesty. The hon. Gentleman should have a word with the coal board about its attitude towards the dispute.

Mr. Hunt: I said that it is difficult to persuade, and for members of the NUM to persuade, the independent adjudication officers that the dispute is over when the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East says that the dispute is not over. I shall, of course, investigate any case if the hon. Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Woodall) gives me details.

However, dismissals are a matter for the NCB and it is up to the NCB to look at each case—I understand that it is willing to do this—in a spirit of reconciliation and conciliation. The task is made more difficult by the NUM still refusing to re-enter normal conciliation procedures. This matter does not really come under this order.

The hon. Member for Midlothian referred to this pension as a "miserable pittance of a pension". I remind him that the Labour Government set the original pension at £3.60 a week. I cannot respond to the hon. Gentleman—not because I do not want to or because I am not sympathetic but because the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) made it impossible for me to respond by stating that the Government had no real power to increase the level of this pension beyond the limit

necessary to bring it into line with its real value as originally set. If the hon. Gentleman will read section 2(2) of the National Coal Board (Finance) Act 1976, he will realise that I am specifically prevented by the actions of his right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield and the Labour Government at that time from doing what he was asking me to do.

Mr. Eadie: I am not disputing what the Minister says. I know that he has been advised from the Box. On reflection, I think that he will understand the origin of the mineworkers pension scheme in 1952, and what could and could not be done. It is a bit thick to tell us that measures inaugurated in 1976 by my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) prevent him from acting.

Mr. Hunt: Without taking that matter too far, what I am saying is that in April 1975—as the hon. Gentleman knows, because he introduced it — the mineworkers' pension scheme was revised and became an earnings-related, self-financing scheme covering men employed in the industry at that date, and also future employees. It was at that moment that the rate was set at £3·60 a week. I am explaining to the House that, under the existing legislation, I am prevented from doing anything other than uprating that pension in line with inflation. That is a fact. Of course, I shall bear in mind and consider carefully the points that he made.

I should like to conclude by referring to the points raised by the hon. Members for Midlothian and for Coventry, South-East about the cost of the strike. The sad fact is that the NCB's finances are so bad that it is necessary to introduce the order. That is a fact. I have no proposals to alter the present accountancy system. Once again we are seeing the inadequate finances of the coal board when faced with the tremendous on-cost of uneconomic pits. Until that tremendous burden is lifted from the industry, the coal board itself will not be able to finance the sort of money that I am talking about.

Mr. Nellist: The Minister says that the coal board's finances are so bad that that is the reason for the order. It is for only £2·14 million, so one can hardly blame the finances of the coal board. I asked the Minister specific questions about the social and other costs included in the coal board's accounts, which anyone can get from the Vote Office. The Secretary of State and other Ministers in the Department refer to the coal board itself being uneconomic. The figures are given for the loss that is made. Included within that are payments for such things as compensation for subsidence, early retirement and so on, which are all social costs, not costs of producing coal, and may apply to miners who left the industry 10 years ago. Those cannot be the responsibility of this generation of miners.

Mr. Hunt: I do not think that I can persuade the hon. Gentleman, other than by putting this fact to him. In the accounts to which he referred there is a loss of £1·3 billion in 1983-84. If the hon. Gentleman is trying to tell the House that that is not a sign that the coal board is unable, for instance, to meet the cost of the order, and, indeed, a whole range of other orders, he is missing the full point behind those accounts, which demonstrate time and again that, if the root cause of the dispute, which was the absurd demand that uneconomic pits should never be allowed to close, had been conceded, that would have meant a deficit increasing from £1·3 billion to many billions of pounds a year. That is just the prescription for financial inadequacy over the whole range of NCB activities that I should have thought hon. Members on both sides of the House would want to avoid.

Mr. Rogers: I do not object to the Minister putting the case for the order, but I wish that he would not try to rewrite the history of the strike in making his case. It would be much better if he confined himself to the order.

Mr. Hunt: I am now being criticised for responding to the debate. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will have a word with his hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-East, who should not have raised these matters in the first place.

Scargill's strike has cost this great industry dear in human and financial terms. To have conceded that irresponsible demand would have cost the country more. However, this is a time for reconciliation, and I hope that Opposition Members will use their influence on all sides in this great industry to put the strike well behind all concerned, to return to proper procedures of conciliation and to start restoring the industry to the great level that existed at the start of this tragic dispute. The Government's commitment is to a viable and competitive coal industry. That commitment is as strong today as it ever has been.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Mineworkers' Pension Scheme (Limit on Contributions) Order 1985, which was laid before this House on 11th March, be approved.

Nurses and Midwives (Pay)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Major.]*

1.20 am

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): It will be interesting to speak in a debate in which Arthur Scargill cannot be blamed. I am pleased that we have with us the Minister for Health, on whose shoulders the blame for this travesty of justice can squarely be put.

I applied for this debate because of the anxiety in the National Health Service and the country about the Government's niggardly, mean and spiteful approach to the settlement of the nurses' and midwives' application for a pay increase. The Government's response is yet another example of their reneging on promises and sliding and twisting out of their responsibilities.

The 500,000 nursing staff in the NHS play a vital role in that service. Their dedication, good will and service to the community are widely recognised. It is a skilled, demanding and responsible job, which requires high personal commitment. Because of their commitment and dedication, however, they are the workers most vulnerable to an unscrupulous Government. If the nurses and auxiliary nurses took industrial action in pursuit of their claim, the whole Government propaganda machine would come into action, with the Prime Minister posturing on television saying that nurses were putting patients at risk.

It is the Minister and the Prime Minister who are putting patients at risk with their deceitful actions. I use the word "deceitful" advisedly, as it is the worst form of deceit to tell nurses and midwives that they deserve realistic pay levels, to set up a pay review body to deliver that promise and then to turn round and tell them that they must pay for their pay increases by accepting reductions in the standards of care for the patients they look after. If an independent body set up by the Government says that nurses deserve far more than a 3 per cent. pay increase this year, the Government should fund it. It is an act of criminal negligence to NHS patients and an abdication of responsibility to set up the pay review body and then to ask nurses, midwives and patients to fund a pay increase.

Staffing levels and the level of care for patients should be determined by the demand put on the Health Service. Pay rates are independent of those factors. Hence, the funding of all awards made by the Government-established pay review body should be treated as a separate matter. To link them is unfair, inequitable and deceitful. Affordability is a political, not an economic, decision. Money to fund what the Government believe to be politically important has been found in the past — examples are too numerous to mention.

The NHS and its staff are essential if we are to have a healthy and economically productive nation. The political will and commitment should be there to fund fair levels of pay determined by an independent body set up by the Government to assess fair levels of pay. The Government's attitude is mean, spiteful and niggardly towards a group of workers in the NHS who cannot adequately defend themselves.

1.25 am

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) on initiating the debate, because it gives us an opportunity to discuss a matter of great anxiety to our constituents. The treatment of National Health Service staff generally has been outrageous.

At the general election in 1979 the Government set certain objectives. The first was to reduce the rate of auxiliaries' pay by threatening privatisation with its reduced pay and conditions. The second was to reduce the comparative position of professional nurses and midwives against that of other groups, such as the police, the military and many in the private sector. I am sure that the Minister will wish to address himself to that when he replies. The third was to apply cash limits with such vigour as to force health authorities, which implement nationally agreed settlements that exceed the cash limit increase, to cut their budgets and reduce services and patient care. That is certainly the position this year. The Treasury stated clearly in November 1984 that there would be an overall increase in the NHS budget of 5·5 per cent. for 1985-86. Provision for pay is 3 per cent. and for additional staff 2 per cent. on the pay bill. Taken together, pay and non-pay elements come to 5·5 per cent. across the board. The Treasury made it clear that, if pay increases exceeded 3 per cent., the extra money would have to come from money allocated for providing more staff and/or improvements in services. What is the value of the 3 per cent. offer? With predictions of an increase in inflation to 6 per cent., 3 per cent. must mean a cut in real pay.

To turn to the immediate issue of the nurses' and midwives' claim, which is covered by the pay board review and which represents more than one third of all health authority costs, if the Government keep to their proposed change in policy of keeping to their cash limits and refuse to fund pay awards above the 3 per cent. cash limit for the NHS, it will have dramatic implications for nurses' and midwives' pay.

The professions have become increasingly suspicious of the Government's motives. Those suspicions were reinforced by the fact that the Minister led the team which gave evidence to the pay review board—obviously to enable him to stress the Government's cash considerations. When the Minister attended those discussions, he placed not the case for the value and contribution of nurses and midwives but exclusively the Government case in securing their cash limit objectives. Yet the profession wants only an objective, fair, independent and realistic assessment of its position. That is why the pay board was set up. It is an act of criminal negligence of the users of the NHS and a complete abdication of all responsibility to set up a pay review board with clear terms of reference based on independence and then to ask nurses, midwives, patients and auxiliaris to fund increases when they exceed Govenment cash limit increases.

When the Minister replies to the debate and tells us that it is important that the Government keep to those cash limits because they do not have the money, I hope that he will address his mind equally to areas where the Government have managed to find the money. Nurses, midwives and ancillary workers should know that, although this year the NHS is costing £17,000 million—the additional amount that we believe should be allocated in this offer is substantially less than that—in two and a half years the Falklands war has cost £2,400 million to secure the future of 1,600 people in the south Atlantic. Furthermore, when the Government were confronted with the need to make a £250 million economy in the National Coal Board, they spent — on their own admission —

£2,500 million to secure that benefit. In the view of some, they may have spent as much as £5,000 million or £6,000 million. Equally, in this Budget, they are cutting capital transfer tax, capital gains tax and other forms of taxation where the beneficiaries will be exclusively the better off in society. Yet, at the same time, they repeat their view that they must keep to the cash limits, and they refuse to pay what we believe is a small increase when one measures the worth of NHS workers.

I hope that, when the Minister replies, he will set out clearly the Government's priorities. Are they to ensure that National Health Service workers are reasonably and fairly remunerated for the contribution that they make to Britain? Does he believe that that is the priority, or does he believe that the Government should persist in handing over large sums of money to small groups of people, and expending their resources on matters that could and should have been avoided, if only the real public interest had been pursued?

1.31 am

The Minister for Health (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): First, may I congratulate the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) on raising this important and serious subject. The hon. Gentleman usually enjoys, as far as I can tell, rude good health, but I realise that this evening he is not as well as he usually is. Therefore, I congratulate him on making the effort to get here at 1.30 am to discuss nurses' and midwives' pay, a subject on which he obviously feels strongly. He received strong support from the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours).

This is not the right moment to consider in great depth the merits of this year's pay claim on behalf of nurses and midwives, because we still await the advice of the independent review body. As the hon. Member for Workington said, I gave evidence on behalf of the Government to the review body, because its advice is of considerable importance to us and to the National Health Service and its development during the next 12 months. All those with responsibilities in this matter — the Government, the health authorities and the review body which advises us—must ensure that we deal fairly with key and dedicated workers in the Health Service. But at the same time we must ensure that resources are available for the development of patient services.

What I shall say now is that the Government have an extremely respectable record on nurses' pay. It is important that the House recognises that. Since 1979, nurses' basic pay rates have increased on average by 94 per cent. That is 26 per cent. more than the increase in prices during the same period. In addition to increasing the pay rates, the Government found the necessary resources —it cost about £116 million—in 1980-81 to reduce nurses' working hours from 40 to 37·5 a week, without any loss of pay to the nurses. That was equivalent to a further increase of 6·5 per cent. on basic pay. As well as giving pay increases to the staff, the numbers of nursing and midwifery staff in the NHS have increased steadily during the period of office of the Government.

We estimate that in England, an extra 39,500 whole-time equivalent staff in these grades were employed between September 1979 and September 1984, of which 24,000 were additional staff necessary to maintain services following the reduction in hours, and the remainder were additional staff for service developments. Those figures speak for themselves, and show the increase in the pay of nurses and midwives, and the increase to numbers in service.

Most important of our actions, we set up the independent review body to advise us on future pay. We did so because the nurses and midwives did not go on strike in the Health Service strike. It is important that those who do not go on strike are dealt with fairly vis-á-vis those who do take industrial action, such as teachers, miners and others.

The Labour party, to which both the hon. Member for Rhondda and the hon. Member for Workington belong, supported the Health Service strike which continued into its last months because the TUC affiliated unions would not accept that we should make what they called a differential offer, offering a larger percentage increase to nurses and midwives than to their members, who had gone on strike against the patients. Therefore, the Government have an excellent record vis-á-vis the nurses on pay and numbers, and giving them a review body because of their dedication to their patients.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Why has the pay of the military and the police risen more than the pay of the nurses since 1979? Is the contribution of those groups greater or less than that of others?

Mr. Clarke: The pay of those groups has risen more because their pay fell behind during the period of the Labour Government, because they were not affiliated to the TUC. The hon. Member knows that he is using two unrepresentative groups for an unrepresentative period to make the comparison. The pay of nurses compares well with inflation during our period of office and with the pay of most other groups.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman remember the Halsbury committee report, which was implemented by the Labour Government over a decade ago? That gave the nurses and other Health Service staff the greatest increase—30 per cent. — that they had ever received. How can the Minister justify a position in which a policeman can go along to a picket line and bash people over the head, and is paid more than twice as much as the poor nurse who has to pick up the bloody battered pieces of the person who lands up in hospital as a result of the policeman's violence? If the Government can find the money to give the police a pay rise, why can they not find the money to give the nurses and the midwives an equivalent pay rise?

Mr. Clarke: I do not think that the average nurse would welcome the hon. Member's use of the police as a contribution to the argument for his or her claim for a pay rise. I have just explained that nurses' pay rates have gone up substantially ahead of inflation during the Government's period of office, and nurses are among the groups of staff that have done well while we have been in office.

The hon. Gentleman spoke of Halsbury in relation to the claim. This is not the stage to argue the merits of the claim, because we do not know what the review body will recommend. When it has produced its recommendations, we shall discuss what we shall pay nurses this year. The staff side has based its claim on Halsbury. As its bid to the review body, the staff side has put in a claim for just over

[Mr. Clarke]

20 per cent. for various grades of the staff. That will cost £650 million and is based on the belief that it would take them all back to the Halsbury level set in 1974.

Such an approach to setting pay should be obsolete. We cannot return to it, first because double figure pay settlements have to be a thing of the past if we are to maintain the low inflation that is necessary as part of the means for restoring our economy.

Mr. Canavan: What about the police?

Mr. Clarke: The police will not get a 20 per cent. pay increase this year.

The idea that a particular professional group chooses one year in which it believes that it achieved a level of pay vis-á-vis other people to which they are automatically entitled to return is a fallacy. Every group chooses a different year. For the nurses it is 1974, for the doctors 1975, while the police will choose current years. Teachers go back to Houghton—I forget what year that was—and Members of Parliament could no doubt choose their favourite year. If historic levels of pay are gone back to and a professional group insists that it is always entitled to go back to that position in the league table, there will be the leapfrogging in pay rises which in the past led to hyper-inflation.

Mr. Rogers: The right hon. and learned Gentleman mentioned that nurses' pay has improved dramatically since 1979. May I refer briefly to the summary of the staff side evidence presented to him:

> "We focus on the low level of nurses', midwives' and health visitors' pay.
> We show that the shortfall in earnings between nurses and other professional workers is around 20%.
> We show that increases of between 15% and 22% would be needed for the main grades to restore the purchasing power of the Clegg award made in 1979.
> We show that 38·5% of nurses and midwives earn less than £101 per week".

To achieve the low pay figure of £110 per week, which is the supplementary benefit equivalent for a two-child family of £115, staff nurses would need a 6 per cent. pay increase and enrolled nurses a 17·7 per cent. increase. In view of these figures, will not the right hon. and learned Gentleman accept that nurses have a very strong claim? This is the evidence not of a raving Left-wing union but of the Royal College of Nursing. This is what it feels about the right hon. and learned Gentleman's pay award.

Mr. Clarke: I know that that is the evidence of the Royal College of Nursing. The Government's respect for the college is demonstrated by the fact that we set up an independent review body to advise us on pay, largely because it is part of the constitution of the Royal College of Nursing that its members do not take strike action. The fact is that the Opposition preferred to support unions which took strike action against patients three years ago. This Government are in a much better position to speak as the friend of the Royal College of Nursing and of those nurses who belong to professional bodies. I have already said that it is not a useful guide in pay determination to take one year as setting a level which determines what is to be aspired to thereafter for each professional group. It leads to each professional group leapfrogging over one another. It is as foolish for the teachers to cling to their favourite year as it is for the nurses and other professional bodies to cling to theirs.

I shall not deal in detail with the evidence. However, one has to work through the figures without knowing whether one is talking about qualified nurses or unqualified nurses, or about student, full-time or part-time nurses. Without arguing about all the comparisons read out by the hon. Member for Rhondda from the evidence, I do not believe that comparisons that are necessarily selective because they are seen to be convenient to the claimant are the only or even the main determinant of pay. A crucial determinant of pay must be the need to deal fairly with one's staff and also the need to recruit and retain staff of adequate quality. That we are doing. There is no difficulty about recruitment.

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): What about the recruitment of midwives?

Mr. Clarke: The recruitment of midwives is an important matter. The recruitment of midwives, for reasons which I do not altogether appreciate, is remarkably patchy. In some places it is difficult for midwives to get jobs, while in others it is difficult to recruit midwives. It is very difficult to match up the trained people with the jobs. Furthermore, about 50 per cent. of those who train as midwives do not practise as midwives. They prefer to go back into general nursing.

A crucial determinant of pay must be the availability of resources. That is not some new hardline cash limit discovery made by the Government, as the hon. Member for Workington implied heavily and emotionally throughout his speech. It is true in every major service and industry. One cannot set pay levels without regard to the level of resources available to pay the staff, certainly not when there are almost 500,000 staff.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: If the pay review board were to recommend a settlement of something more than 3 per cent., would the Government, even at this late stage, say that there might be some flexibility in their position and that they might make a contribution towards that settlement?

Mr. Clarke: I shall come to that in a moment. Let me try, without interruption, to answer the hon. Gentleman's points. He cannot keep on interrupting a flow of argument by asking a new question, as he is doing.

The hon. Gentleman asked me about the way in which we made resources available to finance the NHS, including the pay of all its staff, this year. That is an important question. Therefore, I shall not spend my time reminding him of the background to the issue. We have already doubled cash spending on the NHS. It has gone up by one fifth over and above that achieved by the previous Labour Government.

In 1985-86 we have made available an extra £500 million to health authorities in England alone. That is 5·5 per cent.——

Mr. Canavan: What about Scotland?

Mr. Clarke: An Adjournment debate on Scottish affairs would probably be a more relevant time to give those figures.

A 5·5 per cent. cash increase for the NHS is a substantial increase, over and above any current estimate of inflation for the year. It is also the most that we consider that the country can afford. It shows the Government's determination to increase spending on the NHS at a time when the totality of public spending is being restrained. It

is not the only source of new resources for the NHS. That 5·5 per cent. cash increase is new money. The NHS will also be able to carry through its cost improvement programmes, increase efficiency and improve the cost-effectiveness with which it delivers services. Health authorities generated £100 million-worth of new resources last year alone doing that.

That is the source of money and resources from which the health authorities must, firstly, finance pay settlements, and, secondly, finance service developments. That is the kind of reality within which anybody must work when operating any major service industry. The maximum resources likely to be available must be worked out and out of those resources every bill must be met, including the pay of the staff, which is most important in a service where 70 per cent. of the costs are pay, and the development of the service.

It is true that this year we have made the matter more explicit than in the past. Last year we based the cash allocation to the health authorities on artificial pay norms set for the purpose of public sector financial planning by the Government. When they proved to be way out of line with Health Service settlements, the contingency fund had to be looked to for a contribution towards settling the award. That was unsatisfactory from everybody's point of view in the NHS and did not give anybody a clear guide about where we stood.

This time we have decided the maximum cash available to the NHS—5·5 per cent. It is not based, as the hon. Member for Workington said, on any 3 per cent. pay factor. That has not been applied to the NHS. There is a 5·5 per cent. cash increase, out of which we must meet all our bills, including any increases in pay.

The result is that all we are doing is facing everybody —Government, health authorities, staff and review body —with the reality that there is a relationship between pay and service provision. Were the pay bill for all groups of staff to go up by, say, 3 per cent. we would have a substantial amount of new resources for growth over and above anything the health authorities are expecting and it would enable them to develop the service even faster than they are doing.

On the other hand, if the pay bill goes up dramatically ahead of inflation and if the total pay bill were to go up by something of the order of 6 per cent. or more, it would wipe out all scope for the expansion of the service. Therefore, I hope that everyone will recognise the need to get the balance right and to come up with sensible recommendations and conclusions.

We now have to wait for the report of the nurses and midwives' review body. We have given evidence and so has the staff side. It is too late now to speculate about the content. It remains as independent as ever. We remain committed to implementing the review body's recommendations unless there are compelling reasons not to do so. Common sense is likely to prevail on all sides.

Mr. Canavan: Sit down.

Mr. Clarke: I trust that we shall get a sensible recommendation from the review body and that we shall be seen in the end to have dealt fairly with our staff and the service. If the Scottish matter is debated, I trust that it will be debated in a slightly more civilised fashion. Thanks to the Government's invention of the review body, these matters are debated in a civilised and reasoned way which is fair to a civilised and dedicated part of the NHS —our nurses and midwives.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at ten minutes to Two o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 26 March 1985

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

VALERIE MARY HILL AND ALAN MONK (MARRIAGE ENABLING) BILL *[Lords]*

Read the Third time, and passed.

BOURNEMOUTH BOROUGH COUNCIL BILL *[Lords]*

Considered; to be read the Third time.

EXETER-LAUNCESTON-BODMIN TRUNK ROAD (OKEHAMPTON BYPASS)

Ordered,

That the Committee appointed to join with the Lords as the Joint Committee to consider the Petition of General Objection against the Exeter-Launceston-Bodmin Trunk Road (Okehampton Bypass) Compulsory Purchase Orders (Nos. CSW1 and CSW2) 1984 have leave to visit and inspect the site of the proposed bypass, and any sites which have been proposed as alternatives, provided that no evidence shall be taken in the course of such visit and that any party who has made an Appearance before the Committee be permitted to attend by their Counsel or Agent or other representative.—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Oral Answers to Questions

DEFENCE

Nuclear Warheads (Transportation)

1. **Mr. Janner** asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he is satisfied with the precautions taken to ensure the safety of nuclear warheads when they are in transit.

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. John Stanley): Before answering the question, may I say that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence regrets that he is unable to be present today because of his attendance at the meeting of the nuclear planning group.

The answer to the hon. and learned Gentleman's question is yes, Sir.

Mr. Janner: Will the Secretary of State discuss with the nuclear planning group the higher standards of safety required in the transport of nuclear weapons in the United States than in this country? Is that higher standard the reason why the details of the American safety precautions are lodged with the Library of Congress, while our own Government are unwilling to reveal any details to the House?

Mr. Stanley: The hon. and learned Gentleman will be aware that we have extensive safety precautions that have satisfied the present and all previous Governments. In considering the standards set, we can take some satisfaction in the fact that we have managed to transport United Kingdom nuclear weapons in this country in conditions of safety over a very long period. Nevertheless, we are not complacent, and that is why we keep the safety procedures under review.

Mr. Viggers: Does my right hon. Friend agree that although the warheads themselves are safe, considerable danger is posed by those who seek to disrupt the convoys? Could anything be done to persuade those people to desist?

Mr. Stanley: My hon. Friend is quite right. It is not responsible to seek to disrupt the movement of nuclear weapons.

Sir John Farr: While the warheads are disarmed and are therefore entirely safe to travel by road, rail and air, are not those who seek to suggest otherwise doing serious damage to public safety?

Mr. Stanley: My hon. Friend is entirely right. The safety record, which has endured over a long period, certainly vindicates his point.

Mr. Meadowcroft: What are the implications for the transit of nuclear warheads to and from Greenham Common of any delay in the construction of the Newbury bypass?

Mr. Stanley: I believe that the hon. Gentleman is referring to training exercises. As we have made clear, live warheads are not carried during cruise missile training runs.

Mr. Spencer: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the British Psychological Society has today confirmed the safety of the methods to which he has referred, and that the people of Leicester are much more reassured by what my right hon. Friend has said today than they are by the antics of the city council in putting up "nuclear-free" signs?

Mr. Stanley: I am not intimately familiar with the activities of the British Psychological Society, but I am grateful to my hon. and learned Friend for his comments and for praying that society in aid.

Mr. Denzil Davies: We quite understand why the Secretary of State is not here. We understand that there is a very important meeting in Brussels and we do not object to the right hon. Gentleman's absence. However, will the Minister of State assure us that when the right hon. Gentleman returns he will make a statement to the House about what happened at that meeting? The House is often given no information about such matters despite the fact that hon. Members on both sides wish to debate the issues.

Mr. Stanley: Those matters relate to a later question, but the right hon. Gentleman is aware that it is normal practice to issue a communiqué. I am sure that one will be issued on this occasion.

Sir Antony Buck: Is my right hon. Friend aware that those of us who have tried to look into these matters are satisfied that safety precautions are adequate? Will he consider issuing something like a child's guide for those of us who find some of the technical matters involved difficult, so that we may convince even Opposition Members that the safety precautions are adequate?

Mr. Stanley: The simplest guide that I can give my hon. and learned Friend is that we have made it clear that the most rigorous precautions are taken, as a result of which we have an accident-free record that has lasted for a long time.

RAF Fighter Aircraft

3. **Mr. Stan Thorne** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement concerning the future fighter aircraft for the Royal Air Force.

The Minister of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Adam Butler): Industry completed the feasibility study into the viability of a collaborative European fighter aircraft programme last month. The reports of the study are now being evaluated nationally and internationally. EFA Defence Ministers will review those reports and consider the way ahead at a meeting in Rome, probably in mid-May.

Mr. Thorne: Will my hon. Friend go a little further and give some definite information that I can pass to the 16,000 aerospace workers in Greater Preston, who are worried about the future of their jobs? Should they be looking elsewhere already, or shall we get a positive decision on the EFA?

Mr. Butler: I am sorry that I cannot give the hon. Gentleman a great deal more information now. I see no reason why he should start scaring his constituents and others who work at the factories concerned. The project is progressing as we would have expected. It is extremely complicated and I just hope that when we meet in Rome it will be possible to agree on the next steps forward.

Mr. Robert Atkins: Is my right hon. Friend aware that international collaboration, which we are always seeking, could be between the United Kingdom, Germany, Italy and Spain? If France does not want to participate on the terms that those four countries are setting, it will have to think again, as we must have an urgent decision as soon as possible.

Mr. Butler: It is correct that, as part of the studies into the successor aircraft for the Phantom and Jaguar, we are examining several options, which includes a national one. My hon. Friend has mentioned one route which could be taken. The Government's present objective is to make the project work on a five-nation basis if we can.

Mr. Beggs: Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that the future policy of the Ministry will be to encourage real competition and enterprise in the United Kingdom aircraft industry? Will he confirm that the £60 million saved for the taxpayer and the Ministry of Defence by the successful competitive tender of Short Brothers for the Royal Air Force basic trainer shows clearly that there should never again be a monopoly of supply to the Ministry of Defence?

Mr. Butler: I agree that we have just had a successful competition for the RAF trainer. When talking about aircraft as complicated, expensive and advanced as the European fighter aircraft, however, the competition is much less easy to achieve.

Mr. Wilkinson: Will my right hon. Friend bear in mind that, although the objective of translating the five-nation operational requirement into an operational aeroplane is wholly laudable, it is necessary to keep productive facilities in Britain fully employed? In that regard, if the decision is delayed further, will he consider at the very least ordering a further batch of Tornado aircraft?

Mr. Butler: My hon. Friend always speaks wisely on these matters. We have considerable and close regard to the workload at the relevant British Aerospace factories. I believe that delay beyond a certain point would not be acceptable.

Mr. Carter-Jones: Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that it would be regrettable if delays continued and we ended up in 1995 with an American fighter aircraft bought off the shelf?

Mr. Butler: I hope that that would not be possible, but one has to be completely realistic. It might occasionally be better to buy abroad, but the Government's record on placing business at home is extremely good.

Mr. Favell: Do the options to which my right hon. Friend referred earlier include the possibility of the development of the P120?

Mr. Butler: The P120 aircraft is being considered under the national option.

Mr. Donald Stewart: When the Secretary of State referred to the Short's contract he said that it had been awarded on the basis of the lowest tender. May we take it that that will be the criterion for the award of future defence contracts?

Mr. Butler: It is likely that in all or most cases the two prime criteria of operational performance and cost will be at the forefront of our minds when we reach these decisions. However, we made it clear in that particular competition that the issue of jobs and other matters must also be considered.

Mr. Bill Walker: Will my right hon. Friend bear in mind when he orders the new Royal Air Force fighter that sometimes it is unwise to change the engine and engine mountings of an aeroplane, because it can have disastrous flying results, as every pilot knows.

Mr. Butler: All parties to the present EFA agreement agree that a new engine will need to be developed for the aircraft.

Mr. Concannon: Is not the successful tender of Shorts for the RAF trainer aircraft just a good example of why it was Ulsterised or nationalised at one time?

Mr. Butler: I do not think that the two points hang together.

Mr. Stern: Will my right hon. Friend confirm, if only to reassure my constituents and those of the hon. Member for Preston (Mr. Thorne) and of my hon. Friend the Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell), that he and his fellow Ministers will not allow the French to pursue their standard tactics of delaying a decision until their own product is available?

Mr. Butler: A lot of reference has been made to delay. I do not find that delay exists at the moment. I have made it clear that if there are signs of continuing delay and it is clear that there would be disadvantages from that, we would have to take action in other directions.

Mr. McNamara: Is the Minister aware that we would regard the national option as the least desirable, that there

is a great deal more to be said for long production runs with international collaboration and that, if necessary, and perhaps even preferably, we should work with our Tornado partners, with whom we have had a great deal of experience in these matters?

Mr. Butler: Leaving aside the hon. Gentleman's last point, I am delighted to find that he agrees with both me and the Government on this occasion. It is an unusual occurrence.

European Anti-ballistic Missile System

4. **Mr. Sedgemore** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on proposals for a European anti-ballistic missile system.

12. **Ms. Clare Short** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on proposals for a European anti-ballistic missile system.

Mr. Butler: No such proposals have been made or received by the British Government.

Mr. Sedgemore: If it is true that Britain and Germany have been saved during the past 40 years by the concept of mutually-assured destruction, why is there a need for Europe to back research into costly and speculative star wars mania?

Mr. Butler: The main objective of the strategic defence initiative is to enhance deterrence. Deterrence has kept the peace in Europe for the past 40 years.

Ms. Short: Will the Minister confirm that the United States of America is attempting to persuade Europe to participate in star wars, that in Germany in particular they regard the American proposal for star wars as wholly undermining the strategy of mutually-assured destruction, and that the proposal is destabilising and likely to escalate the arms race?

Mr. Butler: I read reports of what Chancellor Kohl said last week and I do not think that the hon. Lady understands the German position. Participation in research is the only activity which is contemplated. We have made it clear that we wish to participate in that research. The details of that have yet to be worked out.

Mr. Cartwright: Does the Minister agree that any successful development of anti-ballistic missile defences in Europe would not be proof against cruise-type missiles or nuclear weapons delivered by shorter range and battlefield systems? In those circumstances, would not the development of star wars technology leave Europe more, rather than less, vulnerable to nuclear attack?

Mr. Butler: If the interpretation of ballistic missiles is missiles which leave the atmosphere, the hon. Gentleman is right. But, of course, if we can produce a completely effective defence system against such missiles, we shall reduce the risk to Western countries.

Mr. Denzil Davies: The Minister should try to answer the excellent questions put by my hon. Friends. President Reagan's speech has turned the entire Western nuclear strategy on its head, and the Government realise that very well. Does the Minister accept that the Opposition approve of much of the Foreign Secretary's speech a few weeks ago, and that we deplore the expatriate neurosis shown by Richard Perle when he came to London to address some loony Right meeting? Will the Minister say clearly that he deplores the Perle speech and the American initiative in these matters?

Mr. Butler: I am glad that the right hon. Gentleman accepts what my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary said. All of my right hon. and learned Friend's speech rested on the now, I hope, well known four points of Camp David. I noticed a moment ago that the right hon. Gentleman disagreed when I said that the strategic defence initiative had as its main objective the enhancement of deterrence. I am happy to repeat the third point agreed at Camp David, which was that the overall aim is to enhance, not to undercut, deterrence.

Mr. Wilkinson: Is not the SDI intended, if it proves successful, to provide a global defence against ballistic missile attack? Is it not true that a space-based, orbital defence system would be able to intercept ballistic missiles in the boost, and in the ballistic and trajectory phase, and that that would enhance deterrence by reducing the risk of pre-emptive attack, including attack against Europe, especially by strategic systems and by intermediate range ballistic missiles?

Mr. Butler: My hon. Friend's interpretation of the concept of the SDI is right. We all recognise that these are still early days, and that research must be carried out. My right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary was investigating the various strategic implications of the new proposal.

Trident Missile

5. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has made an estimate of the effect on employment in the United Kingdom that will result from the introduction of the Trident missile system.

Mr. Butler: The British Trident programme is expected to create an extra 17,000 direct jobs and 13,000 indirect ones during the peak years of the project, with a total of 170,000 man years of direct employment in the United Kingdom and 130,000 indirect man years over the programme as a whole.

Mr. Kirkwood: Will the Minister confirm that in the five peak years of Trident expenditure commencing in 1988, £1 in £4 of the major procurement defence budget will go to Trident in America, and that that will prejudice essential expenditure in our conventional defence industry? If he is not prepared to cancel Trident on defence grounds, will he consider cancelling it on the ground of the impact that it will have on jobs in Britain?

Mr. Butler: I would have thought that the hon. Gentleman would at least have welcomed the good news about job creation. I have no idea where he gets his figures from. The proportion of the equipment budget that will be taken at peak is estimated at 11 per cent. Therefore, in no way can £1 in £4 go to America.

Dr. Hampson: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the only decision that we must take on Trident is whether Europe needs an independent nuclear deterrent, since there can be no ultimate guarantee that a future American Administraton would come to the defence of Europe? Will he confirm that the Trident system is cheaper in real terms than Polaris?

Mr. Butler: The main reason for having Trident is to make our contribution to the policy of deterrence which has been so effective during the 40 years since the second world war. In the remote, hypothetical event of Western Europe being isolated, clearly Trident and the French nuclear deterrent would have a special part to play.

Mr. James Lamond: If going ahead with the Trident missile would destroy jobs rather than creating them, would the Minister still go ahead with the programme?

Mr. Butler: The hon. Gentleman will have to find another opportunity to explain what is behind his question. I have given a clear answer as to the number of jobs that the programme will create.

Mr. Bill Walker: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that of the jobs that will be created in Scotland many of them will be at Coulport, the base where Trident submarines will be, even though that has been declared a nuclear-free zone?

Mr. Butler: Yes, and I hope that the declaration by the local authority will be ignored.

Mr. O'Neill: Will the Minister take into account the reports in last night's "News at Ten" of allegations that are emerging from America concerning the gross profiteering of General Dynamics in respect of the Trident programme in the United States? Will the Minister take the necessary steps to assure the House that the cost of the gross inflation tactic being used will not be borne by the British taxpayer in the foreseeable future?

Mr. Butler: The largest part of the expenditure on the submarine element of the Trident programme will fall in this country.

RAF Molesworth

6. **Mr. Alton** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what contribution to the cost of security at RAF Molesworth has been made so far by the United States Government.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. John Lee): None. The costs of the current development works and security operation at RAF Molesworth are being borne by the United Kingdom as part of its host nation responsibilities to NATO.

Mr. Alton: Cannot the Minister tell the House what will be the total cost of security at Molesworth to the British taxpayers and ratepayers? Will he anticipate what will be the cost of maintaining security during the Easter vigil next week? Does he not believe that the American Government, as it is their base and their weapon, should make some contribution towards security costs?

Mr. Lee: No figures are available, but, in terms of the apportionment of future costs, infrastructure costs will be shared as between NATO and the United States national programme and the United Kingdom will be responsible for the cost of road access into the site and utilities. As to costs that we might incur in protecting the base because of possible Easter demonstrations, we are determined to defend the integrity of the base.

Sir Anthony Grant: Whoever contributes to the cost of security at Molesworth, is my hon. Friend aware that it is essential to safeguard the amenities of the citizens and residents in the area? Is he aware that they are also entitled to their own rights, and that they wonder how Monseigneur Bruce Kent would like it if they disrupted, and kicked up hell during, his church services?

Mr. Lee: I endorse my hon. Friend's sentiments. Many hon. Members are concerned that the Easter marches will not be disturbed. We are concerned that the rights of local residents during Easter are maintained and that the Ministry of Defence police are not disturbed and have a happy and pleasant Easter.

Falkland Islands

7. **Mr. Foulkes** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on construction work being carried out under the auspices of his Departmnt in the Falkland Islands.

Mr. Stanley: There are two major related projects in the course of construction, the first is the building of a new international airport and associated facilities at Mount Pleasant, together with a road linking it to Port Stanley, and the second is additional facilities for the garrison adjacent to the new airport. Construction is on schedule for the runway to be available for limited use as from May of this year and for the airport to be fully operational early in 1986. Work started on the additional facilities for the garrison in December 1984; progress to date has been good, and completion is expected in early 1987.

Mr. Foulkes: I am grateful for that answer. The Select Committee described civilian use of the airport as a matter of urgency, and the Shackleton report said that it was a priority, so why have no proposals been put forward for such use of the airport? The Government have refused any subsidy for civilian use of the airport. Who does the Minister expect to operate from Mount Pleasant airport, and when does he expect the civilian flights to start operating?

Mr. Stanley: The hon. Gentleman will appreciate that we are trying to achieve the earliest possible initial operating capability so that, in particular, we can rotate our forces, using wide-bodied aircraft rather than the Hercules air bridge. There are good cost advantages in doing so. The requirement is to ensure that during the period of the initial operating capability there is the most limited possible utilisation of the airfields so that the works can be completed. Once they are finished, it is our intention to make the fullest possible civilian use of the airfield facilities.

Mr. Viggers: Will my right hon. Friend take the opportunity of the appointment of the first Royal Air Force officer as commander of the Falkland Islands garrison to comment on the remarkable inter-service co-operation that has been achieved on the Falkland Islands?

Mr. Stanley: My hon. Friend has made an extremely important point. I confirm that it is a first-class example of the tri-service co-operation which was evident during the period of conflict and which has continued very much in peace time.

Crown Proceedings Act

9. **Mr. Ashley** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what steps he is taking about section 10 of the Crown Proceedings Act.

Mr. Stanley: The review of section 10 is continuing, but I am as yet unable to say when it will be completed.

Mr. Ashley: Is the Minister aware that his answer is word for word almost the answer that he gave to me a year ago, and that his answer then referred to an answer that he gave the previous year? Is he further aware that section 10 of the Crown Proceedings Act places a veto on any legal action for negligence by any service man who happens to be severely disabled, or by his relatives if he is killed, and that it is wrong that the Act should prevent service men or their relatives from taking such action? The matter is so simple that it requires consideration, not for two years, but for just one hour.

Mr. Stanley: The right hon. Gentleman says that it is a simple matter, but the fact is that section 10 has been found to be satisfactory by successive Governments ever since the Government of Mr. Attlee put it on the statute book. Therefore, there must be very good reasons why this piece of legislation is thought to be in the interests of service men as a whole. I assure the right hon. Gentleman that the fact that the review has taken some time does not reflect any lack of interest in the matter on the part of the Government, but reflects the real complexity of the issues that we are considering.

Mr. Adley: Nevertheless, is the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) not right to use Parliament as the place to try to bring these matters to a satisfactory conclusion from his point of view? Will my hon. Friend take this opportunity to express his surprise, if he was aware of this, that while the right hon. Gentleman rightly tries to change the law in Britain, the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies), who is a member of the shadow Cabinet and the official Opposition spokesman on defence, has apparently seen fit to sign an early-day motion which clearly calls for the breaking of the law? Is that not shocking?

Mr. Stanley: I note what my hon. Friend says, but, happily, I do not believe that there is any question of negligence or damages under section 10 of the Crown Proceedings Act.

Government Purchasing

10. **Mr. Thurnham** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what measures will be taken by his Department following the conclusions of the recently-published report by the Management and Personnel Office on Government purchasing.

Mr. Lee: Action documents have been prepared and will be submitted to Ministers shortly. It is still too early to say what changes may be made in the organisation or management of our procurement branches as a result of this process.

Mr. Thurnham: Will my hon. Friend do all in his power to simplify Government purchasing procedures, and so encourage small firms to play their part in achieving savings?

Mr. Lee: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his comments. We are doing everything possible in this regard. Our competition policies allow greater opportunities than ever before for small firms, and 40,000 copies of the booklet "Selling to the Ministry of Defence" have been distributed. We are relaxing our specifications wherever appropriate.

Mr. Gordon Brown: In avoiding conflicts of interest in Government purchasing, what role will the new Chief of Defence Procurement play in vetting and awarding contracts to his friends in the Defence Manufacturers Association, in which he was until recently a senior office bearer? Why was it that while still an arms salesman the new Chief of Defence Procurement spent a large part of last year hawking the possible Government franchise for the royal dockyards around his friends in the Defence Manufacturers Association?

Mr. Lee: Having been chairman of the Defence Manufacturers Association, Mr. Levene is extremely well qualified for the job of Chief of Defence Procurement and he has an outstanding record in the private sector. I emphasise that he has severed all connections with his former companies and has divested himself of all shareholdings. Arrangements have been made within the Department to ensure that Mr. Levene will have no access to the Department's business with his former companies.

There is a precedent for this appointment. The Labour Administration in 1969 appointed Mr. Leslie Norfolk, a former director of the heavy organic chemicals division of ICI, as chief executive of the royal dockyards at a salary of £11,000 a year. That salary was considerably higher than the then going rate for a permanent secretary at £8,600 a year. The right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) was then the Under-Secretary of State for Defence for the Royal Navy, and he took a close and supportive interest in that appointment.

Mr. Sayeed: Does my hon. Friend agree that often the best gamekeepers are ex-poachers? Is it not, therefore, interesting that the Opposition have never said that Mr. Levene will not make a good Chief of Defence Procurement?

Mr. Lee: Yes, Sir. The shooting metaphor is well known and apposite in this case. We spend about £1 million an hour on defence procurement. Only a small improvement in our purchasing through Mr. Levene's involvement is needed to more than recoup his salary.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: In relation to Government purchasing, are not the Government concerned about the activities of Messrs. Aish and Co. of Poole and Messrs Dowty Rotol and Co. of Cheltenham, because both those companies fired employees who refused to keep quiet about cheating by the MOD over defence contracts? Does the Minister intend to intervene and personally secure the position of those two employees who were serving the national interest?

Mr. Lee: I have looked into both those cases personally. I visited Dowty about a week ago and raised the matter. Negotiations with both companies are proceeding. In the latter case, the Ministry of Defence police are examining papers.

Mr. Latham: Will it be this report on Government purchasing, or a separate one, which will identify responsibility for the disastrous position over the Nimrod aircraft and sort everything out as quickly as possible?

Mr. Lee: I have already acknowledged in the House that the question of the Nimrod AEW is not a matter about which our Department or Defence Ministry contractors should be particularly proud.

Mr. Denzil Davies: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that his attempts to try to justify the Levene appointment—in which he does not believe—are frankly pathetic? The real problem is that there is a basic difference between business and Government ethics. That is why we totally object to the attempt to bring into Government an arms salesman — no doubt a very good one — when the relationship between Government and defence manufacturers, at the best of times, is so close and symbiotic.

Mr. Lee: It is pathetic that the Opposition are not prepared to support the payment of a relevant and attractive salary to ensure that we bring into Government the people whom we believe will do a first-class procurement job.

AST 404 Helicopter

13. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory** asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he will make a decision on the purchase of the light support helicopters specified in AST 404.

Mr. Butler: Following recent exercises, including Exercise Lionheart last autumn, the Army's requirements for helicopter support are being reviewed. Until that review is complete, I regret that decisions on AST 404 will remain in abeyance. Meanwhile, my Department is in discussion with Westland about other possible Ministry of Defence orders.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply. Is it not wrong that the Army can change its specification at such a late stage? Is it not intolerable that companies—such as Westland Helicopters—which have tendered in good faith can be let down because the Army is again changing its requirements?

Mr. Butler: I understand the reaction that my hon. Friend expresses on behalf of the company, but I think he should realise that the staff target is at a very early stage and that it would be strange if one were to force on any of the armed forces something which did not meet its requirements. The Army feels that it may need a larger helicopter, with a greater payload, in the interests of battlefield mobility, and it is now examining that.

Mr. McNamara: Can the Minister say when the review will be completed? In view of the criteria that he used for the PC9, will he accept that at present the WG30 is 40 per cent. cheaper than the super Puma and 30 per cent. cheaper than the Black Hawk, and that, in terms of jobs at Westland and the future of that company, an early decision is needed?

Mr. Butler: As the Army has not confirmed its requirements, and as it is not certain that finance is available, the matter of choice between the various aircraft has not yet arisen.

Mr. Jim Spicer: Will my hon. Friend give an assurance that he understands that most of us are speaking, not on behalf of the company, but on behalf of constituents who work in the company? Will he give a further assurance that he will keep in the closest possible contact not only with the Department of Trade and Industry, but with the Department of Employment so that he can understand the implications of this order not being awarded to Westland at the earliest possible opportunity?

Mr. Butler: I am fully aware of these matters. I am working closely with my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Department of Trade and Industry, and we will come to a decision as soon as we can, but, in answer to the question asked by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara), I must say that the decision is likely to be some months away.

Sir Antony Buck: Does my hon. Friend agree that a worrying feature here is the change in the staff requirement at a late stage? Will he look at procedures whereby staff requirements are drawn up in order to ensure that industry is not too often put into this difficult position?

Mr. Butler: As I said a few moments ago, we cannot expect the armed services to take something which they do not want. They have seen fit to review their requirements. I should also say that the WG30 in its present condition will not meet the staff target, and would do so only with the advanced engineering gearbox and the new Rolls-Royce motor, and that by itself will cause some delay.

British Army of the Rhine

14. **Mr. Proctor** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current cost of maintaining the British Army of the Rhine; if he has any plans to reduce it; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: As I told my hon. Friend on 13 November 1984, the cost of the British Army of the Rhine is estimated to be some £1,796 million in 1984-85 at 1984-85 Estimates prices. The Government have no plans to reduce BAOR.

Mr. Proctor: In the light of constraints on the defence budget, will my hon. Friend reconsider the prospects for returning to the traditional British policy of not maintaining a standing army on the mainland of Europe?

Mr. Stanley: My hon. Friend will be aware that we are part of a collective alliance, and that our NATO Allies and friends expect us to contribute in the way that we do—and we do so, I think, extremely successfully and cost-effectively—to safeguard and preserve deterrence in a key element of the central front.

Mr. Johnston: Will the Minister assure us that the Trident programme will have no effect on the availability of resources to BAOR?

Mr. Stanley: As we have said many times, the Trident programme is part of the total defence programme. What is spent on Trident cannot be spent elsewhere, but we believe that the expenditure on Trident is a way in which we can achieve an important continuation of our deterrent capability.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: Is it not a fact that BAOR is already the worst equipped of all the major armed forces in the NATO central front, having less artillery than the Dutch Army, and fewer tanks than the French or Germans? Is it not inevitable that the Trident programme will make the situation massively worse in this vital area of Britain's defence capability?

Mr. Stanley: No, I cannot agree with the hon. Gentleman. We are carrying through one of the most important re-equipment programmes of BAOR, and that re-equipment programme directly reflects the fact that the Government have increased defence expenditure by approximately one fifth in real terms, while the Opposition said at the last election that they intended substantially to reduce conventional defence expenditure.

Royal Dockyards

16. **Mr. Hicks** asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he intends to announce his proposed changes in the management structures of Her Majesty's dockyards; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: We intend to complete our deliberations as soon as possible. Assuming that this results in radical proposals for change, there will then be a period of consultation before a decision is taken on future arrangements for the royal dockyards.

Mr. Hicks: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply. Is he aware of the need for an early decision, in view of the fact that delay creates not only rumour and speculation, but, increasingly, unease among employees at the dockyards?

Mr. Lee: We are aware of the need for an early and speedy decision. The deliberations have taken longer than we had imagined. The original uncertainty was caused by the leak of the Levene report at Rosyth.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Fatchett** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 26 March.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Fatchett: In her weekend speech the Prime Minister referred to various critics of the Government's policy as cuckoos. Will she explain whether that term is now extended to the growing number of critics in her own party? Will she also explain whether she feels that characterising the Government's critics as cuckoos is consistent with the language of reconciliation to which she has made recent references?

The Prime Minister: The answer to the first part of that supplementary question is no. We have the occasional grouse, but nothing else.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Is my right hon. Friend aware that one of the most welcome aspects of the Budget is the Government's intention to simplify the tax and social security systems, so enabling people at last to understand how they can interact, and enabling us at last to eliminate the unemployment trap? Will she ensure that this necessary and fundamental reform is pushed ahead without delay?

The Prime Minister: I thank my hon. Friend for those remarks. We shall try to push ahead as fast as we can. It is particularly important in that it will help many employers to take on more young people than they are doing at present.

Mr. Kinnock: There are now more than 1 million unemployed 18 to 24-year-olds in Britain. Apparently the Prime Minister will be seeing 25 of them at 10 Downing Street this afternoon. When she meets them, will she look them in the eye and honestly say to them, as she said on Saturday in Newcastle:

"A bright and confident future beckons"?

If she says that to them, will she expect them to believe her?

The Prime Minister: I look forward to seeing a number of young people on a private visit to No. 10. I shall indeed point out that the economy is expanding, that investment is at an all-time record, that standards of living are at an all-time high and that we are making great extensions to the youth training scheme, from which I hope they will benefit. I shall also have there a number of people who will, I hope, be able to answer their questions and be of practical assistance.

Mr. Kinnock: That cuts no ice, and it cuts no dole queues, either. Does the Prime Minister not yet realise that until she makes radical changes in economic policy—as many, including sensible people in her own party, are advising—there will be no hope of offering real jobs to young people? Will she have the courage to say that direct to them this afternoon?

The Prime Minister: No, because I believe that the right hon. Gentleman is wrong. He does not deny that output is at an all-time record and that investment is at an all-time high. I assume that he supports the youth training scheme. We shall get more jobs when we have more people producing goods and services which everyone will buy. *[Interruption.]* If the right hon. Gentleman knows how to do it, perhaps he will start a business.

Mr. McCrindle: I welcome what my right hon. Friend has said about the interrelation between taxation and the social security system. Will she take this opportunity to confirm that while the reviews which have been undertaken aim at gaining better value for money within a £40 billion budget, at least as important will be an attempt on behalf of the Government to pay more to the most deserving people within society, while reviewing benefits which arguably are being paid to those who are in less need?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend knows, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services has a major review of social services under way. That review will be published, and it will be for the House to debate it. In the meantime, I take account of what my hon. Friend has said. I think he was saying that quite a number of people seem to get perhaps more than they need, while others, who are most deserving, perhaps do not get sufficient.

Mr. Steel: Following the massacre in South Africa at the weekend, does the Prime Minister agree that 25 years on from Sharpeville all the cosmetic improvements in that country do not hide the fundamental evil and injustice of apartheid? Apart from lecturing the South African ambassador, what proposals has she to help end the systematic oppression of the majority of the population?

The Prime Minister: My right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary issued a statement and called in the ambassador of South Africa to make it clear that we were gravely concerned at the events on the anniversary of

Sharpeville and, as the right hon. Gentleman knows, to reaffirm once again that one cannot distinguish between people on the basis of colour. We support and uphold the resolution of the United Nations. I think it particularly sad and deplorable that this event came just at a time when other things seemed to be moving. For example, it was only a few days earlier that we had heard that the policy which we totally deplored of forced removals had been suspended. That was good news. Therefore, we were particularly concerned about the shootings.

Q2. **Mr. Tony Banks** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 26 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Banks: Is the Prime Minister aware that fires are still raging in the Galapagos Islands and that on Isabela 500 giant tortoises are now seriously at risk? *[Interruption.]* Hon. Members on the Government Benches may find this amusing, but I assure them that it is a serious matter. May I repeat the question for the benefit of the Prime Minister? Is she aware of the fires in the Galapagos Islands, and is she aware also that on Isabela 500 giant tortoises are at risk? The Government of Ecuador have asked for international assistance. In view of the close links between this country and the Galapagos Islands, what British Government resources will the Prime Minister make available to rescue the giant tortoises and other endangered species?

The Prime Minister: I am very much aware of the feeling in the House and elsewhere about this matter. We shall consider the hon. Gentleman's request.

Q3. **Mr. Forth** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 26 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Forth: Does my right hon. Friend agree that unanimity is rare in politics? Will she, therefore, undertake that when my right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker) completes his review of the financing of local government, and the equivalent review north of the border is completed, we will move to a rapid solution of the local government finance problem, regardless of whether there is total agreement on any one solution?

The Prime Minister: Those studies, both on the rating system and on the reform of local government finance, are under way. I hope that we shall be able to come to an agreed solution. My hon. Friend is right. If everyone sticks to his own pet scheme, we shall not get anywhere. I hope that we shall be able to bring forward proposals which will command sufficient support to put them through.

Mr. Heffer: Is the right hon. Lady aware that when, later this afternoon, she meets the young unemployed from Merseyside, they are not likely, because of their bitter experience of many years of unemployment, to believe that there is an expanding economy? Does she agree with the view expressed by Lord Alport yesterday in the *Daily Telegraph*, that the Conservative party is now a faction and not a real Conservative party, or is she prepared to accept the advice of her right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), who suggested that the time had come for a change in policy to begin to deal with unemployment?

The Prime Minister: We shall continue the policies announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and enlarged upon during the several Budget debates, which were well received and won excellent majorities in the House upon their conclusion.

Mr. Yeo: Does my right hon. Friend agree that if the teaching profession wishes to enjoy a higher level of public esteem the best thing that its members can do is to end this damaging action, which is hitting the interests of the worst-off children, and get back to work full-time?

The Prime Minister: Yes. I thought that Lady Warnock made interesting remarks during the Dimbleby lecture, pointing out that if teachers act in this way they will forfeit their prestige and the esteem in which they have always been held.

Q4. **Mr. Chris Smith** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 26 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Smith: Has the Prime Minister had a chance to read the report of today of the Rating and Valuation Association, which reveals that the average rate rise in England and Wales for the coming financial year will be 9 per cent.? Has the right hon. Lady noticed that this has happened even with all the paraphernalia of rate-capping targets, penalties, grant-related expenditure assessments and similar controls which her Government have introduced? Will the right hon. Lady now have the honesty to admit that the real reason for such a large increase is the reduction in rate support grant to London boroughs, from 61 to 48 per cent., under her Government? Will the right hon. Lady tell the ratepayers that she is responsible for their rate increases?

The Prime Minister: I have not read that report. I heard a comment from an hon. Member from a sedentary position that our great problems with rating are centred on Scotland. If councils' spending had continued at its previous rate of increase, it would now be £4 billion higher. The growth in councils' spending has dramatically slowed over the past five years, increasing by no more than it did in an average single year in the 1970s. In fact, ratepayers have a great deal for which to thank the Government for reducing Government expenditure. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will take notice of the fact that the average precept is 30p higher under Labour county councils than it is under Conservative county councils.

Mr. Sims: Is my right hon. friend aware that there was warm applause in the country as well as in the hall for her weekend speech, when she emphasised the importance of the wealth creators in our society and the fact that responsibility for law and order is not restricted to the police and the Government? As the best hope for this country's future lies in my right hon. Friend's policies and philosophies, will she and her Ministers continue to repeat this message loudly and clearly throughout the country?

The Prime Minister: It is a message which most people understand, because it is common sense that one must have policies which pursue the creation of wealth,

before that wealth can be distributed or more jobs can be created. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising that question.

Q5. **Mr. Gareth Wardell** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 26 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Wardell: As dental charges will increase from 1 April to £17—which means that 100 per cent. of the costs will have to be borne by the patient—and as 40 per cent. of all the extra costs above £17, to a maximum of £115, will have to be paid by the patient, will the Prime Minister give advice to those people whose income is only slightly above the supplementary benefit level, the occupational pensions allowance and the family income supplement on how they must pay these extra charges?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman is aware, 46 per cent. of chargeable treatment is given free and those who pay contribute on average 60 per cent. of the cost, which is less than the maximum charge. The hon. Gentleman's question implies that the increase in charges will result in a reduction in the number of people taking dental treatment. That is not so. The number of courses of dental treatment is up from 27 million in 1979 to 31 million now. I think that most people would put dental treatment fairly high on their list of priority spending.

Q7. **Mr. Stanbrook** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 26 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave a few moments ago.

Mr. Stanbrook: May I draw my right hon. Friend's attention to the apparent willingness of the British Government, in company with the minority of countries, such as Greece and Denmark, to stand aside from developments in the European Community designed to make it more effective? Is this not a dangerous tendency? Will my right hon. Friend instruct her Ministers at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to promise full support to the Community in its proposals for progress for the benefit of us all, and not to drag their feet?

The Prime Minister: We have taken a leading part in all deliberations on the Community, which are resulting in a much better financial structure and a much more realistic policy for agriculture. As my hon. Friend knows, we are now attempting to persuade the Community to complete the internal market and take a number of steps towards freeing trade, which will be of great help to this country.

Schools

3.31 pm

The Secretary of State for Education and Science (Sir Keith Joseph): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a statement about the White Paper published today setting out the Government's policies for school education in England and Wales. Copies of the White Paper and a summary are available in the Vote Office.

The Government have two principal aims—to raise the standards achieved by pupils of all abilities and to secure the best possible return for the resources invested in school education.

We have set these aims because education at school needs to develop to the full the capacities of every pupil, and to promote the nation's ability to seize the challenging opportunities of a technological and competitive world. The schools need to build on Britain's values and traditions and on its ethnic diversity; they need to educate pupils to their own full potential and for the responsibilities of citizenship and for working life.

Both what is taught and how it is taught need to serve these purposes better than is now the case in many schools. National standards would rise dramatically if all schools matched the present achievements of the best comparable schools. The Government have a duty in law to take a lead in securing that all our schools have an effective curriculum effectively delivered by those responsible.

Together with their partners in the education service and with the customers of the service, the Government will take action in four broad areas of policy to raise achievement at all levels of ability.

First, we shall continue to take the lead in promoting agreement about the objectives and content of the curriculum in primary, secondary and special schools. The curriculum should be broad, balanced, relevant and differentiated for variations in pupils' abilities and aptitudes. Agreed and explicit objectives will help to focus the efforts of local education authorities and schools and motivate pupils towards aims shared also by parents and employers.

Secondly, we are taking action on examinations. As the House will recall, we are establishing the general certificate of secondary education. It will serve the curriculum better than the examinations it replaces. It will put a new emphasis on understanding, on the application of knowledge, and on oral and practical skills. Through the development of grade criteria it will award grades only to those who attain the required standard in defined aspects of each subject. We shall introduce a new examination, the AS-level, to broaden the programme of students on A-level courses. The new certificate of pre-vocational education will offer a wide range of courses for other students over 16. We are working towards the establishment by the end of the decade of a national system of records of achievement for all school leavers which will record not only examination successes but other achievements at school.

Thirdly, we shall promote teaching quality by improving the professional effectiveness of teachers and the management of the teaching force. Better initial training will result from the reform of courses which the Government have already set in hand. We intend to make in-service training more effective by funding it through a specific grant to local education authorities. We shall seek an early opportunity to legislate for that change, as I informed the House last week.

We intend that it should be a condition of the grant that satisfactory arrangements are made for identifying and meeting the training needs of individuals and the service. Adequate arrangements for appraising the performance of each teacher are essential for the career development of individual teachers and for the good management of the teacher force. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and I will seek powers to allow us to require local education authorities to make such arrangements if we consider such action necessary.

Fourthly, we shall develop the contribution that governing bodies can make to good school education. In the light of the response to the Green Paper "Parental Influence at School", the Government have decided, as soon as the legislative programme permits, to propose two measures to the House: first, to entrench the powers of governing bodies of county, controlled and maintained special schools in relation to the functions of the local education authority and the head teacher; secondly, to reform the composition of those governing bodies so that there can be an equal number of parent and LEA-appointed governors, and teachers and the local community will also be represented, with no single interest predominating.

The programme of action will take time to accomplish in its entirety. It may be difficult to achieve it in full within existing real levels of expenditure per pupil, but much progress can be made if the education service gets the most out of what is available. The more it succeeds, the stronger its future claim on resources.

Much of what needs to be done is neither a question of money nor of action by the Government alone. The education service is a partnership. Each partner has important responsibilities that the Government intend to preserve. Each can do his job effectively only with the help of the others. Co-operation and professional commitment have secured notable achievements and built up many strengths in our schools. The Government believe that co-operation and professional commitment will continue to be the norm within the education service. We believe that local education authorities, the Churches and other voluntary bodies, governors, teachers, parents, employers, and all others will join in the common endeavour to make standards of achievement and behaviour at every school as good as they can be and need to be in the interest of the pupils and our national future.

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): Does the Secretary of State accept that raising the levels of achievement of all our children is an objective that we in the Opposition strongly support? However, apart from the sensible decision to abandon his harebrained scheme to give parents a majority on governing bodies, can the right hon. Gentleman tell the House what is new either in his statement or in the White Paper? In that document, we search in vain for the answer to the $64.000 question of whether the Secretary of State can deliver. Quite apart from the HMI reports, the Secretary of State himself admits that it may be difficult to achieve his programme. "within existing real levels of expenditure per pupil."

So why are the Government proposing to cut local authority education spending by 9 per cent. in real terms between 1984-85 and 1987-88, at a time when the number

of pupils is estimated to fall by 5 per cent.? In short, the right hon. Gentleman is attempting the hopeless task of squeezing a quart out of a pint pot.

Is the Secretary of State further aware that his remarks about partnership ring very hollow in a week when half a million children's education is being disrupted by the teachers' dispute? [HON. MEMBERS: "Whose fault is that?"] Wait for it. The parents of those children will not understand why, instead of his empty words this afternoon, the right hon. Gentleman has not announced a new peace initiative. The truth is that the Secretary of State is fiddling while Rome burns.

Sir Keith Joseph: I am genuinely glad that there is an objective that both sides of the House share—to raise the achievements in behaviour, and in examinations at all levels of ability, of children at school.

It is extremely sad that teachers have chosen to disrupt the schooling of millions of children. The teacher unions seem to be in the business of rejecting. They rejected a pay offer. They rejected arbitration. They rejected—refused even to consider — a discussion on structure and appraisal.

The hon. Gentleman asked me about resources. In his comparison, he ignored two factors. First, he had not taken into account the share that education could expect of the unallocated margin. Secondly, for the later years to which he referred, he ignored the crucial point that the spending proposals for distribution between local authority services are provisional.

The hon. Gentleman asked me what the White Paper contains that is new. There are the notable initiatives—already decided and put into preparation by the Government — of improving teacher selection and teacher training, seeking agreement on the objectives of the curriculum, transforming the examination system and introducing records of achievement. All those initiatives, already announced, are drawn together in the White Paper so that people may understand the interaction between all the Government's proposals.

In addition, however, the White Paper announces the Government's decisions on AS-levels, on a massive extension of in-service training and on the readiness of the Government to ask Parliament for specific grant powers in connection with in-service training. The White Paper includes new announcements on the readiness of the Government, if necessary, to seek parliamentary authority——

Mr. Radice: The right hon. Gentleman has said that many times.

Sir Keith Joseph: This is the first time that the Government have formally announced that they will seek parliamentary authority for specific grant powers in connection with in-service training, with extra resources being provided, as announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor. We confirm in the White Paper that we shall, if necessary, be ready to ask Parliament's authority to require LEAs to appraise teachers. Finally, there are a number of announcements in the White Paper on the governance of schools and on truancy. There is plenty of new material.

Mr. David Madel (Bedfordshire, South-West): Is my right hon. Friend aware that there will be a special welcome for the additional funds for appropriate in-service training courses? Is that not further evidence of the Government's commitment to work with the teaching profession to ensure that the education service is backed by appropriate skills and training? If teachers want to re-train, the necessary funds will be available.

Sir Keith Joseph: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. There is much in the White Paper that teachers should welcome, including rendering in-service training more effective and increasing the resources for it.

Mr. Clement Freud (Cambridgeshire, North-East): I too welcome the in-service training provisions, but will the Secretary of State assure the House that the introduction of AS-levels will not further disadvantage children from small and under-funded sixth forms, and make it more difficult for them to enter tertiary education at the expense of those in the private sector?

Will the right hon. Gentleman tell the House that school governors — we welcome the fact that there will no longer be contention among them — will be properly trained? Will the right hon. Gentleman find money for that training, and will he assure us that it will not be taken from teachers' salaries?

Finally, the Secretary of State said that education is a partnership. That is something that few schoolmasters would currently agree with. Will the Secretary of State bear in mind the fact that it takes two to tango?

Sir Keith Joseph: I am only too eager to co-operate with teachers and local education authorities in pursuance of the objectives which the whole House shares. Higher education has responded to the consultation that it will not disadvantage those who have not had the opportunity to take AS-levels. I am glad that the hon. Gentleman welcomes the Government's decision on the governance of schools and I hope that it still ranks as what the hon. Gentleman has referred to as high-octane Liberal policy.

Mr. Robert Key (Salisbury): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the White Paper presents a programme for education possibly as great and important as the Education Act 1944, when taken as a whole? Does he further agree that the teaching profession would be well advised not to listen to the weasel words from the Opposition Front Bench of the hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice), who, I believe, does not mean what he said? Nor should they be advised to listen to the leadership of the National Union of Teachers and others who are sowing dissent and low morale in the teaching profession. Will my right hon. Friend encourage teachers to read the document and consider it carefully, as I think that they will find in it much that is rewarding?

Sir Keith Joseph: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Previous schools White Papers have rightly had to concentrate on scale and structure. This one addresses itself to the even harder questions of quality and effectiveness.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): When will the Secretary of State admit to himself and his party that, according to Her Majesty's Inspectorate, cuts in education are so horrific that schools all over the country have quite insufficient money to carry on with? Is he aware that the Select Committee on Education, Science and Arts recently visited schools in fairly plush areas where the capitation allowance has been doubled by parents? Does he believe that, in working-class areas with massive

[Mr. Martin Flannery]

unemployment, parents can give any money when their children do not receive a proper education? Is he aware that the struggle is going on partly because morale is so low?

Sir Keith Joseph: HMI also emphasised that the quality and effectiveness of management varies sharply between local education authorities and that there is much capacity for redeploying resources from less effective to more effective educational purposes. Will the hon. Gentleman bear in mind that spending in real terms per child at school is at record high levels? Will he also bear it in mind that the pupil-teacher ratio is at record low levels? Will he also bear it in mind that it is open to a local education authority to raise the capitation allowance——

Mr. Flannery: With rate capping?

Sir Keith Joseph: —where parents cannot be expected to provide as much help as those in more prosperous areas.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Did I hear my right hon. Friend say that he would be asking Parliament to require a regular appraisal of teachers, thus linking pay and performance? If so, could that not go a long way towards overcoming the wicked strikes which damage children in special schools and those sitting examinations? Will he remind the Opposition that the Houghton award lost its value under a Labour Government between 1974 and 1979 and point out that it is high time their wicked hypocrisy ended?

Sir Keith Joseph: My hon. Friend has failed to notice that the Government's intention to legislate is expressed as "only if necessary" or some such words. We still hope that, sooner or later, teachers and their employers will reach a bargain on appraisal which will be good for education, negotiable and affordable. If they do not reach such a bargain before long, the Government have confirmed their intention to ask Parliament for authority to require local education authorities to appraise teachers. However, in that confirmation, there is no mention of the word "money."

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): Is the Secretary of State aware that there is a great deal to criticise in the statement and White Paper ? However, I warmly welcome his decision to reintroduce the mandatory requirement for specialist qualifications for teachers of deaf and blind children, and assure him that the all-party disablement group will warmly welcome that announcement and decision.

Sir Keith Joseph: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman and take his criticism as purely ritual.

Mrs. Angela Rumbold (Mitcham and Morden): While I welcome my right hon. Friend's statement, will he tell the House, first, how he believes that it will improve teachers' morale; secondly, how it will enable local education authorities to operate more efficiently; and, thirdly, to what extent it will increase the professionalism of the education service for its customers—the children?

Sir Keith Joseph: To ease my hon. Friend's problems —I know that she will read the White Paper in full—a summary explaining all such matters has been produced and is extremely readable. In brief, there is much in the White Paper to raise teachers' morale, such as the confirmation of recognition of their central importance, an expansion of the network of in-service training, and the sort of unification of the exam systems which they have long wanted. There is plenty in the White Paper to improve the effectiveness of education, which we all want.

Mr. Derek Foster (Bishop, Auckland): If the Secretary of State is really interested in the achievement of all our children, does he not realise that the motivation of teachers is absolutely crucial to teaching quality? Surely he must be aware that teaching morale is at an all-time low because of cuts in the education service and the continual denigration of their professionalism by the Secretary of State and his hon. Friends.

Sir Keith Joseph: I readily recognise that the changing trend of pupil numbers from expansion to contraction has entailed a great loss of promotion opportunities for teachers. I readily recognise that that has implications for morale, which is why it is so much in the teachers' interests to welcome the opportunities that could come to all effective teachers from an appraisal system, and why I think they are so misguided in wanting to retain the present informal appraisal system which is in existence, as they know, and in refusing to co-operate in designing a formal procedure for appraisal, which is enormously to their benefit.

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): Has my right hon. Friend noticed that not a single comment from the Opposition has been truly critical of the White Paper, so much is it in tune with the views within the education world of reasonable and thinking people? Will he also note that his White Paper is quite dramatic in that in many areas, such as the three examination changes and the specific grant for teacher training, he has at last done something which Labour Government after Labour Government under Lord Mulley and Shirley Williams could not bring themselves to do, just as they could not bring themselves to set up a youth training scheme? Regarding school governing bodies, will he say that the motivation of pupils depends on the involvement of parents, that parents should be the largest single element and that the local authority element must no longer dominate and be open to the political abuse that we have so often witnessed?

Sir Keith Joseph: I agree with all that my hon. Friend says. It should be a comfort to schools and teachers that the broad objectives of the White Paper are shared by both sides of the House.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): No.

Sir Keith Joseph: I have heard them approved by Front Bench representatives of the official Opposition. I recognise that the Opposition imagined that they would be able to spend more money on schools, although I think that that is just another sign of the never-never land in which they live. I am grateful to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Jack Thompson (Wansbeck): I have not had the opportunity to read the White Paper in depth, but one section which is of concern to me relates to the education of under-fives. That section states that, although the Government support the education of under-fives, they do not propose to spend more money on it. Is this not an area where more money should be spent? If that is a symptom of the entire White Paper, I cannot see how the education service will be vastly improved by it.

Sir Keith Joseph: I invite the hon. Gentleman to join the real world. There are not, and will not be under any Government, enormous new resources to spend on education. We are concentrating on the compulsory age range. That is why in the chapter about under-five education we undertake to maintain at least the present proportion of the population attending under-five schools and do not give false promises to extend it substantially.

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): Will my right hon. Friend acknowledge that our schools represent an enormous national investment in terms of educational resources? Is he aware that many of those who have left school and who wish to achieve some of the educational qualifications which they lamentably failed to achieve when they were at school, now wish to have access to those resources? Will he confirm that continuing education will be included in discussions on the White Paper, so that the nation might get a better return from the investment of those educational resources?

Sir Keith Joseph: Yes, although it is outside the age bracket addressed by the White Paper. The Government are concerned with, and will be formulating proposals in connection with the wider access to, continuing education.

Mr. Mark Fisher (Stoke-on-Trent, Central): The Secretary of State said that this is not only a question of money, but he must agree that it is crucially a question of teachers being able to implement his proposals. Does he understand that teachers all over the country feel undervalued and let down by the Government? The Government are, rightly, asking them to do a challenging and difficult job, but with fewer resources, less capitation—whatever the right hon. Gentleman may say—in buildings that are less well maintained, and for wholly inadequate pay. Is it not about time that the Secretary of State recognised that money is an essential ingredient in implementing any proposals for education? Is it not about time that he fought for the education service? His colleagues in other Departments are prepared to fight for their budgets. Why does he not show the education profession that he is prepared to fight for the investment mentioned by the hon. Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin)?

Sir Keith Joseph: I recognise that teachers have a hard job, but I ask the hon. Gentleman to recognise, too, that many schools around the country are islands of excellence in which, in conditions completely comparable to those schools where there is less excellence, teachers manage to produce remarkably effective results in behaviour and in academic performance. What that minority of schools can do can be done throughout the system, and that is what the White Paper addresses itself to.

Mr. J. F. Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): Is my right hon. Friend aware that his White Paper will be widely welcomed, especially by parents, who will have a much bigger say on governing bodies? Will he say something about how teacher assessment will work, and the role that headmasters and the governing bodies will play in that assessment?

Sir Keith Joseph: The Government have set aside £1 million of taxpayers' money to run a series of experiments in appraisal, so that the most suitable system can be judged. I imagine that when appraisal is, as it is bound to be, introduced, it will be subject to discussion among the local education authorities, teachers and the holder of my office. Differing combinations of assessors will be involved, including headmasters, heads of department, peers of the teacher, each judging reciprocally, and no doubt representatives of the employers. The pilot schemes are intended to judge the best combination.

Mr. Ken Eastham (Manchester, Blackley): The Secretary of State referred to assessing teachers, but will he consider giving teachers the opportunity to make an assessment of the Department of Education on the resources that it is providing for teachers to do their job? Will he comment on the special problems of inner cities where there is high poverty, many one-parent families, children who are underfed and a lack of the other normal things that are essential to education? What special additional assistance will the Secretary of State be giving to such areas?

Sir Keith Joseph: There is a system available by which teachers as citizens make judgment on the Department of Education—it is called a general election. As for inner-city children, it is because the opportunities of children depend so much on the quality of schools that I once again say that it was wicked of the Labour Government to abolish direct grant schools.

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Will my right hon. Friend accept that the vast majority of people both in and outside the House will be pleased with the White Paper and his statement? Does he agree that highly qualified teachers in specialities in which there is a shortage, such as maths, science and design, can only be properly awarded when there is a proper structure for their appraisal, and the same applies to those in scale 1 whose promotion prospects have been dimmed by the falling rolls?

Sir Keith Joseph: I agree, although the problem of recruiting potentially skilled teachers in shortage subjects for which there is a great deal of demand in the world of commerce — such as maths, physics, craft design and technology — will be difficult, although slightly less difficult once the appraisal system is in being.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Does not the Secretary of State understand that, in each of the sectors that he has announced, additional academic, scholastic and organisational burdens will be placed on teachers, particularly in respect of his legislation for compulsory formal assessment? Does he agree that any real partnership requires confidence, and that the spread of excellence of which he speaks can be achieved only by co–ordination and not coercion? Does not his attitude to teachers and the fact that he has produced this booklet this afternoon show that he does not understand this, does not understand the teaching service and therefore should not have introduced the White Paper at this of all times, when schools are in chaos?

Sir Keith Joseph: I marvel that the hon. Gentleman, whose sincerity I do not impugn, could have spoken at such length without mentioning children.

Mr. Spearing: That is what it is all about.

Sir Keith Joseph: Exactly — the White Paper is addressed to the needs of children.

Mr. Peter Lilley (St. Albans): Is my right hon. Friend aware that there will be great support for the £100 million available for in-service training but that there will be some

[Mr. Peter Lilley]

surprise that as much as half of it should be absorbed by covering for teachers having this break during normal teaching hours, especially as, in my area, the majority of teachers carry out their in-service training during the holidays or after school hours? If this practice were followed throughout the country, there would be twice as much available for in-service training for the sum that the Department can provide.

Sir Keith Joseph: My hon. Friend may have a point, and in-service training is conducted in holidays as well as in term time and at weekends. Some compensation for the employment of relief teachers is a necessary part of the programme.

Mr. Skinner: Is it not a measure of this Government's attitude to the teaching profession and to education generally that, at a time when the education system is in turmoil due to the Government's actions in refusing to pay the teachers a proper wage, the right hon. Gentleman introduces this White Paper as a cover? Is it not also worth noting that the teachers are striving to make up for lost ground during the six years of this Tory Government, and that compares with the fact that he, as the Secretary of State, and the rest of the Cabinet in one of their first acts when they came to power, made up the lost ground in their own salary while depriving teachers? Why does he not pay the teachers their money and get the education system back on the rails?

Sir Keith Joseph: Let me correct the hon. Gentleman. Teachers lost the full benefit of the 1974 award before the Labour Government left office in 1979. The real value of their pay has gone up 9 per cent. since 1979. Those are the facts.

Dr. Alan Glyn (Windsor and Maidenhead): Does my right hon. Friend agree that parents must welcome this new approach because the standard of education has given them considerable concern in the past? I draw his attention to the system of appraisal, which, although it will be difficult to establish, is necessary because at the moment there is little difference in pay between the highly qualified teachers and unqualified teachers. Is my right hon. Friend aware of the recent incident in which a child who condemned the action of teachers who went on strike was disciplined by the school?

Sir Keith Joseph: I agree with my hon. Friend's last reference, which is a sad one. I marvel that Opposition Members, while in general welcoming the purpose of the White Paper, made far less fuss than I would have expected about the wide range of under-achievement. Masses of children under-achieve their potential and I should have thought that there would have been far more emphasis from the Opposition about that. Our desire, like theirs, is to put that right; that is a common bond that I welcome.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is an important Back Bench day. I shall call as many hon. Members who are rising as possible, but I should like to bring the questions on this statement to an end by quarter past four because there is another statement. Those hon. Members whom I have not been able to call may be able to catch my eye in the subsequent debate on the Easter adjournment motion.

Mr. Alan Howarth (Stratford-on-Avon): Is my right hon. Friend aware that there will be widespread appreciation of, and respect for, the strategy of better schools that he has set out, as expressing his and the Government's particular concern for the relatively disadvantaged in our society? In this respect, is he aware that there will be particular appreciation of the emphasis placed on grade criteria, records of achievement and more practical orientation for some pupils of curricula and examinations?

Sir Keith Joseph: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that discriminating praise.

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): Is my right hon. Friend aware that it would be easier to make a good assessment of what we believe to be a sound White Paper if we could have a debate on it? Will he support a call for such a debate?

Sir Keith Joseph: I should welcome such a debate. I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Lord Privy Seal has heard what my hon. Friend has said.

Mr. Tim Rathbone (Lewes): From my right hon. Friend's description of the White Paper, it sounds positive and extremely exciting. He spoke about education for the under-fives earlier. Can he reassure the House that the present study of education for the under-fives, which is due to report in the autumn, will not be overlooked and that action on it will not be denied by the contents of the White Paper?

Sir Keith Joseph: I welcome praise, even when it is followed by a "but". We take the effective education of the under-fives seriously, but we cannot undertake to find more resources for them. We shall certainly study any evidence produced about how it can be made more effective.

Dr. Ian Twinn (Edmonton): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, contrary to the posture taken by the hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice), the White Paper will be welcomed in the country and in the world of education? In considering the content of the curricula in schools, will he give the House an assurance that more emphasis will be given to the role of wealth creation in society, so that there is in schools a climate in which the culture of wealth education can survive and flourish?

Sir Keith Joseph: Indeed, the Government regard it as an important ingredient to try to inject into the school system and into higher and further education.

Mr. Robert Hicks (Cornwall, South-East): I welcome this confirmation of our educational objectives. How does my right hon. Friend hope to resolve the fundamental dilemma, which has existed for a long time, of finding sufficient resources at a time of financial restraints, when we require to attract and sustain the quality teaching force that we all hope to have within the state sector?

Sir Keith Joseph: Yes, it can partly be achieved by more effective deployment of the massive resources that the education system already has. There will come a time when no doubt that will be fully exploited, when more resources may prove to be necessary. Plenty can be done within existing resources if they are sensibly used.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): My right hon. Friend is to be congratulated upon his sensitive consultation on

the enhanced responsibilities of school governors. However, is he satisfied that he has hit the median line between on the one hand governors simply rubber-stamping the views of the local authority and on the other hand parents holding the rest of the ratepayers to ransom?

Sir Keith Joseph: I searched the country for supporters of my proposal for parental governor majorities but found so few friends that I had to strike a compromise—which I believe will be effective.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): At one stage the Secretary of State described his proposals as broad, balanced and relevant, but is not the opposite the truth? Will they not be more restrictive? The Secretary of State is taking greater central Government control over curriculum, in-service training, what is taught by teachers and the appraisal of teachers. When that is coupled with control over teachers' jobs, pay and conditions of service and with the cuts because of the rate capping of local education authorities, it can only mean in reality a deterioration in the standards of education generally. The current education policy is not relevant. Youngsters are not being educated for work because the jobs are not there; nor are they being educated in life skills.

Sir Keith Joseph: How can the hon. Gentleman speak of an assault upon teachers' jobs, when teachers have one of the most secure jobs in the country?

Mr. Radice: What about redundancies?

Sir Keith Joseph: Voluntary redundancies. If the holder of my office does not venture a view on the curriculum, who else can lead the partnership towards more agreed objectives? As for jobs, the function of the schools in preparing children for the world of work and for being independent, or perhaps employers, as well as developing their cultural potential is part of the several parallel strands that are necessary to get this country once again more fully employed.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): Will my right hon. Friend accept that his statement and the White Paper are much welcomed by Conservative Members? His reference to governors and to the fact that local authorities will not have majority control is also to be welcomed. Will my right hon. Friend confirm that, while trying to make schools better than they are now, the best course to take would be either to make all teachers subject to the Employment Protection Acts or to give them not the right to strike?

Sir Keith Joseph: I should be interested to know how my hon. Friend thinks one could achieve his last point.

Mr. Eric Cockeram (Ludlow): Is it not the case that the greatest obstacle to raising teaching standards has been the attitude of the leadership of the National Union of Teachers, which has repeatedly shown itself to be more interested in disrupting education through strikes than in rewarding excellence? Will the Secretary of State therefore welcome the initiative of the more moderate teachers' unions which seek to co-operate in raising standards?

Sir Keith Joseph: Yes, heartily, but I must in fairness say that the National Union of Teachers has expressed interest—indeed, a desire for some system of appraisal, so there may be some common ground, despite the present discontent.

Mr. Gerald Bowden (Dulwich): May I give a special welcome to the requirement that schools should make a statement of their aims and educational objectives? This would, I believe, harness the efforts of the teachers, the aspirations of parents and the interests of the children to a common end. May I ask the Secretary of State to give an assurance that such a statement of aims will be put in plain English which can be understood by everybody and not wrapped up in arcane educational jargon?

Sir Keith Joseph: Yes. As an example, I should like schools to accept such new objectives as something like Wordsworth and word processing

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): May I thank my right hon. Friend for that section of the White Paper which lays down new guidelines for minimum sizes of schools? In particular, will he in due course pay attention to the problems caused in certain areas by authorities laying down unrealistic sizes of school entry forms which mean that those schools remain under-subscribed while adjoining schools are over-subscribed?

Sir Keith Joseph: I suspect that my hon. Friend is hoeing a local furrow, but I agree with him.

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): With the introduction of AS-levels, will my right hon. Friend take the opportunity to publish a simple guide for employers which will set out the role of and the differences between O-levels, A-levels, AS-levels, S-levels, CSE, GCE, 16-plus, 17-plus, CPVE, GCSE, BTEC, TVEI and YTS?

Sir Keith Joseph: I appreciate the enjoyment my hon. Friend has had in asking that question, but I have to tell him that the days of CSE and O-levels are numbered.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): Even though next to the bottom of the class, may I congratulate my right hon. Friend upon the great concern that he has shown for the deaf, the blind and those suffering from partial hearing by refusing to accept the ACSET report, even though it would have saved money, and instead for having listened to those who really know about these matters—the parents of children who suffer from this kind of affliction and those who devote their lives to teaching them?

Sir Keith Joseph: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, but the world of the deaf and the blind is very articulate.

Mr. Jonathan Sayeed (Bristol, East): I welcome my right hon. Friend's brave initiative, but does the White Paper address practical, technical and vocational training for children so as to fit them for the world of work?

Sir Keith Joseph: The technical and vocational education initiative is now at the pilot stage in a majority of local education authorities. The intention is that the extra money for in-service training should be used primarily for TVEI-related disciplines precisely in order to provide a larger pool of teachers with skills to teach the subjects which my hon. Friend has in mind.

Mr. Radice: Is the Secretary of State aware that he has confirmed this afternoon that there is little new in the White Paper? Is he also aware that he has confirmed that educational expenditure by local authorities will fall by 9 per cent. in real terms over the next three years? Incidentally, contrary to what the right hon. Gentleman has said, the last two years do not include the unallocated margin, a point which he always tries to raise. It is also

[Mr. Radice]

a bit thick for the Secretary of State to claim credit for the Clegg award, as I heard him do this afternoon — [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] Yes, he did. Cannot the Secretary of State understand that there is no way in which he can achieve his plans without the support of the teaching profession? I repeat that the time is right for the Secretary of State to take an initiative in the teachers' dispute.

Sir Keith Joseph: The hon. Gentleman is still wrong. The last two years of his comparisons ignore the fact that the figures for distribution of expenditure are, explicitly, on a provisional basis. Why should not the Conservative Government take credit for the Clegg award, which was paid during our time in office? Of course the teachers are partners. Effective education cannot conceivably be delivered without effective teachers. It is in order to improve the effectiveness of teachers that much of this White Paper is addressed. The hon. Gentleman often shows evidence of generosity, but in this case he is being very grudging.

Doctors and Dentists

4.19 pm

The Secretary of State for Social Services (Mr. Norman Fowler): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about medical and dental manpower.

Following the report of the Royal Commission on Medical Education in 1968 and the earlier McNair report on dental manpower, a decision was taken to embark on a major programme of medical and dental school expansion. The purpose of that expansion programme was to achieve a position in which we were training, in this country, enough doctors and dentists to meet our needs. The Health Service had already become heavily dependent on doctors and dentists from other countries to whom we owe a considerable debt. They have enabled us to make good the shortfall in supply which arose from the inadequate number of graduates from our own medical and dental schools.

The expansion programme begun in the late 1960s is now largely complete. The Government therefore have a responsibility to re-examine the supply of and demand for doctors and dentists. A review of dental manpower was completed in 1983 and led us to conclude that the output from dental schools was in danger of leading to an over-supply. We accordingly agreed, following discussions with the profession, to reduce the intake to dental schools by 10 per cent.

I am today publishing a report by the advisory committee for medical manpower planning, which comprised officials from the health departments and representatives of the main professional bodies. The report contains different projections of the likely future pattern of supply and demand for doctors. There are many factors which will affect the future balance, including the level of output from medical schools, the extent to which women doctors remain in active practice and the number of overseas doctors coming here. I shall want to discuss with the medical profession the implications of the report on the intake to medical schools, on the medical staffing of hospitals and on postgraduate training.

The Government have, however, concluded that it is now necessary to prepare for the position which the expansion programme was intended to achieve—that is, where the United Kingdom is essentially self-sufficient in its supply of doctors and dentists. At present, overseas doctors and dentists have almost unrestricted access to this country. We have therefore decided to bring them more into line with the immigration rules applying to other groups. But we shall wish to retain the important role which this country has traditionally fulfilled of providing postgraduate training to doctors and dentists from other countries who can come here for periods of specialist training before returning to put those specialist skills into practice.

To give effect to this policy, my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary is today laying before the House a statement of the necessary changes to the immigration rules. Briefly, these changes will have the following effects from 1 April. Doctors and dentists from overseas who wish to become general medical and dental practitioners will need to comply with the relevant entry provisions for the self-employed. All other doctors and dentists, with the exception of those intending to undertake

a period of postgraduate training, will be subject to normal work permit arrangements. Doctors and dentists seeking entry for the purpose of postgraduate training in hospitals will be admitted for a period of up to four years. After four years in this country they will be able to stay only if extensions of stay are granted under the normal immigration and employment provisions. A similar permit-free period for postgraduate training will be available to overseas nationals graduating here. The changes will not apply to the doctors and dentists from the European Community who have free entry to this country for employment.

The changes are, I believe, a sensible step for us to take at this stage. They do not in any way affect the position of overseas doctors and dentists currently working here. They will, however, make clear to those who come in the future the basis on which they are being admitted and they will ensure that we do not encourage doctors and dentists to come here with expectations which the Health Service cannot fulfil. They will also enable the Health Service to plan its use of medical and dental manpower more effectively.

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): Is the Secretary of State aware that in principle we welcome a statement on medical and dental manpower? It is long overdue, since the Government have been sitting on the report by the advisory committee on medical manpower planning for well over a year without publishing it, even though it contains information essential for resolving current manpower problems. Nearly two years ago the Minister of State promised a review of dental manpower planning for last year, but that never transpired.

Is the Secretary of State aware that the Royal Commission report in 1979 recommended regular and more frequent reviews of medical manpower—to take place about every two years? Since this is the first such review in the last six years, will the Secretary of State undertake such reviews about every two years?

On what basis does the Secretary of State plan medical manpower requirements since the Government stopped the collection of medical unemployment statistics three years ago? Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that at least 2,000 doctors and 10,000 nurses and midwives are on the dole? If that is correct, how does he intend to remove them from the dole queues whilst steadily increasing medical schools' intake?

On the question of consultant expansion, is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the Opposition strongly support the view of the Social Services Select Committee, chaired by my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Short), in its 1981 report that a much higher proportion of patient care should be provided by qualified staff?

Is the Secretary of State further aware that in 1982 the Government suggested doubling the number of consultants over the next 15 years, so creating a growth rate of 4·75 per cent. a year? How does he explain that in the year to September 1984, the last year for which we have statistics, the growth rate was only 2·3 per cent.—less than half that needed to meet the Government's own objective? Do the Government still adhere to that objective? If they do, will the Secretary of State issue an annual target for consultant expansion in each region?

In the interim, what machinery is the right hon. Gentleman setting up to deal with the severe bottleneck between the registrar and senior registrar grades due to lack of adequate consultant posts, especially in general medicine and general surgery?

The Secretary of State seeks to justify his proposals for overseas doctors on the ground that the United Kingdom is

"essentially self-sufficient in its supply of doctors and dentists."

What is the basis for such a bland, complacent statement when, according to a parliamentary answer on 25 February this year, the number of doctors per 1,000 population is 25 per cent. higher in France than it is in the United Kingdom, 50 per cent. higher in Germany and 100 per cent. higher in Italy?

Irrespective of numbers, is the right hon. Gentleman aware of the glaring omission from his statement about the quality of training which overseas doctors receive? Is he aware that overseas doctors are severely disadvantaged by the haphazard arrangements for their postgraduate training? They are often shunted off to study unfashionable specialties in the regions and often end up not receiving the training for which they came here and which they have a right to expect.

Does the Secretary of State agree that the system needs a radical overhaul to provide a clear guarantee of the quality of training offered, and of its completion? Does he accept that without further guarantees about standards and quality—[HON. MEMBERS: "Too long."]—This is my last point and it is important — simply cutting the numbers of overseas doctors who can stay here, which is all that his statement is about, will seem discriminatory and unfair?

Mr. Fowler: The last point rather spoiled the hon. Gentleman's response. I welcomed many of his comments. I am glad to give him the assurance that the matter will be kept under continual review.

The hon. Gentleman asked about self-sufficiency. Successive Governments have aimed for self-sufficiency. We have reviewed manpower needs from time to time and the advisory committee for medical manpower planning report published today follows the dental manpower review of 1983 upon which we have already acted by reducing the intake of dental schools by 10 per cent. We are preparing for the United Kingdom being essentially self-sufficient. Without such action there is a risk of over-supply.

The hon. Gentleman asked about unemployment. At any time people are changing jobs or between jobs. That is the only problem in that respect. We have already cut the number of British dental students. It would be indefensible to allow unrestricted immigration in such circumstances.

Since 1979 the ratio of doctors to population has improved substantially. Today 6,000 more doctors are employed in the Health Service than when the Labour Government left office.

Mrs. Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): I thank my right hon. Friend for listening so carefully to the representations made to him on this point since there has been widespread concern in the dental and medical professions about the way in which dentists and doctors from anywhere overseas have been allowed to come into the country. Bearing in mind the severe difficulties that this has created in planning the future levels of staffing in

[Mrs. Jill Knight]

hospitals and in the dental profession, I have no doubt that there will be a widespread wish for me to congratulate my right hon. Friend on his action today.

Mr. Fowler: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I think that the aim for the country to become self-sufficient in the training of doctors and dentists will be one that is shared on both sides of the House. Equally, I think that it will be realised that there is no point in training doctors if at the end of training there are no jobs for them.

Mrs. Renée Short (Wolverhampton, North-East): I, too, welcome the fact that the Secretary of State has made the statement today although, as my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) said, the Select Committee presented its report to him in 1981, and he has had plenty of time in which to discuss these important matters with the medical profession. Why has he not done so in the intervening period? Is he aware that there are still grave problems about the appointment of more consultants in many regions of the country and that as a result junior doctors continue to have to work long hours and have more UMTs placed upon them, and progress has not been made in this regard?

Why has the Secretary of State not yet published the Green Paper on general practice? Surely this will have some bearing on the numbers of doctors employed, and possibly on the numbers of medical students that we may need in future. If he is not taking on board the proposal of the Select Committee that overseas students who wish to come here to train as doctors should undertake some kind of sponsorship scheme, has he considered it, and what are his views?

Mr. Fowler: We have always made it clear that the Green Paper on the family practitioner services will be published in the summer. That remains our intent.

On the general point about training and the position of consultants, which was also raised by the hon. Member for Oldham, West, there has been an expansion in the number of consultants in the last few years, and an expansion of about 2·3 per cent. in the last year. I share the concern of the hon. Lady and, indeed, of the hon. Member for Oldham, West about training. There is concern at present that too many overseas doctors do not receive the most relevant medical training and experience. They find themselves in areas such as geriatrics and psychiatry, which are important but are not necessarily those which are most relevant to their training needs. I want to see that position improved. I have made it clear to the British Medical Association and the medical profession generally that we shall be having urgent discussions about the matter in order to ensure that better and proper training is provided.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): May I commend my right hon. Friend for his honest and straightforward approach to what is a difficult problem, particularly with regard to overseas doctors. Will he agree that for years we in this country have been draining the poorest nations of their ablest manpower, which has done nothing whatever to assist those countries? Will he reassure those doctors and dentists who are already settled here, and their patients, many of whom have had excellent service in cities such as Derby and throughout the country, that we have no plans to send such practitioners back from what is now their home?

Mr. Fowler: I certainly give a categorical assurance on my hon. Friend's second point. The position of those who are practising here and, indeed, of those who are in training posts here is entirely safeguarded, and there is no question of their position being worsened by what I have said today. I hope that that is recognised by doctors.

Secondly, I should like to underline the debt that we in this country owe overseas doctors. They have made a tremendous contribution. I wish to put on record my tribute to them.

Mr. Michael Meadowcroft (Leeds, West): Is not the Secretary of State's statement a capitulation to an existing perception of resources rather than to a better definition of need? As such, would it not be difficult for those with a greater vision of the resources that we need to raise for medical services to reverse it? Is there not a desperate need in many parts of the world for doctors and dentists to whom we should make our training facilities, both primary and postgraduate, more widely available in order to help those worse off than ourselves?

Finally, will the right hon. Gentleman take on board what has already been suggested, that the implication of his statement on immigration, particularly with regard to the Indian sub-continent, would be more acceptable if it were not for the Government's mean attitude towards immigration? That inevitably encourages a certain suspicion of the Government's intentions which we ought to allay at the first possible opportunity.

Mr. Fowler: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will therefore join me in allaying any suspicions that might arise about this measure.

I do not agree with him on the first point. The work permit system gives flexible means of controlling supply. That is the essence of the work permit system. It means that a health authority can apply for a work permit for a person who has been training in this country.

As to the general case, we have increased the number of doctors, and we are planning further to increase it. The aim is for the country to become self-sufficient. I hope that that is an aim in which the hon. Gentleman will join.

Mr. Timothy Wood (Stevenage): I thank my right hon. Friend for his statement, which I believe reflects a very encouraging position. Is it not the case not only that the number of medical practitioners is improving, but that the A-level standards achieved by those wishing to enter university to read medicine are at an all-time high?

Mr. Fowler: Yes, I think that is right. The standards have improved and are improving.

Mr. Alfred Dubs (Battersea): Will the Secretary of State confirm that he intends to give effect to the changes in the immigration rules from 1 April? If that is the case, it gives people six days' notice. Is it the intention that he or his hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State will rush the immigration rule changes through the House before that date, or will effect be given to the measures without the changes having gone through Parliament?

Secondly, what is the position of doctors and dentists who have made plans to come here and already have posts in hospitals but will be unable to arrive before 1 April? Will there be a period of grace?

Mr. Fowler: The broad position is that any entry that has taken place before 1 April will not be affected. That difficulty always arises with the laying of an order of this kind. If the Opposition so wish, it can be prayed against within 40 days. Any alternative method of action that the hon. Gentleman might propose would be open to severe criticism and might entail disadvantage.

Mr. Den Dover (Chorley): I recognise that the statement is about doctors and dentists. What is my right hon. Friend able to announce about the nursing numbers, particularly if the comments by the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) are correct and there are 10,000 unemployed? In particular, what action might be taken to regulate the numbers per health authority, because there are vast fluctuations between authorities?

Mr. Fowler: I am proposing no change in the entry conditions with regard to the number of nurses coming to this country. It is important to underline the fact that we are making exceptions in regard to members of the medical and dental professions coming to the country for a four-year period of training. I think that the general position of nursing takes us rather wider than the statement.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is the Secretary of State aware that, instead of introducing this Monday Club statement and talking about restricting the numbers of doctors and dentists, he would have done well to recognise that, with waiting lists of approaching 750,000 in the country and the lack of kidney machines, artificial limbs, heart pacemakers and so on, it would make sense not to have any restriction, but to acknowledge the collapse of the National Health Service and to make sure that we increase the number of doctors in order to shorten the current long waiting lists?

Mr. Fowler: Not for the first time the hon. Gentleman is completely out of tune with everything that has been said so far by hon. Members on both sides of the House in response to my statement. There is absolutely no point in training doctors in this country if there are no jobs for them at the end of that training. We have already reduced the number of British dental students. Frankly, it would be indefensible to allow unrestricted immigration in those circumstances. If what the hon. Gentleman said represents the policy that he would wish to advocate, that is up to him, but I doubt whether many people would agree with him.

Mr. J. F. Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): Is my right hon. Friend aware that his statement will be welcome for at least two reasons, first, because it should ensure more jobs for British doctors and dentists and, secondly, because it should ensure greater standards of health care in those countries from which many doctors have come in the past?

Mr. Fowler: My hon. Friend makes an important point. That is why it is important that we should tackle the question of the training of overseas doctors who then return to their countries and put their specialist knowledge into effect.

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): I welcome the Minister's acknowledgement of the crucial role that overseas doctors have played. For those who will continue to come here for post-graduate training, will he be taking steps, so far as is possible and practicable, to make sure that the training they receive is geared to the skills that they will need when they return to their own countries, bearing in mind the provision that is made in, and outlay devoted to, medicine in those countries? Does he see that type of provision being directed more to hospital service or general practitioner service?

Mr. Fowler: I agree with the hon. Gentleman in general outline, as does the medical profession, with representatives of which I have discussed the matter. I shall be having further talks with them about the matters that the hon. Gentleman raises, and any improvements that can be made will, I am sure, be welcomed by all concerned.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): When does the right hon. Gentleman think that the United Kingdom will be self-sufficient in the supply of doctors, and what doctor-patient ratio is he aiming for? Is he satisfied that we shall be self-sufficient in every specialism, bearing in mind what he said earlier about many overseas doctors tending to concentrate on one or two specialisms? Does his guarantee that the proposals will not affect overseas doctors and dentists now working here apply to overseas doctors and dentists currently training here? Is he seriously asking us to believe that all the 2,000 doctors who are out of work are in the process of changing jobs? He seemed to suggest that. Can he guarantee—perhaps I should address this question to his hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State, Home Office — that once the immigration rules have been changed there will not be any police and immigration officer raids on hospitals to check whether doctors have the necessary passports to allow them to stay in the country?

Mr. Fowler: That last question was unworthy of the hon. Gentleman—*[Interruption.]* Come to think of it, perhaps it was entirely worthy of him. I can give him the assurance he seeks about training. I repeat that we do not intend by anything being announced today to affect the position of those already here.

In answering his question about self-sufficiency, I ask the hon. Gentleman to study the report of the advisory committee that we have published today. Many people in the medical profession would say that we have not only reached self-sufficiency but are above it. The Government are preparing for the time when the United Kingdom is essentially self-sufficient. Without action at this stage, there is a risk of over-supply. The work permit system will give us flexibility to control supply, while at the same time allowing health authorities, if there are difficulties or shortages, to apply for work permits for doctors in those areas.

Teachers (Pay Dispute)

4.43 pm

Mr. Clement Freud (Cambridgeshire, North-East): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the teachers' pay dispute and the Secretary of State's handling of the matter."

The matter is specific because the House has a responsibility to consider the matter in the light of the Remuneration of Teachers Act 1965. The House has not fully debated the strike or its consequences, even though it has been going on for nearly a term. We have received from the Secretary of State only a statement in which he made much of the partnership in education. The House needs to know what he meant by partnership.

The matter is important because this is the week when children are making vital choices about their CSEs and O and A-level courses for 1987. The disruption this week threatens that process, and its continuation threatens children who are preparing for their examinations. This is the week leading up to the Easter holidays. It is not only union conference time, but it could be a watershed in the dispute, providing an opportunity to find a settlement away from the bitter context of the strike.

The matter is urgent because the House and the country need a considered statement from the Secretary of State, instead of informal and confusing comments. If he continues to do nothing, the strike will drag on, morale will sink still further and the service will face total collapse. Even if the strike peters out — and one suspects, by his inactivity, that that is what the Secretary of State hopes for — is it right that the right hon. Gentleman's ritual girations should become an annual event, a sort of non-fertility right?

It is no longer acceptable to teachers, parents or employers to have to guess what the Secretary of State is thinking, to go on with no leadership from him, with the children caught in the cross-fire. The Secretary of State is the only person who can provide a way out of the present dispute. The House should, therefore, have an opportunity to debate this specific, important and urgent matter.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Freud) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the effects of the teachers' dispute."

I have listened with care to the hon. Member, but I regret that I do not consider the matter that he has raised to be appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 10, and I cannot, therefore, submit his application to the House.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That this House do meet on Thursday 4th April at half-past Nine-o'clock, that no Questions be taken after half-past Ten o'clock, and that at half-past Three o'clock Mr. Speaker do adjourn the House without putting any Question — *[Mr. Neubert.]*

Highlands and Islands Development Board Boundaries Amendment

4.48 pm

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to amend the boundaries of the Highlands and Islands Development Board area to include the mountain areas of the Grampian, Central and Tayside Regions.

Every school child in Scotland knows that there are three clearly defined geographical areas within mainland Scotland. They are the southern uplands, the central lowlands and the highlands. School children also know that within the highland area there are counties called the crofting counties.

Twenty years ago, Parliament, concerned that the crofting counties and the western and northern islands were suffering from rural deprivation and depopulation, acted to reverse the economic decline which had begun some 200 years earlier, with the highland clearances, which began in my constituency. The situation was made worse by the population movement of the industrial revolution and the events resulting from two world wars.

A board was established to deal with those problems. It was decided to locate it in Inverness and it was given special responsibilities for the social and economic development of the crofting counties and the islands. The board was named the Highlands and Islands Development Board.

For the first 10 years of its life, the fact that the board did not have any responsibility for almost 40 per cent. of the mountain area of the Scottish highlands did not seem to present many problems. That relatively happy situation changed, however, when Britain joined the European Economic Community, an important subject to which I shall return.

During the past 10 years there has been a substantial growth in the number of tourists visiting all of the highland area, while at the same time there has been a dramatic decline in the number of jobs on farms and on highland estates. These changes have brought into sharp focus the differences in all forms of assistance which are available to the Highlands and Islands Development Board area and which are not available to the other parts of the highlands. Yet historically, geologically, culturally and socio-economically, the parts of the highlands which are outside the board area are indivisibly highland — by land use pattern, population changes, settlement destabilisation and the uninterrupted contraction of transport, medical and education services.

Because many of the decisions affecting the type and level of assistance or aid available to the less favoured areas within the European Economic Community are now being made in Brussels, it is imperative that the area designated as the highlands of Scotland, and known in Europe as the highlands of Scotland, should be all of the highlands and not just the former crofting counties, otherwise farmers and tourist enterprises which are attempting to create a viable living in the adjoining mountain areas of Grampian, Central and Tayside regions will find themselves excluded from EEC aid which has been especially designed to meet the needs of highland Scotland.

I remind the House that Drumochter, Glen Lyon, Rannoch, Strathardle, Glen Shee, Glen Prosen, Glen

Clova, Glen Esk and the Cairn-o'-Mount are among the most difficult to farm in highland Scotland, yet, in the view of the EEC, they are not part of highland Scotland.

I also remind the House that the Trossachs, Loch Earn, Loch Tummel, Loch Tay, Loch Rannoch, Killin, Aberfeldy, Pitlochry, Balmoral and Braemar are considered to be among the finest of Scottish highland beauty spots, yet the EEC believes that they are outside the Scottish highlands.

We cannot blame the bureaucrats of Europe for not understanding the true situation. That is why I believe that these anomalies must be removed. Some 20 years ago, when we were not a member of the EEC, and when all the decisions affecting highland Scotland were made in this Parliament, it did not matter greatly that the boundaries of the Highlands and Islands Development Board did not embrace all of the Scottish highlands. Today I claim that it does matter. That is why I invite the House to support my Bill to alter the boundaries of the board to cover the areas in Grampian, Central and Tayside regions which by reason of their highland character, rural deprivation and remoteness can be regarded as having the same problems as the areas already covered by the board.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Bill Walker, Mr. Albert McQuarrie, Sir Hector Monro, Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn, Mr. Tom Clarke, Mr. Michael Forsyth and Mr. Malcolm Bruce.

Highlands and Islands Development Board Boundaries Amendment

Mr. Bill Walker accordingly presented a Bill to amend the boundaries of the Highlands and Islands Development Board area to include the mountain areas of the Grampian, Central and Tayside Regions: And the same was read the First Time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 19 April and to be printed. [Bill 112.]

Adjournment (Easter and May Day)

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That this House at its rising on Thursday 4th April do adjourn until Monday 15th April and at its rising on Friday 3rd May do adjourn until Tuesday 7th May, and that the House shall not adjourn on Thursday 4th April until Mr. Speaker shall have reported the Royal Assent to any Acts which have been agreed upon by both Houses.—*[Mr. Neubert.]*

4.54 pm

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent): I suggest that the House should not adjourn until we have discussed the abolition of section 10 of the Crown Proceedings Act 1947. Section 10 gives total immunity against legal action for negligence which results in the death or serious disability of any service man during his day-to-day activities in peacetime. Hon. Members on both sides of the House will have heard the response of the Minister of State for the Armed Forces at Question Time. It was a leisurely, if not complacent, response. His answer that he was simply reviewing section 10 was the same as the answer last year and the year before.

The right hon. Gentleman's reply was very interesting. He seemed to imply that Opposition Members should be satisfied with section 10 simply because the Crown Proceedings Act was enacted by Mr. Attlee's Government, but Mr. Attlee was operating after a devastating world war. It was understandable at that time that human rights should not take a high priority because everything was all at sea.

The Minister said that section 10 had served successive Governments satisfactorily. That is his opinion, but the House should be concerned not only with what the Government think, but with what soldiers, sailors and airmen think about section 10. I should like to quote to the House an extract from a letter that I have received from a couple whom I do not propose to identify. Their son was one of the victims of section 10. They talk not only about their son but about other service men who were injured in peacetime.

The letter says:

"Jonathan is dead. He sustained 60 per cent. burns when a Seacat missile was fired by mistake. He was our son. He was just eighteen years old and he died before we could reach him. Steven was seventeen years old. He was thrown from an R.A.F. truck, or was he? No-one seems to know for certain. He was irreparably brain damaged anyway, and died within a few hours. Kevin took rather longer about it. When he was found floating face downwards in a vat of lethal cleaning fluid he was seventeen years old. When he finally died he was twenty one years old and he weighed less than four stone.

There is nothing you can do for Jonathan or Steven or Kevin, but you can help those who have been injured. You can also help to ensure that greater care is taken in the training of all young servicemen.

Those cases that I have quoted are the answer to the Minister, who at Question Time said that successive Governments had been satisfied with the operation of section 10. Service men have not been satisfied, because they have been denied the legal right to take action for negligence when they have been injured. The parents of service men who have been killed have certainly not been satisfied.

I shall not go into the details of my own constituent, Martin Ketterick, except to say that he was horribly injured when abseiling down rocks. He suffered a broken spinal cord and a fractured skull, and he will be a lifelong paraplegic. If he had been able to sue, and if negligence had been proved in court, he might have received

[Mr. Jack Ashley]

£300,000. Now he is receiving the equivalent of an industrial injuries payment. He was a marine. He was discharged from the service with a gratuity of £3,553 and an invalidity payment of £47 per week.

Preventing service men from sueing is an acceptable doctrine in wartime, because when they sign on they accept the risk of injury or death, but it is unacceptable in peacetime, because it is a deprivation of basic human rights.

The Ministry of Defence has a list of objections to the case for abolishing section 10. First, the Ministry says, "If we abolish section 10 and allow our service men to sue for negligence, we shall endanger discipline." That reason is bogus, because discipline is irrelevant to legal redress. There is no justification for that claim.

Secondly, the Ministry says, "If we allow service men to sue, it will create anomalies." That is absurd, because the basic anomaly is that comparable public servants, such as policemen and firemen, can sue for negligence, and they receive the same invalid pension as soldiers, sailors and airmen.

Thirdly, the Ministry says, "It is not easy to define the dividing line between military action and other activities." That is absolute rubbish. Any service man or ex-service man would soon put the Ministry right. Everyone who has served in the services knows about the dividing line between military activity and non-military activity.

Fourthly, the Ministry says, "Service men may not be able to prove negligence." They may not, but, on the other hand, they may be able to prove it. That decision should be made by the courts and not by the Minister.

Section 10 should be abolished, first, because that would restore an important human right, and, secondly, because much greater care would be taken in training service men and running their other military activities. I have no doubt that the case will be won sooner or later, because it is just. Sooner or later, section 10 will be abolished and service men wll be given this basic right. I make no plea: when the Ministry of Defence accepts the case, it should be retrospective so that the Martin Kettericks of this world do not suffer because they were injured before the Government saw fit to give them that right. When the Ministry of Defence gives service men the legal right to sue for negligence and makes that right retrospective, it will ensure justice not only for the future but for all those service men who have been deprived of that right.

5.3 pm

Mr. Peter Viggers (Gosport): It is a privilege to follow the speech of the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) because I, too, have an interest in the Crown Proceedings Act 1947. Only 10 days ago I went to see my constituent, Mr. Des Clingham, who, as a chief petty officer, served in the Falklands with distinction. He came back and was working in Portsmouth harbour when, unfortunately, he fell many feet into the sea from a platform, an accident which left him a paraplegic. As with the cases quoted by the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South, Mr. Clingham has suffered injuries for which he can claim only a nominal amount through the normal procedures of the armed forces compensation board. He is deprived of the opportunity of getting what would undoubtedly be hundreds of thousands of pounds were he able to sue through the courts.

I share the right hon. Gentleman's concern that the Government should review section 10 of the Crown Proceedings Act. I do not know whether it is possible to sweep away section 10 although there are real objections to it, but I believe that the current level of provision for those who are damaged and able to receive compensation only under that provision is less than generous. There is no doubt about that. It is not right that service men should be treated in that way. I look forward to the result of the Government's review.

My purpose in participating in this debate is to suggest that the House should not adjourn until it has had the opportunity to discuss another subject which could scarcely be less related to the subject raised by the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South. I refer to the issue of tri-organo-tin anti-fouling which is used on boats. I am sure that that issue is of great concern to my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House.

Anti-fouling is used by yachtsmen and operators of large boats to prevent growth on the bottom of boats of marine organisms and plant life. By far the most popular of the anti-foulings is organo-tin anti-fouling, which is used by 90 per cent. of all yachtsmen. The industry that manufactures these paints is healthy. Indeed, International Paints, which is the leading manufacturer, has received two Queen's awards—one for export achievement and the other for technical achievement for the development of tri-organo-tin copolymer anti-fouling paints. Blakes Paints Ltd. of Gosport in my constituency also deserves an honourable mention for its production since the last century of high-performance marine paints.

What is the problem? The Government are thinking of banning organo-tin anti-fouling paints. They have issued a draft regulation entitled Control of Pollution (Anti-fouling Paints) Regulations 1985 and called for any representations to be made by 14 May 1985. The Government are apparently contemplating action because it is stated that damage is caused to a particular type of oyster — crassostrea gigas, otherwise known as the Pacific oyster.

The so-called evidence derives mainly from laboratory tests on Pacific oysters. The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has found that Pacific oysters kept for long periods in cages coated with organo-tin anti-fouling failed to thrive, and who can blame them? The evidence against organo-tin is circumstantial, and the research has not been profound. Some oyster growers have apparently complained of poor crops, but I am not aware of any tests to discover whether disease, poor weather conditions or even poor husbandry is the cause. The anti-fouling paint is blamed, but I maintain that the case has not been proved.

The scientific evidence is by no means unanimous. *The Western Morning News* of 3 February 1984 states:

> "Ministry of Agriculture tests have shown that anti-fouling paint containing toxic TBT (Tributyl Tin) compound can kill or cause deformity in thousands of oysters, mussels and fish larvae, but the Plymouth officials said the problem was not affecting this area.
>
> 'We have been looking into mortality of sprats and shellfish in the Tamar to see if TBT could have contributed to the cause of death, but the levels found are not significant,' said Dr. Tony Stebbing, of the city's institute of Marine Biological Research."

I have several worries about the imposition of a ban. First, any alternative to organo-tin anti-fouling paint could

be worse, because yachtsmen would be forced to go back to the old-fashioned copper-based anti-fouling. It is known that some fishermen find that copper-based anti-fouling is not effective for their purposes, and they lace the copper-based anti-fouling with mercury or arsenic. I believe that that could be far worse than organo-tin.

Secondly, the only precedent for a ban on organo-tin is in France. Since the use of organo-tin was banned in France, exports to France from the United Kingdom have increased by 24 per cent., suggesting that something may be wrong with the ban. The ban in the United Kingdom is proposed to be on the sale of organo-tin paints, which means that it is perfectly satisfactory and legal for a yachtsman to sail to the Channel Islands, have his boat painted with organo-tin anti-fouling and sail back to the United Kingdom without having broken the law.

Thirdly, I maintain that oysters in the Solent and Spithead area, of which I claim to have special knowledge, have been breeding like rabbits. There is no evidence that their numbers are falling.

My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment explains away the Solent area and my point that oysters are breeding well there in a letter of 15 March 1985, in which he says:

"While the Solent is a popular boating area, it generally enjoys good tidal flows and good exchange of water with the open sea."

In that way he seeks to dismiss the fact that, although there are more yachts and therefore, presumably, more organo-tin anti-fouling in the Solent area than in most parts of the United Kingdom, nevertheless oysters are thriving as never before.

My fourth point of concern is perhaps the most telling of all. The proposed Government ban is intended to apply only to vessels under 12 metres. When I raised this point with my hon. Friend the Minister and pointed out that larger commercial vessels used more anti-fouling than smaller boats and yachts, he replied:

"Large commercial vessels are not moored in large numbers for long periods in shallow waters where interchange with the open sea is poor."

I ask my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House, and indeed the House and the Minister, how it is, then, that the Burmah Endeavour, a very large tanker of 457,000 tonnes, has been moored in the port of Southampton for the past two years. Friends in the industry have estimated that it would need 36,000 litres of anti-fouling to keep that tanker anti-fouled—the equivalent of what would be needed by 14,400 yachts. I submit that the ban on yachts is not very logical if the Burmah Endeavour is entitled to remain in Southampton docks, presumably contaminating Southampton Water.

I am grateful for the opportunity to raise this point with the House. I am completely confident, of course, that my right hon. Friend the Minister will come to the right conclusion when the period of consultation eventually ends on 14 May 1985, but I think it would be helpful for the House to have an opportunity to consider this matter further before then.

5.12 pm

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): I should like to join the hon. Member for Gosport (Mr. Viggers) in thanking the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) for raising the matter of section 10 of the Crown Proceedings Act. It seems to me quite remarkable that each of the first three speakers in the debate has had a personal connection with service men who have suffered under that particular section. I am therefore very grateful to the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South for raising it.

I should like to speak on a matter that I believe should be debated before we go into recess for Easter. It concerns the practices of the newly privatised British Telecom plc and the way in which they are not only deeply inconveniencing some of its subscribers but threatening the viability of some small, newly established firms which have been formed to take advantage of that privatisation.

When the legislation to privatise BT was passing through the House many of us said that the public would benefit neither from competition nor from better business practices through the conversion of BT from a public to a private monopoly. We said that as the privatised BT would not be accountable to the House, through the Minister, there would be less constraint upon sharp practices and exploitation. I have clear evidence that this is exactly what is happening. I will give the House an example drawn from my own constituency, but I have good reason to believe that this is occurring throughout the country. Indeed, I have a number of letters and evidence to that effect.

I have in my constituency a small firm, C and C Telecoms, run by two former BT engineers, John Clothier and George Crawley. These two—so typical of many others—left BT on privatisation in order to set up their own small business to take advantage of what they believed could be, as the Government had promised, a new, more competitive and liberated market in telecoms. Their aim was quite simple. They formed a small firm with a meagre amount of capital which they invested in a certain amount of equipment, and they wished to install small value items such as telephone sockets and small exchanges. They were encouraged to do this by BT and even went on BT-sponsored courses to learn how to install this particular equipment. They then went out into the market place and started to trade. They offered to install telephone sockets for £58·75 — about £20 below the prevailing BT price of £78·20. As might be imagined, they soon had a good deal of business coming their way.

What they did not know, however, and what BT apparently omitted to tell them during their courses, was that under the Telecommunciations Act 1984 private contractors are not allowed at present — although this may be changed fairly soon — to fit sockets in these circumstances. C and C were not only never advised of this by BT but were, I understand, encouraged by BT to undertake this kind of business.

Whatever the case, however, BT is now refusing to take up this issue directly with the installers. Instead, they are charging the end customer, the member of the public, £25 to inspect the socket installed by the private contractor, so conveniently putting the total cost of the installation by the private contractor just above the price which BT would charge to do the job itself. BT is, presumably, reluctant to challenge the matter legally. Instead, it is taking the easy route of charging an inspection fee to the end customer—on the threat, incidentally, of cutting off his telephone — so ensuring that the problem is solved by the simple route of destroying the private operator's competitiveness.

There are rumours to the effect that BT will shortly, in June this year, be offering DIY sets for the installation of private telephone sockets. I very much hope that the

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question of the inspection charge at a massive £25 each will have been resolved by then, and indeed the general legality of the matter as well.

There is a second, more disturbing aspect to this problem, and I will take the case of C and C again. In common with many other similar small firms, C and C, established in the wake of the privatisation of BT, was heavily encouraged by BT to sell three small exchange systems called Rhapsody, Minimaster and Ambassador. They attended BT courses at which they were advised to go out and install as many of these telephone exchange systems—they are called switching systems—as they could.

Messrs. Clothier and Crawley duly made their own personal investments and set up their business on this basis. In the early days they did very well indeed. Then, suddenly and without warning, having been encouraged to base their business on the installation of these small exchanges, they received a letter of 6 March 1985 from their supplier, who is the accredited BT supplier, Eagle Telecoms, saying, quite bluntly and surprisingly:

"British Telecom Consumer Products will no longer supply Rhapsody, Minimster and Ambassador from 31st April 1985."

That is not because those exchange systems have gone out of supply or been withdrawn in any way. That is made perfectly clear by the next statement in this surprising letter:

"BT areas will continue to sell and maintain systems through their own outlets, but they will not commission . . . 3rd party installations."

In one swipe, BT, acting in just the kind of dictatorial way that we predicted, has pulled the rug out from under the feet of small installers like C and C and many other similar firms throughout the country. The result for Messrs. Clothier and Crawley, with their small resources, is likely to be the end of their business, unless BT can be persuaded to change its mind, and soon.

Practices of this kind, in which BT is blatantly using its monopoly position in the market place to squeeze out third parties and kill off small firms because they are able to do the job more cheaply, must be stopped. The prophecies made by many of us during the passing of the privatisation Bill are coming all too tragically true. Small firms like C and C, which were established with the meagre personal investment of individuals who believed the Government's rhetoric about liberated markets, are now threatened with extinction. I very much hope, for the sake of those small firms, that this matter can be discussed in detail before the House rises.

5.19 pm

Sir Fergus Montgomery (Altrincham and Sale): I should like to raise two issues, one national and the other local. My right hon. Friend the Leader of the House will not be surprised to hear that the first issue is the reform of the rating system. I should like to quote from the *Official Report* of 25 July 1983, when I said:

"I have raised this issue often before. I make no apology for raising it again today and I shall go on raising it until something is done to find a fairer system, and if that does not put the fear of God into my right hon. Friend I do not know what will."—[*Official Report*, 25 July 1983; Vol. 46, c. 813.]

Obviously I put no fear at all into my right hon. Friend, because here we are almost two years later and still nothing has been done. So I must say to my right hon. Friend that the battle will continue.

I admit that the Government have tried to do certain things to help hard-pressed ratepayers. We have had the system of rate capping and the proposed abolition of the metropolitan counties. I cannot understand why the Government have pussyfooted around so much and allowed the Opposition parties to have such a field day on the abolition of the metropolitan counties. The Labour party would have kept the Greater London council but abolished the metropolitan counties, and the Liberal party has clearly stated that eventually it would have abolished the metropolitan counties and the GLC. I shudder to think of the amount of ratepayers' money that is now being spent by the GLC and the metropolitan counties in an attempt to prevent abolition.

However, that is all by the by, and we still have to find a fairer system of raising local government finance. No one can dispute that the present system is manifestly unfair, because it takes no account of a person's ability to pay. Every hon. Member will have examples such as this one, of two identical adjacent houses, in one an elderly widow living on her own, and in the house next door three or four people all earning wages. The people in both houses would pay the same rates bill. There is no justice in that system.

I do not pretend for one minute that a solution is easy. We know that there are terrible problems. The Government set up a committee to look carefully at the matter, but nothing came forward that met with approval. The problem is compounded by the fact that water rates are assessed on rateable value rather than on actual consumption. No one has ever given me a satisfactory explanation as to why we can have rate rebates but not water rate rebates. Water rates are another burden that bears heavily on the poor and the elderly.

I am always being reminded that the Conservative party promised to get rid of the rating system. That needs to be put into perspective. It is true that in October 1974 my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, when she was shadow Secretary of State for the Environment, put that pledge into the election manifesto. But we did not win that election. By the time the 1979 election came along, we believed that rate reform should be given a much lower priority because the burden of taxation under the Labour Government from 1974 to 1979 had risen so substantially that something had to be done about trying to reduce the rate of direct taxation.

Basically three options are open to us for changing the rating system. First, there is a sales tax, which seems to work well in the United States. However, the United States is a large country, and in a smaller country such as ours, if there were a substantial variation in shopping patterns, it could be difficult for traders. Secondly, there is a local income tax. We are always being told that the present rating system does not take account of ability to pay, but under a local income tax at least that would be changed. The argument has always been that the present system is easy to administer and collect and that a local income tax would be expensive to administer and collect. I should have thought that that argument had died because of the massive advances in technology and computers. Perhaps that matter can be looked at again.

The third option is a poll tax. That would spread the burden evenly on everyone on the electoral register. It would be easy and inexpensive to collect. The Green Paper forecast that a 30 per cent. poll tax would yield £1,200

million annual revenue. I wonder whether we could have a mixture of a poll tax and a much reduced domestic rate. Perhaps that is the answer to the ratepayers' problem.

If anyone bothers to look at the back of his rate demand, he will find that education is far and away the biggest spender and that teachers' salaries take the highest percentage of the education budget. I am convinced that teachers do not want to become civil servants and that they wish to continue to be employed by a local education authority. Therefore, local authorities must have some financial responsibility. Perhaps my right hon. Friend the Minister will consider the idea of a scheme whereby teachers' basic salaries are paid by central Government and any additional payments are shared between the Government and the local education authorities. That would lift an enormous burden from ratepayers' shoulders, but it must not be a signal to spendthrift councils that they can go ahead with all sorts of extravagant schemes, because in that case the ratepayers would be back to square one.

The second issue affects my constituency. It is the vexed question of the South Trafford district hospital. In 1976-77 it was placed in the regional capital programme, and the scheme was due to start in 1980-81. The first phase was for elderly, severely mentally infirm people. In 1977-78 there was a further review and the decision was announced that we would also have acute facilities, but the start was put back to 1982-83. There was a belief in my constituency that the Department of Health and Social Security was holding things up, so on 30 June 1980 I raised an Adjournment debate on the issue, and my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young), then the Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security, replied and said:

"Let me say at once that I fully accept in principle the need to site these services locally and to provide, so far as is possible, acute geriatric and mental illness services in the same location as other acute specialties. I recognise that the RHA's plans to include 100 geriatric and ESMI beds, together with 80 day places in all, in phase 1 of the development would represent a substantial step towards remedying the gaps in provision. I am also aware that its proposal for 150 mental illness beds and 170 day places in phase 2 would enable the needs of the whole Trafford area for mental illness facilities to be met . . . I should like to confirm that the ultimate size of the new hospital as envisaged by the RHA does not conflict at all with our recent thinking on hospital size. At 489 beds, it is well within the range that we regard as viable."—[*Official Report*, 30 June 1980; Vol. 987, c. 1271.]

I took a fair measure of hope from that debate, but we then had a Greater Manchester hospital review between the regional health authority and the DHSS. As a result of that review it was confirmed in October 1981 that the scheme would go ahead, so we had a firm pledge. From then on apparently there was a great deal of correspondence between the regional health authority and the DHSS. In 1983 the regional health authority reviewed its strategy for what it called its regional strategic plan. At the beginning of 1984 work started on an option appraisal, and that took up most of 1984.

In November 1984 we had the recommendation for what was called the Wythenshawe option. Trafford health authority objected, and as a result the regional health authority ordered another appraisal. In February 1985 we were told that the Wythenshawe option was marginally favoured. That has caused a great deal of anger in my constituency, because people feel that the solemn promise that was given has been broken.

Last Wednesday, 20 March, the community health council in my area held a public meeting. It was well attended, and the audience were very angry. People were furious that nobody from the regional health authority was there to explain the position. I often find that if people are presented with the facts, at least they have some understanding of the situation. If the regional health authority had sent someone to put its point of view, that would have been helpful. At the meeting there was a unanimous vote for going ahead with the South Trafford district general hospital. I hope that my constituents' views will be heeded by the DHSS.

I hope that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House will note the points that I have made, and that before the House rises I shall be given some assurances on both issues.

5.31 pm

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): We in Northern Ireland had hoped that this Easter would be brighter and happier for our Province than any Easter since 1969. In the intervening years, a cloud of uncertainty had cast its shadow over all our activities, but that cloud had at long last been dispelled in the immediate aftermath of last November's anglo-Irish summit, when the Prime Minister with characteristic clarity removed all doubt about the constitutional future of Northern Ireland. She made it crystal clear that the principle of self-determination made it necessary to reject the three options set out in the New Ireland Forum report. The Opposition shared the stated view of the Government that there could be no change in Ulster's constitutional position without the free and willing consent of the people of Northern Ireland. That ruled out partial change too.

The Prime Minister's forthright statement after the Chequers summit in November made a significant impact on the entire Northern Ireland community. All over the Province there was evidence of a dramatic change in attitudes. Protestants, Roman Catholics, Unionists and Nationalists were all conscious that three years of drifting were over. They said to themselves, and, what is more, to each other, "Now we know where we stand." They recognised the futility of squabbling about what was not going to happen, and began to wonder how they could co-operate in making Ulster a better place for everyone.

Tragically, that has all now been put at risk by a concerted offensive by Republican politicians and certain churchmen. The culmination was the speech last Friday in London by Dr. FitzGerald. Coming from a lunch in Dublin with the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, he was able to imply that he spoke for them all when he claimed that they were all working on novel and far-reaching proposals for joint authority over Northern Ireland. That speech inspired various press articles designed to add to the confusion and dismay in Northern Ireland.

I recognise that the House is not responsible for any of those activities, but the House is entitled to know the view of those who are accountable to it—in this case, the Northern Ireland Ministers. Everything that they have said over the past week has been so ambiguous that it might have been better left unsaid. For example, on his arrival in Washington yesterday, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland said:

[Mr. James Molyneaux]

"weekend speculation is overblown . . . predictions are well ahead of the game".

That is good Foreign Office stuff, but what does it do to remove the natural anxiety in the minds of those who have been let down and betrayed over 15 long years?

The instability thus created may not strike some right hon. and hon. Members as being very important, but the crying shame is that all that has been achieved in the past five months will be set at naught. The modest success in persuading citizens of Northern Ireland of all aspirations that their future is secure and their path known will be extinguished.

Disaster will be averted only if the Government reiterate the Prime Minister's clear message of 19 November in terms that cannot be misinterpreted or misunderstood. I understand that such a course will not commend itself to those who cherish diplomatic double-talk. However, even they have no choice in the matter, because their opposite numbers in Dublin have put them on the spot—not for the first time. They have created a situation in which words such as "overblown", "exaggeration", "speculation" and "premature" no longer convince or reassure. Considerations of diplomatic niceties have simply enabled Dublin to mount a flanking attack where the frontal attack failed last year. The Government must make it clear that a flanking attack will be no more successful, and the tactic of drift and double-speak must be abandoned now if all that the Prime Minister has achieved is not to be ruthlessly torn away.

5.36 pm

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg (Hampstead and Highgate): I should like to raise two issues and to suggest that they should both be looked at before we agree to the Adjournment. Although it is not always so, one of the issues falls directly within the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House.

First, however, I should like to comment on the unfair attack on British Telecom by the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown). My constituents are satisfied with British Telecom. There has been a great improvement in attitude since privatisation.

The first matter to which I wish to refer is the House of Commons car park. There has been a substantial deterioration over the past few years. It is becoming increasingly difficult to park cars there. Fewer and fewer cars appear to display the discs issued. Will my right hon. Friend authorise an investigation to find out whether in some cases more than one car is being parked by an hon. Member, whether staff are parking more than one car there and whether all the vehicles are in fact authorised? Could he also instruct the car park staff to notify Mr. Speaker if vehicles are parked in spaces not marked out for cars? When people selfishly park their cars outside the marked spaces, driving in the car park becomes difficult and dangerous.

I have written to the Chairman of the Accommodation and Administration Sub-Committee, without so far receiving a very helpful answer. However, the Chairman said that the matter was under consideration. That was some time ago, but, knowing the right hon. Gentleman, I am sure that he is considering the matter. It may well be that he does not often use the car park. It is only when one tries to park a car there that one realises what the problems are. For instance, on a Thursday, it is becoming increasingly difficult to park a car even at noon.

The second issue concerns the Department of the Environment, where a most disturbing case has come to my attention. I declare an interest as a life member of the Bluebell railway—the steam railway between Horsted Keynes and Sheffield Park. The railway is run entirely by volunteers who raise all the funds. Three or four years ago they decided that they would like to purchase and reopen an additional section of line so that the Bluebell railway could again be linked to the main line. Through trains could then be run, or people could alight from a British Rail train and board a Bluebell railway train on another platform at the same station.

That requires planning permission and a light railway order. I am not asking for a favourable decision—that would not be right—just for a decision. If I tell the House that the public inquiry was held between 21 June and 6 July 1983, hon. Members will realise why I am beginning to get somewhat anxious. The inspector considered the planning appeal in conjunction with an application for a light railway order and his report was received on 2 November 1983. Some civil servants must have been shuffling those documents around, and they should be disciplined. I put it no lower than that.

When I had the great privilege to be a Minister in the Department of the Environment from 1979 to 1981, I had to deal, on behalf of my right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State, with opposed compulsory purchase orders. He laid down a firm rule for me—Ministers dealing with planning applications, appeals or compulsory purchase orders were therefore dealing with the right of citizens, so they should be given priority. Any document containing an appeal which came across my desk and into my red box was dealt with within 48 hours. I raised immediate queries if I found that documents had sat on a civil servant's desk for a long time before reaching me.

This intolerable delay has cost the Bluebell railway money which volunteers have raised, and on which they must pay interest to banks, to extend the line. It is not costing the civil servants anything while they shuffle bits of paper around.

I hope that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House agrees that it is intolerable that we should have to wait so long. This is not a matter such as Stansted, which is of major international importance. It is an application to reopen a small length of line, so no new principle is involved. He should tell our right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment that the delay must not continue and that the decision—I am not asking what it is to be—should be given before the House rises for the recess.

5.43 pm

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): Before we rise for the Easter recess, there is an urgent need to debate the Law Commission and the Scottish Law Commission report on family law called "Custody of Children—Jurisdiction and Enforcement within the United Kingdom", Cmnd. 9419.

The background to the report is the headline cases that we occasionally read in newspapers of heart-rending stories of children being taken abroad in defiance of a custody order. Usually, one parent of a broken marriage cannot accept that the other has been given custody. They

are usually described as tug-of-love cases, but all too often the children are innocent victims of parental disagreement, in which love often seems to be the least obvious emotion. That is not to deny that there is often genuine love for the children or that the children are torn between parents. Nevertheless, the trauma undergone by the children can leave its mark for a lifetime.

The most serious cases are those in which the children are abducted. Sometimes the parent with the custody order abducts the child back to where legal custody applies. Great attention is rightly paid to cases with an international dimension. Not so well publicised or so widely understood are the comparable circumstances within the United Kingdom. A custody order made in a Scottish court is neither recognised nor enforceable in English courts. Similarly, a custody order made in an English court is neither recognised nor enforceable in Scottish courts.

In international terms, there is an anomaly peculiar to Scotland. If a child is removed to a foreign country in contravention of an English court's custody order, no matter how willing the child might be to accompany the parent, the custody order will be acted on by the Home Office to prevent the child's removal. Immigration officers are advised and a stop order ensures that the child remains in the United Kingdom. However, the Home Office will not act on a court order made in Scotland. That is greeted with incredulity by constituents who seek the intervention of their Member of Parliament. They cannot understand why there should be a difference, and I do not blame them for being bemused.

The anomalies arise because the Scottish and English legal systems have different roots and have evolved separately. The Scots, of whom I am one, are justly proud of their legal system and stoutly resist what we call Anglicising encroachment. The English, in their turn, believe that their system is superior. It is a case of never the twain shall meet. In other aspects of family law, however, they co-exist, notwithstanding different traditions and even separate legislation. If a couple are divorced in Scotland, England or Northern Ireland, that is recognised throughout the United Kingdom. A maintenance award made in any part of the United Kingdom is recognised and may be enforced in any part of the United Kingdom, wherever the awarding court might be.

Two of the three principal affects of family law are mutually recognisable and enforceable; only custody orders are still subject to non-recognition. The application of logic compels one to the conclusion that rectification is urgently required. Help would appear to be at hand. The joint Law Commission that I have mentioned, under the chairmanship of Lord Justice Scarman, finally reported to Parliament on 15 January 1985. The committee was established in 1972, so it has taken 13 years to produce a report. The report comes to the sensible and obvious conclusion that there should be mutual recognition of custody orders and that the anomalies should be eliminated. In the interests of time I shall not quote the report, but paragraph 1.14 recommends a simple procedure for recognition and enforcement and paragraph 6.20 recommends that the stop order system should be extended to include Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Command 9419 has the great advantage of a draft Bill giving effect to its recommendations being attached as annex A. However, we must ask whether help really is at hand and whether, at long last, there will be some action. Alas, I am not convinced that the Government are seized of the urgency of the situation or that the respective Law Officers display enthusiasm for legislation. After all, the report is not the first on this matter. In 1958, a working party under the chairmanship of the then Lord Justice Hodson was asked to consider what alterations to the law were required to avoid conflicts of jurisdiction. That report, Cmnd. 842 entitled "Report of the Committee on Conflicts of Jurisdiction Affecting Children", recommended, at paragraph 56, reciprocal enforcement and the extension of the stop order system to Scotland and Northern Ireland. Nothing was done to translate that 1959 report into legislation because, it appears, the Law Officers did not agree. I am worried that Lord Scarman's report may suffer the same fate.

Experience does not lead me to believe that we shall soon have a change in the law. In another place, the Child Abduction and Custody Bill has had a Second Reading and may have started its Committee stage. If it has not, it soon will. It is a welcome measure because it will solve the issues relating to the international scene. The Bill will enact into our domestic law the Hague convention of 1980, which was signed by the Government. Five years later, we are only bringing that convention into legislation. We cannot wait any longer to remedy the serious defect in our domestic law.

I have asked the Lord Chancellor and the Lord Advocate what plans there are to implement the recommendations in Cmnd. 9419. The Lord Advocate, Lord Cameron of Lochbroom, with the concurrence of Lord Hailsham, advised me that, although the issues were non-controversial, the Government would need time to study the report, and that no legislation would be commenced this Session, but it is hoped that something might be done next Session. That sounds ominous to me, especially as every query that I have raised during the past 15 years when I have been a Member of the House and, in particular, since 1972 has been answered with, "Wait until we get the report of the Scarman inquiry."

I concede that Cmnd. 9419 does not resolve every anomally to everyone's complete satisfaction. There are differences of opinion about wardship cases, which affect only England, and the draft Bill does not cover the Isle of Man. Nevertheless, the mechanism of recognition and thereby of enforcement is simply that of registration. A custody order made in Scotland may be registered with the High Court in England, and a custody order made in England may be registered with the Court of Session in Scotland.

While the report says "may be registered", we should have automatic registration instead of registration by application. The machinery for automatic registration must exist, as divorces are automatically registered. Therefore, there is a channel of communication that can be used. There is sufficient agreement over a wide-ranging area of the law to warrant swift legislation. The grounds for further delay are thin. The Committee stage could resolve the few outstanding issues, which would certainly concentrate the minds of Ministers and those in the legal profession.

Why is the matter so urgent? After all, it is 27 years since the first report was established, and the problem was recognised even earlier. There is an opportunity to introduce legislation this Session. Earlier, I mentioned the Child Abduction and Custody Bill. The long title could be amended to include the domestic position, and the draft Bill, annex A to Cmnd. 9419, could be grafted on.

[Mr. Robert Hughes]

The principles are non-controversial. They are certainly non-party political and would be widely welcomed. The three major aspects of family law — divorce, maintenance and custody — would then be properly catered for and, with the good will of the Government, achieved this Session. That is why we urgently need a debate. We may then have the verdict of the House on the matter both as a guide to the Government and to urge and spur them into action. Many parents and children would benefit, and the matter is long overdue.

5.53 pm

Mr. Christopher Murphy (Welwyn Hatfield): At the outset I wish to echo the anxiety expressed by the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) about the present speculation relating to Northern Ireland. It would be of considerable help, not only to the House but to the people of Ulster, if the Leader of the House could make it clear that there has been no change in the position since the Prime Minister's statement at the press conference following the November summit.

Before the House rises for the Easter recess, and at a time when rate demands come popping through the letter box, it would be appropriate to examine the value for money or otherwise provided by local authorities. At the same time, as on previous occasions, I fully concur with my hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale (Sir F. Montgomery) in his call for the abolition of domestic rates. Instead I advocate introducing a poll tax at the earliest opportunity to overcome the unfairness of the present system.

I have long supported the Government's concept of the privatisation of council operations where appropriate, and have advocated a right to compete to ensure that a process of competitive tendering is fairly and openly entered into. It is essential always to bear in mind that a local council is only the custodian of ratepayers' and taxpayers' money, and therefore has a duty to spend it efficiently, effectively and economically. I therefore welcome the recent announcement of the consultation document, "Competition in the Provision of Local Authority Services", but I respectfully suggest that positive action should follow hard on its heels. Hon. Members who, like me, have in their constituencies councils which dogmatically refuse even to consider such privatisation know how essential that is.

I must, however, add a note of concern, in that the document excludes parish councils and parish meetings from its scope. Bearing in mind that the functions and political motivation of some large parish councils can be considerable, I feel that they should not be treated differently. I might add a plea that parish councils should be better understood — they are often the least appreciated aspect of local government—which is to be regretted. Parish councils, because of their nature, are often far more closely in touch with local opinion than larger authorities. That element of the administrative process should never be overlooked.

One particular advantage that the lowest tier of local government usually provides is the annual meeting, at which parishioners have a right to plead their case and to air their views on topics of local importance. Through such an opportunity, and the inevitable lack of remoteness between a parish councillor and the electors, the feeling of the village or community can often be reasonably well gauged.

When privatisation is talked about, I detect a tendency to dwell perhaps too much on refuse collection and street cleaning, and not enough on the other services that private enterprise can do as well and, in most cases, probably considerably better than direct employment. Undoubtedly, it is of key importance to extend the number of councils using contractors for such tasks, but the principle of good housekeeping goes wider than that.

I am aware of the savings in cost and manpower, and the improvement in service, already exhibited by privatisation as a consequence of competitive tendering. In Southend, which is an obvious example, £600,000 was saved on refuse collection and street cleaning in the first year alone. Such advantages should not be restricted to the few, but should be available to the many.

Before the House rises for the Easter recess, we should remind ourselves that value for money has rightly been a central theme of the Government. It must equally be one for all levels of local government.

5.58 pm

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): Before the House rises for the Easter recess, I wish to raise certain matters relating to the Severn bridge which need to be clarified.

On 21 September 1983 the Secretary of State for Transport announced proposals to increase the toll on the bridge by 150 per cent. The decision was apparently based on the principle of trying to recoup £20 million which had been earmarked for repair and maintenance work. It is worth pointing out that £20 million is more than the construction costs of the bridge in the first place. The fact that a relatively new bridge should need such extensive repair work so early in its life shows that someone got it wrong. There must have been design faults in the original construction work, and certainly in the estimating of traffic flows on the bridge. The question that must be posed now is, why should the motorist today have to pay for those errors? Surely Parliament did not contemplate such a penalty on law-abiding motorists.

The debt under the Consolidated Fund is purely notional, although it should be said that the interest on the original sum is increasing rapidly. Under the provisions of the Severn Bridge Tolls Act 1965, a proposal such as the one made by the Secretary of State to increase tolls must be advertised in the *London Gazette* and in the local press. When that was done, Gwent county council and several other important local bodies objected to the proposal. Therefore, to some extent, the Secretary of State was pressurised into announcing a public inquiry. Meanwhile, on 28 October 1983, I secured an Adjournment debate in the House, during which I revealed the contents of a hitherto secret report on the bridge prepared by Mott, Hay and Anderson, an internationally renowed firm of consultant engineers. The report pinpointed some rather disturbing aspects of the state of the bridge and subsequently there was a public outcry, certainly in Wales. That was understandable, because the bridge had become the principal artery for people travelling in and out of the Principality. Two major national conferences were held, at which unananimous decisions were taken to call for the repair work to be carried out as expeditiously as possible. In addition, there was a call for a second crossing of the Severn.

Following those events, the Secretary of State for Transport announced that £33 million would be spent on the urgently needed repairs to the bridge. The House will recall that the original figure was £20 million. It was on that figure that the original proposal to increase tolls by 150 per cent. was based. There is obviously a discrepancy, and one can imagine only that the Secretary of State probably had in mind a further increase in tolls at a subsequent date. But at the same time the Secretary of State agreed to consider the possibility of a second crossing of the Severn.

The public inquiry into the proposed increase in tolls commenced in Bristol on 17 July 1984. It heard much evidence from many bodies and individuals, all of which was hostile to the Secretary of State's proposal. The commissioner who conducted the inquiry presented his report to the Secretary of State early in November 1984. Since then, I have put down several questions calling for the publication of the report. Each time I have been told that the matter is still to be considered and that the report will be published some time in the future. We still await the report. Meanwhile, there have been unofficial reports that the commissioner did not entirely accept the Secretary of State's proposals.

My first major question is, may we be told positively when the report will be published? The public have a right to know what it contains, because the Severn bridge is of vital importance to the economy and the interests of Wales. Also, has there been a change in Government policy on toll charges. For instance, the new Conway tunnel in north Wales will be toll-free. I understand that last week there was an announcement that a new estuarial crossing in Scotland, north of Inverness at Dornoch, will also be toll-free. We need some clarity from the Government, not to mention some consistency in their decisions on toll charges.

On 6 February 1984, the Secretary of State for Transport announced a feasibility study into a proposal for a second crossing of the Severn. On 13 December last year, I put down a question to him asking

"What progress has been made in the study of the proposed second crossing of the Severn; and if he will publish an interim report to inform interested parties of developments so far."

I received a reply from the Minister of State, Department of Transport, who said:

"The study into how a second crossing of the River Severn might be provided commenced in August this year. During the first three months of the study the consultants have had preliminary discussions with local authorities and many statutory and representative bodies. They have also made an initial examination of traffic, engineering, environmental, planning and economic aspects of a second crossing. Many possibilities have been investigated for the location and type of a river crossing, and the link roads to the M4/M5 motorways.

A report on the work done in the first three months will be made available in the near future." — [*Official Report*, 13 December 1984; Vol. 69, c. 578.]

That was in December and we are still waiting. Today I must ask why we are waiting. There seems to be no reason why the public should not be given that information.

From the outset, it has seemed that the Secretary of State for Transport has insufficient understanding of the importance of the Severn bridge to the economy and interests of Wales. There is certainly considerable interest in the matter in Wales and, indeed, outside in the various companies that move in and out of Wales.

In conclusion, I trust that the Leader of the House will impress upon the Secretary for Transport the importance of publishing both reports without further delay.

6.9 pm

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): When our hours have been long and our recesses short, my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House may need some convincing, but I hope that what I say convinces him that there is a case for shortening our recess so that consideration can be given to the rather urgent issue of Parliament's control of expenditure, particularly in view of some recent developments initiated by the Government.

My right hon. Friend may be aware that some hon. Members raised on a point of order their serious concern about what appeared to be a new constitutional development whereby the Government, for the first time in my memory, created new policies by putting figures in Supplementary Estimates. My right hon. Friend may recall that on 14 March we had a debate on Supplementary Estimates, which included an additional payment of £364 milllion which the Government had decided to pay to the Common Market by providing an overdraft facility. I have endeavoured by every possible means to discover the justification for that payment. Where was the Bill, the order, the decision of the House? There has been none.

It has always been a principle in the House of Commons that Estimates should reflect agreed policies, not that Estimates should create policies. For example, we might decide that it would be fair, because of the burden that he carries, that the salary of the Leader of the House should be doubled. Presumably we should put down a motion, and if that motion were approved an appropriate figure would be put in the Estimates. If we agreed that, because of the enormous burdens borne by the Deputy Speakers, their pensions should be doubled, we would pass a motion and if that were accepted, a figure would appear in the Estimates.

In this case, it appeared to me and some of my colleagues that the Government were creating a new policy of offering overdraft facilities to the Common Market simply by placing figures in the Supplementary Estimates. What is even more disturbing is that, although a number of us put down an amendment to take this figure out of the Estimates, Mr. Speaker had to explain, on 14 March, that under Standing Order No. 19 it was not possible to have a separate vote, far less a debate, on the issue.

This is a desperately important constitutional point. In the light of Mr. Speaker's ruling, the Public Accounts Committee is to consider the principle of the issue on 3 April. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House will at least accept that there is a major issue which requires debate and consideration, whether in the Chamber or in the Public Accounts Committee.

On the same subject, I was surprised to hear during the Budget debate that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor had decided to alter the VAT legislation to ensure that credit card companies were unable to claim back some of the money that was paid by them. This was a major and significant measure, which amounts to about £15 million a year in taxation. As my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House will be aware, some £4 million of that has to be carried by Southend, by the Access credit card company, which has its office there.

Understandably, Access has been in touch with me, and no doubt with other Members, asking what the score on

[Mr. Teddy Taylor]

this is, when it had been decided by Parliament, and when it had been debated. I had to explain that it was not in the motions that we approved under the Budget. How is this major decision to be approved? It has to be decided in terms of a statutory instrument, No. 432, called the Value Added Tax (Finance) Order 1985.

My right hon. Friend will be aware, because I have written to him about this, that this is what is called a negative resolution procedure order, which means that it can be debated only if the Government decide to give it time for consideration. If they do not, at no stage of our deliberations will Members of Parliament, collectively or even in a Committee, have decided whether it is right to charge an extra £15 million on the credit card companies. Is this not depriving Members of Parliament even of their statutory right to be rubber stamps? We are not even being asked to approve or disapprove of this new tax.

What worries me more about this is that my right hon. and learned Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury kindly sent me a note to explain that he had to do this because the Common Market had threatened my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary that if we did not do something about this we would be taken to the European Court. We know the way that these things work out these days, but what upsets me as the Member of Parliament representing the headquarters of Access is that, despite this threat by the Common Market, the German credit card companies do not operate the law in this way. If the order is approved, inevitably British credit card companies will be at a competitive disadvantage compared with German companies.

I said "if" this is approved, but this major decision to take £15 million out of the credit card companies, which will put them at a competitive disadvantage with Germany, can be debated or discussed only if the Government and my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House agree that there should be such a debate and such consideration. If they do not, it will simply mean that a Minister or, to be plain, two Lords Commissioners of the Treasury will have signed this document to get an extra £15 million out of the credit card companies.

The House and my right hon. Friend must agree that this announcement makes nonsense of parliamentary control of expenditure. It means that taxes are being charged without anyone considering, debating or reviewing them. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House will not say that we have had a debate on the Budget. Of course we have, but he must be aware that this issue was not one of the motions being discussed, and there was no opportunity last night to vote on it. I hope that before the House moves into its recess my right hon. Friend will be able to give me an assurance that if, as will happen, an order is tabled to annul this regulation, he will ensure that there will be a debate in the House, or at least in a Standing Committee, to consider this taxation.

My right hon. Friend will be aware that some years ago there was a major dispute with King Charles I, about Parliament's control of supply, which ended with the King's head being chopped off. This is a major constitutional issue, and I hope that my right hon. Friend will bear this in mind.

The third point about Parliament's control of expenditure arises from something that was revealed in *Hansard* this morning by my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in a written answer. This showed Parliament's complete lack of control on the vast amount being spent on the dumping of food abroad, particularly in Russia and Eastern Europe. The latest figures were provided, and sadly they show that the Common Market is spending £20 million every day on the storage and dumping of food abroad, with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe being the main beneficiaries. That is a huge amount of money when we consider how our local authorities and hospital boards are having to cut back on their expenditure. For example, local authorities are being forced to stop the provision of improvement grants because the money has run out. At the same time, an open cheque is being given for the provision of subsidies for the export of cheap food to the Soviet Union.

The latest figures sadly show that since the Government came into power the export of cheap food to Russia has increased by about 1,000 per cent. It also shows that the prices at which we are exporting food to the Soviet Union are lower than they have ever been in the history of Britain or the EEC. I see that my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) has just arrived. He takes an interest in the public purse and will be horrified to learn the figures published in *Hansard* this morning.

The figures reveal that, whereas in Britain we have to pay over £3 a pound for our beef, we are selling top quality beef to the Soviet Union at 35p a pound. It reveals that, whereas we are paying about 28p a pound for sugar, we are selling vast quantities to Russia at 7p a pound. Whereas we are paying about £1·40 a pound for butter, the Russians get it at 47p. Whereas flour is sold in this country at about 30p a pound, the Russians get it at about 5p a pound. Even more unbelievable is the figure for wine. I do not drink wine, but if I were to buy a litre bottle it would cost me almost £3. We sell it to the Russians at 7p a litre.

I am sure that I and my right hon. and hon. Friends do not mind paying a great deal of money in taxes to ensure that we can protect ourselves against the Russians by having all these missiles, bombs, planes and goodness knows what. What is the point of paying extra taxes in order to subsidise the Soviet war machine? That is what we are doing by means of this subsidy. Sadly, Russian housewives do not get their beef at 35p per pound, butter at 47p per pound, or wine at 7p per litre. The Soviet Union imposes a substantial extra cost on all these prices and keeps the difference to cover its public expenditure.

As the Leader of the House is well aware, we have no control whatsoever over such spending. If the European Community fixes the amount that it wants to spend upon providing the Russians with cheap food and goes over that limit, there is nothing that we can do about it, apart from writing out a cheque for the additional amount. We have had to write out several such cheques this year because the European Community has spent over the limit.

The Leader of the House is, I know, concerned about the rights of Back Benchers. How can it be right that we should be spending £7 billion a year on dumping food, with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe as major beneficiaries? Before we go into recess I hope that we shall examine this remarkable development in the power of the Government over the Supplementary Estimates and the taxation of my constituents without discussion or vote, and the scandalous increase under a Conservative Government in the subsidies to the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe through the provision of cheap food which my hard-pressed constituents would be very glad to buy.

If the residents of Southend were able to go to the shops tomorrow and buy beef at 35p per pound, sugar at 7p per pound, butter at 47p per pound, flour at 5p per pound, wine at 7p per litre, pork at 38p per pound and chicken at 29p per pound, it would provide a bigger fillip to the economy of this country than will be achieved by the meagre reductions in taxation that this Budget has introduced. The Chancellor referred to the problems of the poor and their need for more help. If we were to provide cheap food not for the Russians but for the British people our economy would be given a massive boost. Real protection would also be given to the poor who need help at this time.

6.22 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Before we agree to the motion, there are two matters which ought to be mentioned. The hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) will forgive me if I do not pursue the points that he raised. First, I wish to refer to the disturbances and killings during the past week in South Africa. Secondly, I shall refer to a domestic matter.

The events in South Africa during the past week clearly demonstrate that a few piecemeal reforms of the apartheid regime cannot resolve any of the deep problems that exist in that country. There are undoubtedly a number of tyrannies—far too many, in fact. Labour Members are hardly in the habit of finding excuses for Governments who clamp down on civil liberties and whose authority is usually based upon military power rather than upon consent.

South Africa, however, remains different in one respect from other dictatorships and tyrannies. Its political system is based upon a very brutal way of running the country. It discriminates against the majority population for one reason only—that of colour. Even those who are keen to find excuses for what goes on in South Africa usually preface their remarks by saying that they are against apartheid. Apartheid is so discredited and so disgraced that even those who want to find excuses for the South African regime usually have to preface their remarks with something along those lines.

Britain has very large investments in South Africa. There remain close ties between the authorities of both countries. My hon. Friends and I maintain that we cannot remain neutral between the Government of South Africa and those in South Africa who wish apartheid to be defeated. Whatever cosmetic changes have occurred since the Sharpeville events of 1960, South Africa remains governed without the participation, and certainly without the consent, of a large majority of the people of South Africa.

We have also raised, in particular at Question Time, with the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary the continued imprisonment of the leaders of African opinion. They have been in prison for over 20 years. Their real crime is that they want South Africa to be free and independent, a country in which people can live without being discriminated against. I refer to Nelson Mandela who has been in prison for over 20 years, Walter Sisulu, Govan M'Beki and many other members of the African National Congress. These are the people who really speak for South Africa.

That is why the Opposition were opposed last year to the visit to this country by the Prime Minister of South Africa. We objected to the way in which he was wined and dined in this country. We objected to the Prime Minister playing host to him at Chequers. Of course the Prime Minister went through the ritual of saying that she was against apartheid. However, the Opposition say that, if the true representatives of South Africa are to visit this country, we must wait until Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu and his colleagues are released. They will be most welcome visitors to this country.

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): The hon. Gentleman is going down the predictable path of his usual speech. However, things have changed during the last three weeks for Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners. Does not the hon. Gentleman recognise that a full pardon was offered to Nelson Mandela——

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North) *rose*——

Mr. Carlisle: If the hon. Gentleman wishes to make a contribution, he may catch your eye, Mr. Speaker, in a few moments, but perhaps at this stage he will listen to the argument on the other side, even though he does not like it.

The State President made Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners the offer of a full pardon, provided that after their release they did not engage in revolutionary tactics. Will not the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) agree that the 16 or 17 prisoners who accepted that offer are now in a far better position to influence the Government of South Africa and, indeed, to influence the West than is Nelson Mandela, who has refused this offer of a pardon because he is bent upon the path of revolutionary change?

Mr. Winnick: I thought the hon. Gentleman knew that Nelson Mandela has made his position perfectly clear. The message that he gave his daughter to read made it perfectly clear once again that he would accept no conditions. Why should he accept conditions? It is his country. He is the leader of African opinion and he has been put in prison for that reason and that reason alone. He will never give up the struggle for a free and independent South Africa, a country that is free from the tyranny of apartheid. I say to the hon. Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle), and to the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton), who I see has just come into the Chamber, that the Opposition find the attitude of certain Conservative Members very disturbing. I do not wish to pursue the matter; I mentioned it yesterday.

However, certain Conservative Members always find it possible to make excuses for what has happened in South Africa. The Opposition do not make a habit of finding excuses for dictatorships, wherever they may be. However, the hon. Members for Luton, North, and for Macclesfield are well-known in the House as fellow travellers of the apartheid regime. In view of what I have said, I must give way, I suppose, to the hon. Member for Macclesfield.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. I shall not pursue the matter of Nelson Mandela, although my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) is quite right. For the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) to dismiss the offer of release that has been made by the State President of the Republic of South Africa is to fly in the face of the reforms that are taking place in that country. The hon. Gentleman said that Nelson Mandela and one or

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two other people that he mentioned are the true leaders of South Africa, but would he not concede that Chief Gatsha Buthelezi, the leader of the Zulu nation and of the Inkatha movement, which has a known membership of over 1 million people, has not found it necessary to indulge in the revolutionary activities of Nelson Mandela and that he is travelling around the world in support of the black people of South Africa? Survey after survey has shown that over 70 per cent. of the black people in South Africa do not support the disinvestment that the hon. Gentleman clearly supports, as is evident from his remarks this afternoon.

Mr. Winnick: All the hon. Gentleman's remarks bear out what I said a moment ago—that he and some of his hon. Friends are indeed fellow travellers of the apartheid regime.

The test is clear. When elections take place in South Africa in a democratic manner and without discrimination, and when South Africa is liberated from the tyranny of apartheid, we shall see who are the true leaders of South Africa. The majority of people in South Africa cannot vote in national elections at present for one reason only—the colour of their skin. We shall raise the issue time and time again. We send our message of solidarity to those in South Africa who are battling against a notorious regime.

The second issue that I wish to discuss might be less controversial.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: The Soviet Union?

Mr. Winnick: I do not find excuses for dictatorships, including that in Russia—unlike the hon. Member for Macclesfield, who can always we know be relied on to put the arguments for the apartheid regime. I think that that is disgraceful.

My second issue is domestic—the growing housing crisis. Many local authorities are increasingly unable to fulfil their statutory housing responsibilities. In London alone, bed and breakfast hotels receive over £1 million a month for housing homeless people. It is no wonder that a crisis exists when one considers the drastic fall in council housing starts. Because of Government financial restrictions, since 1979 Walsall has not entered into any contracts for new council dwellings. That means, of course, an ever-increasing number of people on the waiting list who cannot be rehoused.

Last year, fewer than 40,000 public housing starts were recorded in Britain. Due to further cuts in the housing investment programme allocation for 1985-86, even fewer starts will take place this year. The number will probably be down to 30,000. The Government restriction on the capital receipts that can be used will make it even more difficult for local authorities to build and modernise dwellings.

Housing Ministers claim that there was a sharp drop in housing starts when the Labour Government were in office. In 1978, the last full year of the Labour Government, there were over 107,000 starts in the public sector. In 1979, there were at least 81,000 starts.

People who require local authority accommodation but who do not have the means to obtain a mortgage should be rehoused by their local authority. Housing authorities should be able to carry out their statutory housing responsibilities, but how can they when they do not have the money? How can they when the housing waiting list grows longer and longer and boroughs such as Walsall are no longer building houses at all?

A large amount of pre-war stock needs to be modernised. The longer that is left, the more expensive and extensive it will be. Tenants are living in unfit accommodation because local authorities do not have the means to do the necessary work. How many people among the mass of unemployed are trained construction workers who could be released from unemployment and allowed to earn their living by doing essential community work in building and modernising dwellings? What a policy of madness it is to cause such tremendous difficulties for our constituents, so many of whom desperately need local authority housing.

I ask the Leader of the House to pass on to the Secretary of State our concern about the housing plight caused by local authorities not being able to carry out their statutory functions.

6.35 pm

Mr. David Amess (Basildon): I should like the House to consider animal welfare. Although I am most definitely an animal lover, like the majority of the British public, I condemn some of the disgraceful methods used by some animal welfare groups to further their aims.

In my time I have kept most animals, from peacocks and goats to baby alligators. As a child, my long-suffering family did not know what I would bring home next in the way of livestock.

Next Tuesday I shall be bringing a horse to the House of Commons. Hon. Members need not concern themselves unduly, because I shall not attempt to bring it into the Chamber. Instead, a peaceful lobby will take place in Abingdon gardens between 2.30 pm and 3 pm. It is being organised by the Animal Welfare Group of Essex, inspired by the Basildon branch and led by a Mr. Clements. The purpose of the lobby is to draw to the attention of the House a shameful practice which negates the effects of an incomplete set of laws. I refer to the growing practice of leaving horses on other people's lands while arrangements are made to move the horses on to slaughter houses, to a port for export or to other markets.

The practice came to my attention because of problems in my constituency, but I understand that it is widespread throughout the United Kingdom, particularly on county and borough boundaries. Once ownership of the land in question is established—which is not always easy—horse owners have a habit of moving their horses to adjacent land so that the whole process must begin again.

In Basildon, a large tract of land is divided between the district council, the development corporation and a large private waste disposal firm. There are few clear boundaries. The horses are moved about the land to avoid legal proceedings. County and borough boundaries also provide perfect places for such manoeuvres, because the animals can be moved over the boundary to land owned by a different authority.

The Animals Act 1971 established that owners are liable for damage caused by the livestock straying on to people's land. The nub of the problem is that no damage is caused. The poor, half-starved animals do little more than forage where they can for the small amount of grass available. Were it not for the kindness of my constituents, many more horses would have died. Last winter two horses had to be put down by the RSPCA.

The Abandonment of Animals Act 1960 makes it an offence to abandon any animal in circumstance liable to cause it unnecessary suffering, but these animals are not legally abandoned. Their owners return to move them to another field or to ship them out, usually before the cumbersome legal machinery has started to operate.

I admit that if the council, the corporation and the private company employed a full-time worker with legal knowledge to keep an eye on the land around Basildon and to take the necessary legal steps at the right time the problem could be confined or kept to reasonable proportions. Expenditure on such an officer is impracticable, especially because of the possible need for a pound, and because of the legal costs involved in an area where the law is unclear, to say the least.

The law allows the owner of the land to sell the horse if it has been kept there for more than 14 days. The scale of the problem is so large that if this section of the Act were put into operation the three organisations involved could well find themselves becoming major horse dealers, in addition to their many other responsibilities. I do not think that we would wish to go down that road.

The long-stop to the existing legislation, such as it is, is the Protection of Animals Act 1911, which makes it an offence to cause unnecessary suffering to any domestic or captive animal. In theory, it is a good piece of legislation, but in practice it does nothing for the animal and relies on knowledge of who the owner might be at the time in question.

As the animals are worth one price as meat, they can easily be sold without being seen, so that they can change hands three or four times while remaining in the field to which I have referred. Any action taken by the police involves long and complicated searches throughout Essex to find those responsible. The fact that horses cannot easily be linked to owners means that much time, money and manpower are spent on each search. This problem occurs not only with travellers. We have discovered that some smallholders with one or two horses over the limit allowed on their land are taking the same action.

The National Farmers Union has come up with an effective arrangement for freeze branding, which is less painful than hot branding, but with the same long-lasting properties. Such a system, given the force of law, would enable private organisations and the police to identify much more simply the owner of a horse.

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals has designed a good code of practice on the tethering of horses which should go some way to ensure that suffering is eliminated. Included in the code is the provision that clean water should be available at all times. The water available on Pitsea marshes in my constituency can only be described as of dubious quality. The code states that food must be given in all cases where grazing is not adequate. The grazing on Pitsea marshes is reasonable, but cannot be expected to keep a horse in satisfactory health for any length of time. During the winter the animals do not have nearly enough to eat. The two horses that had to be put down had nearly starved to death. The code also contains a provision on the frequency of inspection. It states that horse and tether must be inspected at least twice in 24 hours. The horses are not tethered and, if they are seen by the owners once a month, they are very lucky. All the excellent advice is ignored, and the results are appalling.

What is needed is a consolidation of the law as it stands in relation to animal welfare, with extensions and additions to block not loopholes but veritable motorways through which those who would flout the spirit of the law drive. Freeze branding must be seriously considered, and administrative objections should be examined closely. The RSPCA code of practice on tethering should have the force of law behind it.

I do not believe that the House is disinterested in this matter. It is simply that it has been somewhat too pressed for time to act on the issue. I have every confidence that after my short speech today it will act.

In conclusion, I apologise in advance for being unable to stay to hear the response of the Leader of the House, which I look forward to reading in *Hansard*.

6.44 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): The matter that I ask to be debated before the Easter Adjournment is the immigration law and its operation in this country.

Many people in north Islington are very concerned about the way in which the immigration law operates. Indeed, in inner cities throughout the country many people are worried and frightened about the way in which the immigration law operates. Many go to bed at night fearing a knock on the door early the following morning, being told they will no longer be allowed to remain in the country, followed by forcible removal. Like many hon. Members who face similar situations, I take up a large number of individual cases every year. Last year I took up several hundred such cases with the Home Secretary, and I know that my hon. Friends regularly take up an even larger number of cases. This matter can no longer be disregarded and ignored. Later, I shall mention the report of the Commission for Racial Equality, and the need for an urgent debate on it.

Alongside the despair of many people in the country at the way in which the immigration law operates—the Kafka-like procedures, the Kafka-like trials, the so-called appeals against removal from the country and requests for entry into the country—there are other cases of people who seek refugee status in this country.

A couple from Cyprus, Katerina and Vassilis Nicola, have sought sanctuary in St. Mary's church, Eversholt street, in Euston. Their case is being taken up by my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) and by a number of other hon. Members who are supporting him and the couple in what they are trying to do.

One has to ask what kind of democracy and civilisation exists when a couple from a country that has been a colony of this country for many years and is now a member of the Commonwealth, albeit a divided island, seek sanctuary in a church in order to avoid removal from this country. If that happened in many other parts of the world, I believe that Ministers would be leaping to the Dispatch Box to condemn a Government and regime that drove people to such despair. But, because it is Britain and because it is 1985, the Government are apparently indifferent. I hope that the Leader of the House will ensure that the Home Secretary considers the plight of this couple so that they may be allowed to remain permanently in the country.

I wish to explain how this couple came to be in the country at all. They have lived here for nine years. They used to live in the northern part of Cyprus. In 1974, the island of Cyprus was invaded by the Turkish army, which

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took control of the northern part of the island. It must be said that Turkey is a member of NATO, and little has been done to remove its troops from Cyprus. Mrs. Nicola took refuge in a school when the army invaded, and subsequently in a refugee camp. Her husband was conscripted into the Greek Cypriot army. At the end of 1975, he was released from the army, she was able to get herself out of the refugee camp, and they fled to this country. Since that time they have been in Britain.

They have been told that they must return to their home. They cannot return to the northern part of Cyprus because it is under occupation by the Turkish army, which has illegally declared that part of the island independent, and their home no longer exists. If they go to the southern part of Cyprus where the Government of Greece is in charge, they have no home to go to, and they did not come from the south of Cyprus in the first place. The British Government maintain that they must leave this country, but they have no home to return to in Cyprus.

It is appalling that this couple, through no fault of their own, should be forced to seek sanctuary in a church in this country for fear of removal. They are a symbol of the fear experienced by many migrant families, the fear of being forcibly removed from the country. It is an insult to them and a disgrace to the country that this couple should be forced to take such action. It is much to the credit of the church and of the bishop that this couple have been allowed to remain in St. Mary's church, that the local congregation has supported them, that money has been collected to maintain them and that food has been provided for them. They are now in their 26th day in the church, and they intend to stay there until the Home Secretary is prepared to see sense.

I am sure that they would be more than happy to discuss their case with the Home Secretary if he went to that church to see them. They cannot leave for fear that, if they did, they would be picked up on the street outside by the police acting on behalf of the Home Office. I regard that as a disgraceful state of affairs in Britain in 1985.

Let us consider how this situation arose. The subject of refugees from Cyprus is not new. The war in Cyprus took place in 1974, when 10,000 refugees entered the United Kingdom. They came from the Greek and Turkish communities in Cyprus; they were simply refugees from the war. All had been uprooted from their homes in villages and towns and many had lost their possessions. They came to various parts of London, many to where I used to be a councillor, the borough of Haringey, where they were given help and support by the existing Cypriot community and by the community generally.

They came to Britain because they had relatives and close friends here and because of Britain's historical links with Cyprus, but also, frankly, because they had nowhere else to go. Having obtained sanctuary here, many of them stayed, are living happily here and are making an enormous contribution to our economy.

There have been endless arguments with the Home Office about the situation facing Cypriot refugees. Those who fell within the Home Office definition of "displaced persons" were granted special concessions and at first had their permits to stay extended from three to six months and then to a year. Those who were not accepted as displaced persons were refused extensions and were treated as overstayers, or illegal immigrants, and were forced to leave the country.

Of the 10,000 Cypriot refugees who came here, only 2,000 remain. By 1981, the Home Office had become even more severe, and demanded that many of the remaining refugees had to return to Cyprus, the Home Office claiming that the situation on the island was stable. The Department started to deport Greek Cypriots to the south of Cyprus and Turkish Cypriots to the north.

Thus, the Government were de facto accepting the partition of the island of Cyprus, even though Britain was a signatory to the treaty of guarantee and was involved in the independence negotiations that brought the state of Cyprus into being. It seems, therefore, that the British Government accepted the fact that the Turkish army had invaded and were giving de facto recognition to the Government there by deporting people to different parts of the island, in many cases firmly against the wishes of the people concerned.

Because of that, a large campaign grew up among members of the Cypriot community here, and they were supported by many other groups. They brought their anxieties to the attention of the Home Office, to hon. Members and to migrant workers' groups in Britain. They persuaded the then Minister of State to grant a concession, and in 1982 a concessionary policy was announced. Indefinite leave to remain in Britain was granted to Cypriot refugees who fell within the Home Office definition of "displaced persons." About 600 people benefited under that policy. Those who fell outside the policy were either deported or are still awaiting deportation. Those, for example, who did not enter the UK immediately after the 1974 war but who lived in refugee camps awaiting the outcome of the war crisis before coming here were not considered by the Home Office to be displaced persons and were not granted indefinite leave to stay.

That was an unfair way of operating the policy. I urge the Government to reconsider their whole attitude towards the refugees from Cyprus and to grant an amnesty to those who are here. That would remove their fear of being told that they must leave. It is appalling that this couple should be forced to seek sanctuary in a church in their effort to remain here in a place of safety.

I raise the case of Mr. and Mrs. Nicola because it is serious and demands an urgent answer from the Home Office. They should be allowed to stay here. I raise it because it is symptomatic of the way in which immigration policy operates in this country. It is also symptomatic of the attitude of the Home Office to many migrant groups.

Opposition Members have consistently pressed the Government to provide time to debate the report of the Commission for Racial Equality on immigration control procedures. That lengthy document, which was painstakingly put together after many interviews with Home Office staff and others, is damning in the extreme about the way in which the immigration service operates. I will quote only two of the report's general conclusions.

The promotion of good race relations should be a specific consideration in the administration of immigration control, and in that respect the report says in its conclusions that that

"depends not on allaying fears and prejudices of a section of the majority community, though they must be recognised and faced, but on a determination by the government to uphold the rights of all people to fair and decent treatment."

Under existing immigration law and procedures in this country, migrants are not treated in the same way as the rest of our citizens. The onus that rests on them to prove their innocence is much greater than is normal under British law.

Too great an emphasis has been placed in the operation of the procedures on the detection of bogus applicants, at an unacceptable cost to genuine families and to race relations generally. Another of the report's conclusions states:

> "In our view, of the basic mistakes which it is possible for an administrative system of this sort to make, it is far worse wrongly to refuse a geniune applicant than to admit a bogus one; and it is far worse to delay the exercise of their rights by genuine applicants than to allow a bogus applicant through the net in efforts to avoid delays."

This country stands condemned by many people in the world because of the operation of our immigration policy and the way migrants are treated. They condemn the way in which people are bundled out of the country — the way Afia Begum was thrown out of Britain whereas Zola Budd was welcomed here. The Government stand condemned for what I believe are the racist practices endemic in Britain's immigration laws. There are divided families, people who are fearful of being removed, people from Bangladesh who are trying and are entitled to come here, and many others.

The House should debate this serious matter in a way that will put at rest the fears and concerns of many migrant families. Couples such as Mr. and Mrs. Nicola should no longer have to go through the indignity of seeking sanctuary in a church so as to remain in Britain. They should have peace and be allowed to continue to make the valuable contribution to the community that they have been making in the nine years that they have been in Britain.

6.57 pm

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): I agree with the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) that we should be discussing South Africa — against the sad backcloth of the events in the eastern Cape in recent days — and I shall take the advice of Mr. Speaker, who yesterday half suggested that this subject should be mentioned. It is an important issue, and I welcome the opportunity to speak about it. We should not be afraid to discuss such matters, and I hope that it will be useful to the South African authorities to listen to both sides of the argument.

It is a pleasure for me to speak in the calmer atmosphere of the Chamber of the House of Commons, whereas in recent months I have delivered similar orations in British universities and colleges of further education, where I have received much abuse and, in some cases, much violence, perpetrated on the whole, of course, by those most opposed to what I had to say.

There is a genuineness of purpose among those who are represented by the anti-apartheid movement — which, I believe, includes the hon. Member for Walsall, North, the leader of the Liberal party, the leader of the SDP and other Opposition Members — in urging that the problems of South Africa must be solved. Indeed, I believe that that same genuine belief exists among Church leaders on both sides, here and in South Africa. Those of us who understand a little of the problems of South Africa appreciate the anger and, in some cases, the utter frustration that is suffered by the black community at their lot. I say that in as genuine a way as I can.

Opposition Members, particularly those such as the hon. Member for Walsall, North, must appreciate that it is easy, in the comfortable precincts of Westminster — indeed, in the comfort of the free democracy which we in this country enjoy — to parade their consciences and those of their fellow travellers, to borrow some words from the hon. Member for Walsall, North, and to forget the violation of human rights that is taking place in countries throughout the world.

Despite the earlier remarks of the hon. Member for Walsall, North, it is not often we hear from him or from his hon. Friends protests about what is going on in eastern Europe or in South America, although I was pleased to see the early-day motion on Chile which was put down by the Opposition the other day. We do not hear protests from them about what is going on in the far east, in Cambodia, for example, nor about what is going on in black Africa itself, particularly Zimbabwe. The hon. Member for Walsall, North and his hon. Friends have been silent in their condemnation of the recent slaughterings in that sad country and of the regime which the hon. Gentleman holds up as the epitome of all that black Africa stands for.

This debate must always be seen in the context of the history of African politics. It must be seen, sadly, in the context of a continent which is now dominated by Marxism, where many states are now one-party states. Of course, one man, one vote exists——

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Once.

Mr. Carlisle: Yes, as my hon. Friend says, once. Perhaps more important, the tribal background of the political strife in South Africa is such that the Westminster system is not necessarily the best. The question that we must ask ourselves is whether the system of one man, one vote for South Africa tomorrow is the answer.

I was pleased to hear the hon. Member for Walsall, North say at the beginning of his speech that I had always condemned apartheid. It is a system which is a violation of human rights, but I understand it and I understand why it exists. That does not mean that I support it. It is against the background of the large problems that South Africa is facing that we must debate the issue. Rural blacks are moving into urban areas, which is not unusual in Africa, as hon. Members will know. There are the problems of the shanty towns, which are not particular to South Africa, but which exist in most major cities throughout the world. It is in that context that we must consider the argument on a basis of calm appraisal, rather than in the sort of violent discussion which Opposition Members, and particularly the hon. Member for Walsall, North, seem to promote in this place.

The leader of the Social Democrats and many hon. Members on the Opposition Benches are now joining the American chorus by calling for some form of disinvestment in South Africa. Coupled with that, many of them are making serious allegations against British companies and the conditions of the employees of those companies in South Africa. Those arguments are scurrilous and discredit totally those who make them. On the whole, they are made in complete ignorance of the situation.

It is a fact that of those who work for the 350 or so British companies in South Africa about 98 per cent. are

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paid above the minimum level set by the European code. Some of our greatest companies, like BP and Barclays, which we debated some time ago in the House, have spent enormous sums on social benefits and are giving equal opportunity in education, training, agriculture, welfare and housing to all their workers. Indeed, the record of Barclays, castigated so much by the anti-apartheid movement out of sheer ignorance, would stand in any country throughout the world. I certainly salute what it has done for the advancement of black wages.

Mr. Corbyn: Does the hon. Gentleman consider that the apology he is giving for the regime in South Africa ought to be followed by an explanation of the profits made by those companies out of virtual slave labour in South Africa? Does he not agree that it is time totally to condemn apartheid and British commercial participation in it?

Mr. Carlisle: I was afraid that the hon. Gentleman, in his ignorance and naivety, would go down that path. If he had been listening, he would have heard me explain what British companies are doing. I shall repeat it, because obviously he did not hear it, or did not want to hear it, the first time. About 98 per cent. of the employees of British companies are paid above the minimum level set by the European code, not by the South African code. If that is slave labour, the hon. Gentleman is somewhat misguided in his information.

Mr. Corbyn: They still get low wages.

Mr. Carlisle: I shall come on to low wages, because I knew that the hon. Gentleman would bring that up.

Another argument that is put is that there is a disparity between black and white wages. That is well paraded by Opposition Members. It is a fact that the disparity is reducing dramatically. Many people in America, sitting in the nice precincts of American suburbs, castigate South Africa for the fact that the disparity between black and white wages is not as small as it is in the United States of America. I remind the House that between 1972 and 1982 in South Africa the real wages of the whites dropped by 7 per cent. and in the same period, the only period for which figures are available, the wages of the blacks went up by 68 per cent. I suggest that the hon. Member goes back to his books and checks his facts. The fact is that many skilled blacks in South Africa are now enjoying a middle class standard of living and are advancing dramatically within the professions and in clerical jobs.

Mr. Ashdown: The hon. Gentleman has produced figures, but, as he well knows, there are lies, damned lies and statistics. Can he give us the median level for black wages against the median level for white wages in South Africa?

Mr. Carlisle: As a Member on the Front Bench would say, given notice of that question I shall send the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) the figures. I resent his accusation of lies and damned lies. The information that I have comes from the Middlesex polytechnic of London, which may interest London Members. It is written by Art Spandau, who is a German, not a South African, and who has made his own investigations into various countries throughout the world. The figures are his; they are not South African figures. They are fact, not lies as the hon. Member for Yeovil suggested.

South Africa has to create 400,000 jobs just to keep those who are employed at the moment in employment. The calls for disinvestment, which are now siren cries from both sides of the Atlantic, will do more than anything else to ruin the prospects of those blacks who are beginning to find that they can advance to the middle classes and to better jobs. To those Opposition Members and to those outside the House who say that to trade with South Africa, which was part of the hint by the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn), is to support the apartheid regime——

Mr. Corbyn: That is right.

Mr. Carlisle: The hon. Gentleman says that that is right. If that is the case, why are 49 out of 51 black African countries trading with South Africa? Are they supporting the black regime by their trade? Why does South Africa sell £500 million worth of goods to black Africa each year? Is that supporting the apartheid regime? Why are up to 1·5 million foreign labourers in South Africa? Are they supporting the apartheid regime? What the hon. Gentleman does not know, and will not recognise, is that conditions of work within South Africa are such that 1·5 million illegal immigrants are in South Africa looking for conditions which they cannot enjoy in their own countries.

The argument is often put by Opposition Members that if we ceased this trade it would not affect the blacks. Perhaps I can remind hon. Members that if trade between the Western world and South Africa dropped by only 20 per cent., about 90,000 whites and about 350,000 blacks as well would lose their jobs. Is that what Opposition Members really want to see with their programme of disinvestment? They say that other markets could be found. Again, that has been put forward by some people in America. At present, 10 per cent. of our overseas trade is with South Africa, and up to 250,000 jobs in this country are dependent upon that trade. I would not trade 250,000 jobs in the pious hope that what I was doing was helping the blacks, on two bases—those jobs should never be lost, and blacks would be the first to suffer.

Mr. Ashdown: May I tempt the hon. Gentleman a little further on trade? Will the hon. Gentleman join his colleague the hon. Member for Dorset, West (Mr. Spicer) — he has just been appointed chairman of the Conservative party's international office—in calling for a relaxation of the embargo on arms trade with South Africa? The hon. Member for Dorset, West called for the sale of helicopters with military potential to the South African Government. Would the hon. Gentleman go that far?

Mr. Carlisle: Yes, I would, because the basis of the United Nation's resolution which is supported by this country is bogus. It includes forms of defence which are desperately needed on the African coast in and around the Cape and further north. The hon. Member for Yeovil, who has made a face at what I have just said, might like to know that for several hundreds of miles of the African coast there is no form of air-sea rescue other than that provided by the South African Government. I believe that this country should break that embargo and sell arms to South Africa.

Mr. Winnick *rose*——

Mr. Carlisle: I am looking at the clock. I shall give way for the last time to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Winnick: I have looked up the Register of Members' Interests, and I notice that in September 1984 the hon. Gentleman paid a visit to South Africa sponsored by the South African Government. Would it not be more forthright for the hon. Gentleman to explain to the House that he has been on a free trip to South Africa—and to do so while he is speaking so that I do not have to look up the Register of Members' Interests — which was sponsored by the South African Government? The hon. Gentleman is telling us what is in the South African Government's brief to him.

Mr. Carlisle: Let me assist the hon. Gentleman by telling him that I have been on several trips to South Africa. In no case have I paid the air fare for the first class travel on all my journeys to South Africa or for the first class hotels where I have stayed. If the hon. Gentleman's knowledge is so great, why does he not go to South Africa and look for himself? I make an offer to him that I will do all that I can to persuade someone to fund him—not necessarily the Government — to see for himself. I suspect that the hon. Gentleman would not wish to go to South Africa because he, like thousands of others, would return having changed his mind after seeing the true picture.

I am sorry to shatter the calmer atmosphere which the debate was enjoying before the hon. Member for Walsall, North, my hon. Friend the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) and myself made our points. I make no apology for bringing to the attention of the House the bogus case of the Opposition and of some Members of the American Congress, especially Senator Kennedy.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: My hon. Friend is advancing an excellent case which I hope will improve the Opposition's education. Will he comment briefly on the fact that the Wiehan commission led to the recognition and establishment of black trade unions in South Africa? Free trade unionism is certainly not practised behind the iron curtain. I hope that the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) will be able to intervene yet again on this point. Will my hon. Friend confirm that great strides have been made in granting freehold rights to urban blacks—a unique measure which is not the custom behind the iron curtain? These are reforms of considerable magnitude, for which the South African Government should receive credit in the free world.

Mr. Carlisle: As usual, my hon. Friend speaks with a deep knowledge and understanding of the position, unlike the Opposition. Only this afternoon on the Floor of the House my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister acknowledged that the freehold system had been advanced to blacks. That is a great advance for South Africans.

I should have liked to cover the major constitutional changes that have taken place and the need and will for reform in South Africa. Suffice it to say that if we are genuine in our belief that we want to help South Africa, as I think some Opposition Members are, surely it would be better for us to co-operate with the South Africans and recognise their need for peaceful change.

The events of the past few days have cast a shadow over South Africa and its relationship with the rest of the world, and we deeply regret them. We must understand, however, that in any form of change there will be, as the South African ambassador put it, some form of violent revolution. Those of us who are desperately trying to help all the peoples of South Africa are upset by the fact that the violent revolution perpetrated by some Opposition Members, Bishop Tutu and other well-meaning clerics and politicians can lead only to disaster and bloodshed in South Africa. The policy of disinvestment, so eloquently put forward by hon. Members and those on the other side of the Atlantic, will irrevocably harm the blacks first. I believe that this important subject should be brought up many times on the Floor of the House and that both sides of the argument should be heard.

7.15 pm

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): I listened to the hon. Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) with a growing sense of frustration and sadness. I did not seek to intervene during his speech because we can all intervene with platitudes, from a standard point of view and, of course, from interest. My one interest in life is in human beings. I tend to judge a regime by what happens to its citizens. I would listen to anyone who can explain to me why it is necessary to shoot coloured people in a township on the anniversary of the terrible massacre 25 years ago and to bulldoze houses and move people from their homelands. We are talking not about economics, but about the quality of life and the right to life.

I concede that many regimes in Africa, Asia and South America are a disgrace to those humanitarian principles that are meant to be the foundation of the United Nations charter. I judge the South African regime against that background. I do not wish to say too much on that subject, because that is not why I sought to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker. On the tests of the right to express political views, to object and to live where one wants, the South African regime fails. So long as that regime continues to fail on those simple humanitarian grounds, I shall be against it just as I am against the regimes in Chile, eastern Europe and many other parts of the world where those simple tests are not met.

Mr. John Carlisle: I do not dissent from the hon. Gentleman's tone. If he reads my speech in the *Official Report* tomorrow and other speeches that I have made in this place and outside, he will recognise the genuine need for reform. The hon. Gentleman and I might differ about the means of achieving that reform.

Mr. Bermingham: In the long term, to apologise for and excuse the actions of the regime while being critical of those actions does the South African people no good. It might be better for the people of Africa as a whole if we in the West, including America, who do not like what we see, whether in Mozambique or Zimbabwe—my name has been recorded as one who has protested about the recent arrests of trade unionists in Zimbabwe—had the courage to say, "Your regime fails the test." We should seek not to apologise but to explain that we do not tolerate such conduct.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Will the hon. Gentleman give way, on a point of accuracy?

Mr. Bermingham: I shall give way for 15 seconds.

Mr. Winterton: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that enforced removals have now been suspended in South Africa? This was announced by one of the top Ministers in the Republic's Government, Dr. Gerrit van Viljoen.

[Mr. Winterton]

Will the hon. Gentleman withdraw his remarks about people being forced to leave their homes, because enforced removals have now been suspended?

Mr. Bermingham: I accept unreservedly that there has been a suspension. The results of the enforced removals still stand for those who were forced to move.

I am very pleased to see the Leader of the House in his place because, as I understand it, he is the Minister who is in touch with each of the Departments for the purpose of arranging the business of the House. He therefore no doubt has close and frequent contact with, for instance, the Departments of Employment, of Health and Social Security and of Energy. I hope that he can assure the House before the Easter recess that he has informed those Departments that the miners' strike is now over.

I am not being facetious; I am seeking to raise an extremely important point, because somebody somewhere in the system—I do not suggest that it was the Minister, because I have no evidence by which to identify who is responsible — is acting in a way that can only be described as extraordinarily vicious. What is going on at present is an absolute disgrace. I do not seek to raise the matter which was raised in the House last night with regard to miners who have been dismissed during the strike, although I notice that it is stated in *The Guardian* today that a number of sacked miners are barred from claiming benefits. Some are now, I am very pleased to see, beginning to win their claims for unfair dismissal, but of course they are all suffering, anyway.

A number of my constituents are miners, as the Leader of the House is aware. I want to raise the case of one of them, Brian Knowles, who in August last year, during the strike, decided to leave the coal industry. I want to deal generally with the cases of those who resigned during the strike and of those who, because of redundancy and so on, find themselves in the following farcical position.

Having resigned in August, Brian Knowles put in a claim for unemployment benefit. He was told that he could not resign in the middle of a strike. I cannot find where this is stated in the rules; nor, indeed, can anybody else. Instead of getting the normal unemployment benefit, he was given supplementary benefit at the reduced level. That continued from August of last year until 4 March. I raised the matter with Ministers, wrote letters, but got nowhere. Then, on 4 March, Mr. Knowles decided that, as the men were back at work, he would go to the employment office and sign on. He has a wife and children, he has debts and he is in poverty, so he asked for unemployment benefit.

He was told that, as far as the Department of Employment was concerned, the strike was not over and that he would have to apply to the arbitrator, a gentleman in Southampton, who would determine when the strike was over. So the unemployment resources centre in St. Helens wrote to Southampton. The centre got a lovely letter back saying that they did not answer letters from people in unemployment centres. I wonder if they would answer a letter from me. I suspect not. Who do they answer? Who do they think they are? Ministers come to the House and say that the strike is terminated, but they do not work on that. They say that they cannot judge the strike to be over until production levels are up. They also now raise the point about the overtime ban which still exists in the coalfields. Apparently, not until that is over will they admit that the industrial dispute is over.

Someone, somewhere, is determined to crucify people such as Brian Knowles — thousands of people in this country. This extends not just to those who resigned during the strike but also to those who had agreed to take redundancy before the strike commenced but who asked to stay on for particular reasons and were then involved in the dispute, to those who through ill health or for other reasons suddenly found that, after they had agreed to redundancy terms, the strike intervened. Now that the strike is over, everything is held up. I wonder if the Leader of the House would be so kind as to inform the Department of Health and Social Security and the Department of Employment before the Easter recess that the mining dispute is now over. It would help.

The Leader of the House may ask why these men do not apply to the various tribunals. A constituent of my hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) applied in November for a tribunal hearing on this matter. That tribunal has not yet sat. These hearings can be delayed.

Why must people who are elderly, or sick, or have left the mining industry for other reasons be treated in this mean, petty, spiteful way? I thought that we were seeking reconciliation with the miners. I can assure the House that in the constituency of St. Helens and in the mining areas generally people are well aware of what is happening, of the spitefulness and meanness, and that adds to the bitterness. It is so unnecessary, and I hope that the Leader of the House can find time to resolve this nasty problem.

7.26 pm

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): It is not for me to reply to the speeches made in this debate, although I have noted them, and the fact that no fewer than 15 have been delivered over the last two and a half hours. I believe that the House owes a debt of gratitude to those hon. Members for the range of important subjects which they have briefly addressed. If I single out one or two it is because they certainly deserve it.

The two speeches made on the subject of the Crown Proceedings Act and the possibility of service men being treated more generously in connection with injuries sustained certainly require attention. The Act has stood for too long unchanged. I think too that the plea by my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) for the early publication of the two reports on the Severn bridge really ought to be responded to. I certainly think that our immigration procedures need the most urgent review and a far more sympathetic administration than they are getting at the present time.

Last, but not least, I believe that my hon. Friends were indeed right to raise the whole ghastly tragedy of recent events in South Africa, themselves a repeat of the appalling massacre at Sharpeville 25 years ago. Although I listened with interest to the speech made by the hon. Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle), because he has clearly studied the subject in some depth, I found the general sentiments which he expressed, particularly on this occasion, when there is so much suffering and loss of life in South Africa, pretty repugnant.

I wish to say something about two other matters— one which my hon. Friend the Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) has just broached, about the

aftermath of the coal industry strike, and, secondly, the question of Mr. Levene as the chief official concerned with arms procurement in the Ministry of Defence.

With regard to the bitter legacy of the coal strike, I assume that everyone has a strong wish that the wounds that have been sustained during the past 12 months should be healed as rapidly as possible. Against that background, I was shocked when I read today that sacked miners cannot even now claim unemployment or supplementary benefit and that the £16 deduction from their families' social security income is still being exacted by the DHSS. Therefore, their families are still ineligible for the £16 benefit that strike pay is assumed to provide.

I should like to know who has made that ruling. It cannot be one for regional officials of the Department of Health and Social Security; it must have come from Ministers. It is a scandalous decision. It is punitive, vindictive and designed to ensure not only that the wounds of the strike do not heal but that they deepen and fester. So too is the policy decison emanating from the National Coal Board HQ, as all will acknowledge who listened to Mr. MacGregor on television on the subject of teaching the lessons of indiscipline — that many hundreds of men dismissed during the strike should not be re-employed.

The correct attitude to the problem was stated by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition on Friday 8 March, when he rightly said that the way to deal with the matter was for management sensibly to consider

"each case on its merits."

My right hon. Friend said that unions should have

"the opportunity to represent individual workers."

Those who have been found guilty in the courts of minor offences, including the daubing of walls, taking coal to keep their families warm, obstruction and other petty offences, should not be dismissed. There are other cases too in which, as the recent industrial tribunal decision in favour of Mr. Norman Lynch makes plain, such dismissals are unjustifiable under industrial law.

Surely the time has come for a general instruction to area coal managers, including Scotland's, to consider all dismissal cases on their merits. It is up to the Minister to see that that is done.

Therefore, what we want from the Secretary of State for Social Services and the Secretary of State for Energy is an early statement on both those subjects. It is no good the NCB taking out four-page advertisements in the *Daily Telegraph* and other newspapers proclaiming, as they did today:

"you're better off with coal and Britain can provide it"

if in reality official policy makes it certain that the bitterness of the past year is allowed to continue and to fester.

The second subject that I wish to raise is the disgraceful and quite extraordinary story of Mr. Peter Levene, recently appointed head of the Ministry of Defence arms procurement programme. The importance of that case is plain to everyone except the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Defence.

The constitutional doctrine on the acceptance of outside appointments by former civil servants was recently stated in the Government's White Paper containing their response to the report of the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee, "Acceptance of Outside Appointments by Crown Servants". In their general observations, they said:

"The Government agrees with the Committee that the rules governing the acceptance of outside appointments by Crown servants have to strike a balance between two principles; the principle of maximum possible freedom of movement, which is a matter not only of personal liberty but also of the economic and other benefits of interchange between the public service and other occupations and spheres of activity; and the requirement to avoid corruption or impropriety, or the suspicion of them, in relation to the public service."

That is fair enough, but the doctrine must apply equally to industrialists and business men seconded or appointed to the Civil Service, particularly the requirement to avoid

"corruption or impropriety, or the suspicion of them, in relation to the public service."

No one can dispute that serious improprieties have already been committed. In the case of Mr. Levene, the Civil Service Commission was not asked to consider what is called the "issue of qualification" nor was there any pretence that the appointment had been made open to general applications. It is reported that the Civil Service commissioners considered resignation en bloc, and it is a pity that they did not carry out their threat. For without such checks as are written into practice and procedure, appointments can be made at the grace and favour of Ministers and the door is wide open to favouritism, nepotism and worse.

So why was Mr. Levene appointed in breach of those rules? Who authorised the payment of £107,000 per annum to Mr. Levene, who now becomes the highest paid civil servant in the land? What are the ethics and where is the common sense in appointing as chief of defence procurement the chairman of a major arms equipment supplier, United Scientific Holdings?

Now, after pressure, we learn that Mr. Levene is to be refused access to papers relating to his former company and other associated companies for a 12-month period, and, further, that he will be subject to Civil Service rules when he leaves the Civil Service. That is to say that he will have the obligation simply to inform the Diamond commission before taking up a new job within two years of leaving his present post, a requirement which, as the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee stated, has no sanction behind it.

Serious issues are involved in this case, and it is not the only one. In its editorial of 22 March, under the title, "A Lingering Whiff", *The Times* recalled:

"over a period of five recent years some 1,400 movements from Whitehall into private business were made by the senior personnel of a single department yet of these a paltry few were delayed or subjected to extensive inquiry. Then the permanent secretary of the same department, within months of his retirement, joins the board of an aircraft supply company and a few months later becomes chairman of a major armament contractor."

Of course, the Department to which *The Times* is referring is the Ministry of Defence.

The Government have done much to damage the whole British economy and, indeed, the British people. The damage being done to the Civil Service is less obvious, but no less serious. Standards of conduct are slipping, and slipping fast. There should therefore be an early debate not only on the case of Mr. Levene but on the whole clutch of issues raised by the report of the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee and the Government's inadequate response to it. I very much hope that the Leader of the House will have something to say about that matter, too.

7.37 pm

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): This afternoon's debate is what is now a traditional one on the recess motion, which gives Back Benchers the opportunity to raise a whole host of topics, and it is my privilege to seek to answer them with such skill as I have. Therefore, I hope that the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) will permit me, of course to acknowledge what he has just mentioned in respect of Mr. Levene, but to proceed to the more traditional role that I have to perform on such occasions.

The right hon. Gentleman talked of serious improprieties, favouritism and nepotism. Those are all devastating charges and are wholly unmerited relative to an appointment which, I agree at once, was bound to be controversial. However, I have noted the anxiety that the right hon. Gentleman expressed. It is only right that I should do so. I shall refer the matter to those of my right hon. Friends to whom it is most appropriately directed. I also noted the interest that the right hon. Gentleman expressed in the matter being returned to on the Floor of the House.

In its variety, the debate has not disappointed any of the connoisseurs who now follow these occasions. I shall try to comment on the speeches of each of my hon. Friends who have contributed to the debate.

I shall start with my hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale (Sir F. Montgomery), who mentioned the serious difficulties in his constituency over the South Trafford hospital. I quite understand his anxiety and his concern that the regional health authority has not yet made as public as he would wish its position on the matter. I shall see that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services knows of his anxiety.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg) brought the whole of our consideration close to home when he complained about the Car Park. He has been beaten to it. It must be a growing issue of contention, as I have already been in correspondence with my hon. Friend the Member for Ashford (Mr. Speed) on the matter. I have taken note of the detailed points raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate, and I hope to be in touch with him in due course.

My hon. Friend also referred to the extraordinary delay in dealing with the planning appeal by the Bluebell line. I have been told that the decision should be available within the next two or three weeks. I do know whether that is news to my hon. Friend. If it is, he may like to reflect that it was probably his intervention that brought about that happy conclusion.

Mr. Robert Rhodes James (Cambridge): Pull the other one.

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend's comment is quite unnecessary. This debate before our much-needed rest is no occasion for cynical comments such as I would not normally associate with so distinguished a scholar as my hon. Friend.

The right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) mentioned the problems and difficulties created for service men by section 10 of the Crown Proceedings Act 1947. He specifically mentioned a case on which it is not appropriate for me to comment as it is still under consideration. The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney observed that that law had stood since the time of the Labour Government of the immediate post-war years. To some, that may be a sign that it is encrusted with barnacles. Others may feel that, whatever its administrative defects, the law has survived many scrutinies which have concluded that any departure from it would make the situation worse rather than better.

I shall, however, refer the right hon. Gentleman's anxieties to my right hon. Friend and point out that they were endorsed by my hon. Friend the Member for Gosport (Mr. Viggers). I should also say that the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South has explained that he is unable to be present to hear my reply to the debate.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gosport has won the palm, in that he raised a topic which was incomprehensible to me at the outset and which remained so. I am sure that it will feature in *The Times* diary tomorrow——

Mr. Gerald Malone (Aberdeen, South): Too late.

Mr. Biffen: I am grateful for that comment, which reveals the innocence of my relationship with *The Times* diary.

In this case, the absurdity does not even derive from a proposal by the European Community. There are plans for the outlawing of an anti-fouling chemical which could be only partial in its application and whose only sure result would be to cause commercial damage to certain of my hon. Friend's constituents. That situation is so inequitable that I shall at once remind my right hon. Friend of it—he is currently considering it—and I hope that there will be a happy and commonsense outcome.

The hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) is anxious about the experiences of some of the new industries which have been set up as satellites of the new-style British Telecom. I note what the hon. Gentleman said. He did not mention whether a reference had been made to Oftel in that context. That might be one remedy, but I shall see that the matter is further considered.

With that heroic optimism which often lends distinction to these debates, my hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale raised the matter of the reform of the rating system. As he reminds us, he has done so on previous occasions. I can only say that he is 12 months nearer to an answer—if answer there is to be—than he was when the matter was last considered.

I remind my hon. Friend that this debate is only the hors d'oeuvres to the main course of today's proceedings, the debate on the Consolidated Fund Bill, in which I see that the Scottish rating system is to be debated for a full three hours. Many hon. Members might say that three hours is inadequate time for such a debate.

Mr. Albert McQuarrie (Banff and Buchan): Very much so.

Mr. Biffen: The matter raised by my hon. Friend is of lasting topicality and has erupted, north of the border, from a smouldering state into the most rampant flames. We might do well to take guidance from his suggestion that the matter needs to be seriously considered again.

The right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) spoke about the situation in the Province in the light of developments over the past few days. We can all understand his concern about the destructive

consequences of uncertainty. To the voice of the right hon. Gentleman was joined that of my hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Murphy).

The right hon. Gentleman stated that the position of the Government was that there could be no change in Ulster's constitutional position without the free and willing consent of its people. That commitment has existed for decades, and nowhere has it been repeated more powerfully than from the lips of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. I am happy to repeat this evening that that is the situation.

We all appreciate that of all our citizens in the United Kingdom those in the Province live under the most relentless pressures. It is all too easy on this side of the Irish sea, and in this place, to lose touch with the real anxiety that is bound to exist in the Province under those pressures.

The hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) spoke, in the context of recent reports, about the whole question of the custody of children and family law reform. His argument was most persuasive and, as so often in such cases, one understands the frustration that is felt when persuasiveness has no obvious consequence in the form of legislation.

I am told that the Government are considering legislation. I have been Leader of the House for long enough to know that, if a measure is not well over the horizon by this stage in the year, it will not appear in the current Session. It is the hon. Gentleman's view that the current legislation might accommodate the point at issue if the long title could be adjusted. I shall refer those points to my right hon. and learned Friend the Lord Advocate and consider whether we can meet the hon. Gentleman on that point.

The hon. Gentleman's namesake, the hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes), referred to the Severn bridge. Year by year, as I have sat here, my admiration for the way in which the hon. Gentleman has pursued the issue of the Severn bridge has grown. One might say that he is the Dalyell of Gwent. The hon. Gentleman requested that I should pass to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport a request that both reports should be published. I shall of course do so. I realise that the matter is of the utmost concern in South Wales, and I appreciate the concern of the people of South Wales that their industrial future rests on the provision of appropriate road access to the rest of the United Kingdom.

The hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) devoted the major part of his speech to South Africa. However, he also asked me to pass on to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment his anxieties about the present level of council house starts. I shall not anticipate my right hon. Friend's reply, but any fair judge of the Government's housing programme must take account of our great emphasis upon private house building and, above all, on house improvement as the means of securing the national housing stock. However, I take the hon. Gentleman's point.

My hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) has explained why he must be absent for this stage of the debate. He made an effective speech about animal welfare as it relates to horses. Anyone who comes from a constituency such as my hon. Friend's, which is suburban, and where, on the whole, there are a great many horses without the full advantage of a truly rural environment, knows only too well that the issue on which my hon. Friend touched is a real and growing problem in animal welfare. I hope that my hon. Friend will be successful in the ballot for private Members' Bills in the next Session, as an amendment to the Animals Act 1971 could very well achieve the purpose that he had in mind. Meanwhile, he has today opened his campaign most professionally.

The hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) brought to our debate the consideration of immigration law and asked whether I would refer to the Home Secretary, once again, the Nicola case so that it might be considered further. I undertake to do that. The hon. Gentleman was determined in his attack on how we administer immigration. He described Britain as standing condemned and our immigration procedures as a disgrace. There is a good case to be made for saying that our immigration law and its application are a testimony to the tremendous tolerance of the host community, above all the working-class host community, which has had to deal with the consequences of immigration. I hope that when we debate these matters we shall not do so in a sense of self-denigration, but rather with measured praise of how we have tried to tackle considerable and difficult problems.

The hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) mentioned constituents who are suffering from the consequences of how the mining dispute concluded — without a settlement between union and employers. I realise that it has given rise to difficulties, and if he would like to give me more details about the case that he has in mind I might wish to approach the Government Departments direct. However, I am sure that we can help the hon. Gentleman in some way.

My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) mentioned the problems of the European Community and the serious problems of taxation implicit in what is now being decided, which often runs outwith our normal forms of public expenditure control. He said that the matter was now being considered by the Public Accounts Committee. I am sure that the whole House is interested to know what its findings will be. I suspect that this matter will increasingly occupy the House's attention. My hon. Friend was kind enough to write to me about VAT on credit cards, and I shall do all that I can to accommodate a discussion in the appropriate Standing Committee.

I have deliberately left until the end the debate on South Africa. I have an uneasy feeling that this evening's debate will be a pointer to recurring debates on the subject. The debate was made by the hon. Member for Walsall, North and by my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle). A situation redolent of all the poignancy of a Greek tragedy is now unfolding in South Africa. It is one in which our frustrations will be that much more as we realise that the effective way in which we can influence matters is tremendously limited, especially relative to the free and easy and bombastic moralising which so often has characterised our contribution to this debate hitherto. As we must try to relate our sense of feeling with our ability to do something, that becomes a true test. It is a test for that Government but, above all, for the House, which cradles government.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House at its rising on Thursday 4th April do adjourn until Monday 15th April and at its rising on Friday 3rd May do adjourn until Tuesday 7th May, and that the House shall not adjourn on Thursday 4th April until Mr. Speaker shall have reported the Royal Assent to any Acts which have been agreed upon by both Houses.

Orders of the Day

Consolidated Fund (No. 3) Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

Question, That the Bill be now read the Second time, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 113 (Consolidated Fund Bills), and agreed to.*

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Question, That the Bill be now read a Third time, *put and agreed to.*

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.

Scottish Teachers (Strike Action)

Motion made, and Question proposed, pursuant to Standing Order No. 113(2) (Consolidated Fund Bills). That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

7.54 pm

Mr. Gerald Malone (Aberdeen, South): I am grateful to have this opportunity to raise an exceptionally important matter for Scotland — the effect that teachers' strike action is having on Scottish pupils.

I shall divide my comments into two areas: first, the general effects of the dispute in Scotland and how I hope they might be solved and, secondly, the effects of strike action on my constituency. The effects have been rather singular and different. I attempted to secure this debate to echo the views of my colleagues from Scotland, although I do not do so in any animosity towards the merits of the teachers' case. There are differences between opposite sides of the House and between my views and those of many people in teaching. However, I should like to emphasise that there is a fund of good will and sympathy for many of the important points made by teachers to me and my colleagues. It would be helpful if we had an opportunity constructively to express that sympathetic view. I hope that that spirit will be clear to teachers in my constituency, to teachers throughout Scotland and to parents.

We should consider the nub of the issue that is causing difficulty and preventing negotiation and see how it can be overcome. The difficulty faced by teachers and the Government is the demand for an independent pay review. That difficulty is not quite as substantial as it was, because a significant number of teachers concede that the best way forward is to negotiate through the statutory joint negotiating machinery and to pursue the offers that the Government have made through that mechanism. The Educational Institute of Scotland is almost alone in standing out for an independent pay review. That intransigence is causing the difficulties which school-children in Scotland are now experiencing. It is a log-jam of which parents are becoming increasingly impatient because they have seen flexibility from only one side in the dispute—from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. He alone has moved. It is becoming increasingly unclear why the offer that he has put down cannot be explored properly——

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): Which offer?

Mr. Malone: —as we would be happy to support some parts of the teachers' case.

The hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) asks which offer. I am happy to tell him. It is an important offer during such negotiations. It is an offer to find new funding over and above the record funds that are being spent in Scotland per pupil in the primary and secondary sectors of education, and to finance with those funds a suitable package, which can be negotiated through the joint statutory negotiating machinery.

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): Will the hon. Gentleman admit that he is misleading the House when he says that? The Secretary of State said that he would consider carefully whether he could find extra money to finance the package. He has made no promises to finance a package.

Mr. Malone: The hon. Gentleman knows full well that to set out firm positions and to define sums or claims at the outset of negotiations is patently absurd. He also knows full well that there has been no detailed articulated demand from the EIS in the dispute. For the hon. Gentleman to suggest that my right hon. Friend's offer to find new funds is not a sign of flexibility, especially as Mr. Pollock of the EIS conceded it to be a sign of flexibility, is nonsense.

The offer should be explored. It would not prejudice the teachers' rights, and in no sense would it imply that they must accept it. It would be helpful for me as a Back-Bench Member to explore the terms of the offer, and if my colleagues and I thought it appropriate, to apply whatever pressure we felt necessary to meet the rightful demands of teachers in Scotland.

It is important for teachers and the people of Scotland to understand the sincerity with which the teachers' demand for an independent pay review is supported by Opposition Members. There is no substance in it. It is implied that if Opposition Members were in government and had the levers of power within their control, they would concede an independent pay review for teachers. That means that they would be bound to give an independent pay review to other public sector bodies which required it. That is the implication of conceding an independent pay review to teachers.

Why should a procedure be made available only to the public sector? Perhaps we should debate whether we are to embark on a system of independent pay reviews throughout every sector of the economy. Opposition Members are misleading the public when they say that they would run down this road with the teachers, but would be prevented from running down exactly the same road of wage bargaining with other interests. That is nonsense.

The claims to back an independent pay review run uncomfortably with many of the statements from Opposition Members following the Budget. On the one hand they ask for an independent review, presumably with the implication that it would be accepted no matter what level it set, and on the other they demand some sort of incomes policy or incomes strategy. To pursue both courses at once is misleading, and deceives the Scottish people and the teachers whom they claim to support. It is blatantly dishonest.

Alliance politicians consistently pledge themselves to a firm incomes policy. I do not know how they can justify granting an independent pay review hand in hand with a policy of controlling incomes and, presumably,

relativities. I was interested to read an article in *The Sunday Times* of 17 March by the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel). He said that he would

"introduce an incomes strategy, to distribute more rewards more fairly and keep inflation down."

If the right hon. Gentleman were to embark on a policy of independent pay reviews throughout the public sector, it would not ride easily with that claim.

Mr. Malcom Bruce (Gordon): Will the hon. Gentleman explain to the House how a Government who have been in power for six years and have cut public sector pay to the bone can say anything about fairness or justice, or speak of a mechanism for relating pay in the public sector fairly to pay in the private sector? That is an incomes strategy, and that is what we support. Conservative Members have no fair means of assessing pay in the public sector. All public sector pay has been screwed down, except that earned by Tories.

Mr. Malone: If the hon. Gentleman is talking about a fair way of assessing the income of people in the public sector, the way not to go about it is to concede one independent pay review to one public sector body. It is illogical to suggest that the teachers should be supported in this issue, when Opposition Members are not prepared to say what the rest of their policy is.

It must be made extremely clear to the teaching profession in Scotland that, while Opposition Members may happily consort with teachers in this demand for an independent pay review, if Opposition Members were in office, in the light of the policy that they have already stated following the Budget, they would be the last people to concede that review.

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): Can we take it that the hon. Gentleman is opposed to the independent review procedures that already apply and have been carried out by the Government for the police service, the armed forces and the fire service?

Mr. Malone: The hon. Gentleman is well aware that many concessions were granted by people involved in those reviews, which are not even now on the table for the teachers. If the teachers sought arbitration, his point may be valid, but they do not seek arbitration. The absurdity of their position is that they want an independent pay review and want its results referred to the statutory joint negotiating machinery, to which they refuse to resort. That is the absurd illogicality of their case, and the hon. Gentleman knows it.

If we are discussing a way to achieve a quick end to the dispute and to its detrimental effects on Scottish schoolchildren, the first way forward is to explore my right hon. Friend's offer. I cannot understand why those who say that the results of an independent review must in any event be referred to the statutory negotiating machinery are not prepared fully to explore my right hon. Friend's offer. At the end of the day it may be exposed to be no offer at all. I do not know that; indeed, no one knows it. The teachers who refuse to use the negotiating machinery do not know that either. If we are talking about a rapid resolution of the dispute, the joint negotiating machinery should be used.

By encouraging teachers in what Opposition Members well know to be an utterly impossible objective, which they could not fulfil even within their own policy guidelines, Opposition Members are more responsible than striking teachers for the damage being done to the education of children in Scottish schools.

Mr. James Hamilton (Motherwell, North): Does the hon. Gentleman remember the Houghton report? That was before he came to the House. A Labour Government set that report in motion and a Labour Government implemented its recommendations in full. They also set up the Clegg commission, which was disbanded when the Conservatives came to power.

Mr. Malone: The hon. Gentleman is well aware that that sort of approach to public sector bargaining is not something to which his party is committed now. Are Opposition Members prepared to indulge in independent pay reviews across the board in the public sector? If they do not give that commitment now, the commitment that they seek to give to the teachers is nothing more than a sham.

The effects of the dispute are to be found in the short and long terms. In the short term, although not for those affected by exams, there will be great difficulty. I am grateful to the teaching unions in Scotland for at least conceding that examinations will be allowed to proceed. If we are to find some ground on which to build during the debate, I hope that we can consider that as a sign that they will take into account the interests of their pupils. But the point is that, even for those who will be allowed to take examinations, there will always be the thought that the results that they achieve will be, in some way, inferior or second class.

The long-term fear is that this industrial disruption will prejudice the implementation of the Munn and Dunning proposals. They were broadly welcomed not only on both sides of the House, but throughout the teaching profession, and it is desperately sad that the innovative approach of Munn and Dunning could be prejudiced not only this year but in the long term.

Mrs. Anna McCurley (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): Does my hon. Friend agree that not only was the teaching profession anxious to implement the Munn and Dunning proposals, but the Government gave adequate assistance — [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] They were extremely expeditious about introducing finances adequate to implement the Munn and Dunning proposals.

Mr. Malone: My hon. Friend is right. If the long-term future of education in Scotland, as it is affected by Munn and Dunning, is to be prejudiced by such industrial action, it is regrettable.

As to the other aspects of the dispute, I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for making clear his position during the dispute and for giving every undertaking that he can that the effects of industrial action will be consistently reviewed. He has said that he will take every action within his power to ensure that pupils at least are not affected. We are beginning to see some of the results of that undertaking. I am glad to know that the Scottish Examinations Board has allowed an extension of the arrangements for appeals along the same lines as it did during industrial disputes in 1975, 1979 and 1980. Although that is not an adequate solution to the problem, it is helpful as far as it goes. I was also pleased to know that the Scottish Universities Council on Entrance has said

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that it will take into account the position of any candidates who might suffer as a result of the industrial action in Scottish schools.

I make no secret of the fact that they are simply temporary expedients to get over an appalling difficulty that has been recognised ever more widely by the parents of Scottish schoolchildren who are suffering the effects of the current action. If the dispute continues, as it seems set to do for some time at least, I hope that my hon. Friend will continue to ensure that children will not be made to suffer in their examination results because of the action taken by teachers.

I now turn to matters connected with my constituency. One school in my constituency — Aberdeen grammar school — has been especially hit by selective strike action. The children there are suffering much more hardship than many other children in Scotland. Indeed, they have regularly been denied education for three days a week, and it looks as though that will continue to be the case. It was no puzzle to me why Aberdeen grammar school was selected for strike action, although it was not made clear by the EIS. That school was chosen because it was in my constituency and because I did not support the teachers' claim for an independent pay review. The EIS fudged the issue. It would not admit that. The suggestion was—it would seem absurd to anyone with common sense — that the EIS had happened upon Aberdeen grammar school as part of a general programme of escalation — *[Laughter.]* The hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) laughs at that suggestion, which is patently absurd.

The EIS adhered to that view until Monday 11 March, when, at a parent-teacher association meeting at Aberdeen grammar school, the local field officer for the EIS, Mr. Stuart Topp, made it clear what the position was. He said clearly that the school had been selected with a view to pressurising me to change my views on the issue. Following the meeting of 11 March, I attended a meeting of a cross-section of parents from that parent-teacher association, at which much concern was expressed that such action was being taken. The correspondence that I have had from constituents since then has shown that they share that concern. The EIS has now clearly said that it is taking selective action in the constituencies of Conservative Back-Bench Members to pressurise them to change their minds on this issue.

I do not mind the fact that pressure has been brought upon me. I am prepared to listen to representations from any quarter, but when children in my constituency are made to suffer for my views that is nothing short of disgraceful.

Mr. Home Robertson: I assure the hon. Gentleman that I am not a Conservative Back-Bench Member— [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] Teachers have been on strike in my constituency, and my son was not in school today because the only teacher in the primary school that he attends in the Borders region, which is represented by a Liberal Member of Parliament, was on strike today. Will the hon. Gentleman stop giving us this humbug?

Mr. Malone: There seems to be some dispute about the hon. Gentleman's credentials. Some members of his party do not seem to want him. Sometimes I wonder whether we should not invite him to join the Conservative party. He completely fails to recognise that Aberdeen grammar school was the first school in Scotland to be selected for strike action three days a week. That is a matter of simple record, which was admitted by the EIS. The position has become completely clear. The school was selected with only one purpose in mind. I view it as an attempt to intimidate me by holding hostage the future of children in my constituency in connection with the dispute. It is utterly reprehensible. It is political blackmail of the most despicable sort.

I say to the teachers who are taking action that they are losing support. They have not lost my support for the merits of their case—I would not be so mean-minded and petty as to do that—but they are losing support among parents, who resent them. The action has been deplored by many teachers, not only in Aberdeen but in Scotland as a whole. I should make it clear that such selective action, which is designed to intimidate me, is utterly ineffectual and will be of no use to them.

Teachers in Scotland should be trying to get as much support as they can from parents and from Conservative Members. To indulge in selective action does nothing for the merits of their case and nothing for the children whose interests they claim to have at heart. It turns logic on its head to say that they are prepared to indulge in the most damaging sort of selective action—that of three days a week—but that it is all in the interests of children and of Scottish education.

Mr. Maxton: That is right.

Mr. Malone: The hon. Gentleman says that that is right, but the future in which I am interested is that of children who will be adversely affected in the short term. They are the worst affected by the strike.

Mr. Maxton *rose*——

Mr. Malone: I have given way enough in my speech. I am making a constituency point now, and I do not wish to give way again. The teachers do their cause no good.

The other part of the message that I wish to get across tonight is that Conservative Members are not blind to many of the intrinsic merits of the teachers' case. I cite as one example, in which I have every sympathy for teachers who write to me, the salary structure. That is inadequate in the long term, when we are trying to cope with the difficulties of falling school rolls and the impossibility of being able to secure promoted posts. This is why my right hon. Friend has suggested that we should negotiate a package of pay and conditions together, so that all these matters can be thoroughly investigated and sorted out, to the satisfaction of the teaching profession as a whole. *[Interruption.]* Labour Members may scoff, but why do we not give this opportunity a chance? What do the teachers have to lose by entering into the negotiating machinery? What problems do they see in presenting their case that they do not have now? That is nonsense, and they should go through the negotiations as quickly as possible.

The main interest of the House, of the teaching profession as a whole, of parents and of children is to bring this dispute to an end as rapidly as possible. The simple way to do that must be to go to the statutory joint negotiating committee. If, at the end of the day, a satisfactory deal is not negotiated, and paid for by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, there is nothing to prevent the teachers from arguing their case point by point

in the country and the House and to hon. Members such as myself and my colleagues. We would have much more sympathy with what the teachers are doing if they behaved like that.

Members of the EIS who are particularly indulging in selective action such as this are losing support within their profession. Two teaching unions are suggesting that the statutory joint negotiating machinery should be used and explored. Why do EIS members not see that that is the way forward? If they are waiting because they think that there might be an element of political defeat in such an approach, and that Conservative Members would delight in rubbing their noses in the dirt if they were to resort to the machinery, nothing could be further from the truth. If they resorted to the statutory negotiating machinery, that would be a matter for rejoicing among Conservative Members and teachers would get much more support than they have so far been able to acquire.

There is no suggestion that I would be keen in any circumstances to gain any political victory from the teachers' resort to the statutory negotiating machinery. I hope that all hon. Members have the interests of school children in our constituencies much too close at heart for that. I encourage teachers throughout Scotland, particularly in my constituency, to abandon the damaging action that they are taking, and the attempts that they are making to try to intimidate me and other Conservative Members by such strike action. It will do them no good. We have one interest in common—the welfare of our schoolchildren. This method of selective strike action does nothing to help that.

8.23 pm

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): This is a valuable opportunity, thanks to the luck of the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Malone), to debate this important issue, which, as he rightly says, concerns large numbers of people throughout Scotland. It concerns not just parents of children who are now in the education system but those who have a genuine interest in the education system.

I have a feeling that the Government are yet again running scared of this issue as they are of rates revaluation, which subject we will debate later. There are reports that the Secretary of State for Scotland is on television in Scotland this evening making noises that seem to show that some announcement will be made about rates. Perhaps he is trailing his coat in advance of the Scottish Conservative party conference on this issue, on which the Government are in serious trouble. If any announcement is to come, it will come against the background of assurances and categoric statements suggesting that the Government were resolute and would not back down in the face of pressure. However, the Government are clearly scared, are running, and will change their minds.

There is genuine concern in Scotland about what is happening in the education system. The teachers' dispute is only one feature in the landscape of the problems facing Scottish education. I do not dissent from a number of comments that the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South has made, but I do dissent from the conclusions at which he arrives and the partisan view of the dispute in schools that he takes.

Last night, I went to a well-attended meeting of the parent-teacher association of a number of schools in my constituency. Many parents expressed genuine concern about a number of things going on in the education system, and in particular about the impact of the teachers' dispute on their children.

The hon. Member for Aberdeen, South made a particular point about the impact on children being educated in the constituencies of Conservative Members, but, as my hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) has pointed out, the dispute has had an impact across the board and as feeling strengthens the impact will increase. There is considerable and growing sympathy for the teachers' case and for the reasonable nature of the request that they are putting forward. There is support for the teachers among parents and pupils.

There is a crisis in Scottish education that is manifested not only by the teachers' pay. The frustration of teachers is occasioned not just by the level of their salary, although that is the particular problem that has been identified, but by a number of other factors. First, there are falling school rolls, which should have been the opportunity for expanding and improving the education services. Instead, because it coincides with savagely cut education resources in Scotland, the opportunities are being squandered, and the traumatic effects of the possibility of school closures are having an impact on the morale of parents and teachers.

Mr. Malone: Why, if there was that widespread concern about conditions and pay, did the EIS seek simply an independent review of pay without reference to conditions?

Mr. Robertson: I am talking about the dilemma that faces the whole of the Scottish education system, which has led to the frustration that has centralised itself on the particular issue of pay. If the hon. Gentleman will let me come to the end of my speech, he will find that the conclusion at which I arrive is that there was probably no alternative but to concentrate the eyes of the negotiators on a particular aspect.

On top of the problems associated with the Government's cut in resources has been the introduction of the 16 to 18 action plan and of Munn and Dunning, which has received widespread and general welcome among teachers, parents and other members of the community. However, the combination of all these factors, occurring at one and the same time — the development of a unique and original solution to try to deal with these things, as the consortia arrangements in the Strathclyde has been—has been to create almost unique pressures on members of the teaching profession.

Conservative Members should understand the nature of the feeling that exists among teachers today. This is not an ordinary industrial dispute. It is impossible for Conservative Members, and the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South did not even try to do this, to characterise this as a dispute in which revolutionary and agitating people of some militancy have generated support way beyond the boundaries of ordinary people in the profession.

What is significant to anybody who has talked to teachers and sought to understand what they are on about is the depth of feeling among the whole strata of the teaching profession. There is deep and genuine concern among the middle aged, middle class, middle minded teachers in schools who have come to the end of their tether and patience. They genuinely believe that there is

[Mr. Robertson]

no alternative but to take the sort of industrial action that they are taking. That is the nature of the crisis that has been precipitated by the Government. Lack of understanding of the circumstances is creating the log-jam to which the hon. Member so slightingly referred.

Of course it was inevitable that one aspect of the dilemma would be picked on, despite the fact that within our schools there is a widespread drop in morale. It was natural and inevitable that there would be concentration upon pay. The hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends continually pour cold water upon the setting up of an independent review procedure as though what the teachers are asking for is the thin end of a wedge that will drive a coach and horses through the free collective bargaining procedures. To believe that free collective bargaining procedures can be followed under a Conservative Government is totally absurd. A most rigid form of incomes policy has been practised by this Government under the guise of allowing people to negotiate freely.

However, the Government have established, with the assistance of review procedures that were in force before they came to power, the principle that certain parts of the public sector should be removed from the pay bargaining arena. I do not believe that it is right to draw strict comparisons between the police service and other parts of the public sector. The police service is in a unique position. It was established by statute, and strike action is prohibited by law. Before the implementation of the Edmund-Davies report by the last Labour Government, no independent pay procedure was in force. There is now an independent pay procedure. Quite properly, in my view, the Government decided to take the pay of the police out of the normal bargaining procedures that apply in the public sector in order to remove from a key area of the public sector the ability to take widespread industrial action. The police were provided with a degree of protection that they had never previously enjoyed. However, the police are not the only ones in that position. This applies also to the armed forces and to the fire service, although the fire service is not prohibited by law from going on strike. The fire service has not denied itself the right to strike, but its members' pay is protected under the provisions introduced by the last Labour Government.

The important principle is that there are key public services that all of us wish to be removed from the normal warfare of industrial bargaining. If the fire service, the police and the armed forces fall into that category, we ought, according to the argument of the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South, to remove our children from that battleground.

Mr. Malone: I did not understand that the teachers were asking for a permanent system for the independent review of their salaries. They are asking for nothing of the sort. If they were arguing for that, the hon. Gentleman's argument might have some relevance. However, his argument is worthless. That is not what the teachers want. They already have a statutory joint negotiating committee upon which they are well represented.

Mr. Robertson: That is a point which I am sure those who read *Hansard* tomorrow will read with considerable interest. The hon. Gentleman seems to be suggesting that if the teachers were arguing for a permanent review system he might be in favour of it. The principle has already been conceded by the Government. If the Government believe in their own case, they ought to put it before an independent review body, before which the teachers could also put their case. Then somebody outside the narrow arena of those involved in the dispute would be able to come to a conclusion. Many children are being affected by the dispute. The vast majority of the members of the teaching profession in Scotland do not wish any harm to be done to children's education. They have a far deeper conviction about the need to protect children's education than many Conservative Members have or have ever had. Children are being caught in a vice between the understandable frustrations that teachers have experienced over the years and a Government who lack the courage to test their convictions and arguments in front of an independent review body. A reasonable demand is being made and it is reasonable for the people of Scotland to demand that it should be listened to by the Government.

8.35 pm

Mr. Gordon Wilson (Dundee, East): I agree with the hon. Members for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Malone) and for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) that there is a wide area of common concern about this dispute. It encompasses worry about those children who are attending school. Whatever the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South may have said about a particular school, we all know that throughout the length and breadth of the kingdom schools have been affected by the teachers' dispute. It is common ground that we should seek to devise a method by which that dispute can be ended as quickly as possible. However, there is genuine disagreement about how the dispute can be ended.

The Government have been perversely blind about the development of this dispute. Anybody with any eyesight at all would have seen the attempts made by the teachers last year to negotiate a cash settlement with the Government. A settlement then would have helped to allay a considerable amount of the disquiet that was developing at grass roots level within the teaching profession. If a union ascertains by means of a ballot that over 80 per cent. of its members want industrial action to be taken, that is very significant. When such a union by a ballot obtains huge support for industrial action, and also has a tradition of trying to avoid taking industrial action whenever possible, the Government ought to take on board the fact that the reasons for this dispute are so deeply rooted that they must attempt to reach a settlement. To do so, the Government will need to throw overboard some of the obduracy of their approach.

There is quite obvious lack of trust between the Government and the teachers. On 25 March the Secretary of State for Education and Science gave me an answer which contained information relating to primary and secondary school teachers. It showed that, in constant terms, from the time of the Clegg review salaries had decreased in real terms. Teachers have seen an erosion of their standard of living and, something that worries them just as much, they feel that society lacks respect for their profession. If the Minister looks at the information, he will find that in 1980, for secondary school teachers, in constant terms, the value was £11,458, whereas the comparable level is now £10,365. That demonstrates the fall that has taken place.

It is equally interesting to note that the average pay in 1984 for a teacher in the secondary sector, including teachers who had been promoted, was £10,155. I am sure

that many hon. Members would be reluctant to accept a salary within that range. Therefore, the Government must answer the real worries of teachers, not just about their pay, but about their position in the league table for pay in three, four or five years' time. Their experience is that unless there is a substantial hitch-up from time to time their standards of pay will be compressed and hammered down. The Government have failed to realise that teachers have reached the end of their tether and can go no further.

The Government have changed their stance on a number of occasions and they have obscured the issue—probably for propaganda reasons—but they have not changed their cash stance. If the Government were to guarantee that the cash would be available to meet a negotiated settlement the teachers would consider their proposals, but they do not have much faith in a Government who have refused an independent pay review. The Government are saying that if terms are agreed with the teaching profession and the employers, they might not be willing to agree with them.

The Government suggest a two-stage settlement. The first is that the teachers should sign a blank cheque, abandon some conditions of service and enter into negotiations with the employers through the negotiating machinery. If a package were agreed between the teachers and the employers, that must meet with Government approval. The Government have carefully made it clear that they will not sanction any such agreement in advance. Having achieved the notional package, the teachers might find that it is shelved, as so many agreements have been in recent years.

If the Government want the teachers to negotiate and to avoid an independent pay review, they should come out from under their cloak of independence. They should accept that they are the paymasters and be prepared to negotiate direct with the teachers. The teachers would then know exactly where they stood. However, the Government are standing back and are not prepared to guarantee that they will meet in full any package which is agreed. In those circumstances, the teachers would be rash to become involved.

Mr. Malone: Is the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson) saying that he would be happy to accept direct negotiations between the teachers and the Government? If he is, it is an important modification of the position which he stated previously.

Mr. Wilson: I am saying that the teachers do not trust the Government to come up with the cash to sustain any package agreed as a result of negotiations. If the Government want the teachers to change their stance on the independent pay review, the Minister must say that he is prepared to meet the cash proposals resulting from that review.

The teachers would be ill advised to enter into negotiations with the Government on both pay and conditions at the same time. Pay and conditions must be considered separately. The urgent need is to settle the pay issue. Once that is settled, it would be appropriate for the Government or the employers to negotiate conditions. It is not desirable for the two issues to be conjoined.

One of the reasons for the teachers' lack of trust in the Government is that the Secretary of State has, within the Scottish budget, insufficient money to meet the pay claim that would be accepted under an independent review. By refusing an independent pay review the Government have underlined that fear. The Secretary of State has already had to readjust his priorities on two occasions in the last financial year, and he would have to approach the Cabinet, well aware of the bounce-on effect on the Department of Education and Science, which also has a pay dispute on its hands. He would have to extract the money from the Treasury, and that is unlikely to be successful. I do not think that the Secretary of State for Scotland has sufficient clout within the Cabinet to obtain the money necessary to settle the dispute.

In the last few years, pay has declined in real terms. The adjusted curriculum following reports by Munn and Dunning has resulted in additional work for teachers, disciplinary problems because of the phasing out of corporal punishment and composite classes. Teachers can see the education system crumbling because of lack of care and attention.

Mrs. McCurley: Part of the problem is that teachers wish to negotiate pay and conditions. They are complaining about terms and conditions, so how can the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson) divorce pay from conditions?

Mr. Wilson: I can easily divorce the two issues, because they are different. Pay has declined in real terms in the last few years. Teachers want that put right, and the Government must put it right if they want to sustain a good education system in Scotland and to provide proper education for our children. That is the primary issue.

Conditions can be more easily taken care of once the pay issue has been resolved. Teachers suspect that they will be asked to trade in many conditions of service, without any real advantage, simply because the Government refuse to make up their pay.

The blame for the dispute rests with the Government. If the Government had any political intelligence or sensitivity they would have seen the dispute approaching on the horizon. The Government have made many political blunders and errors in the last three or four months which have decimated their support and upset their supporters. They have made a mess of the teachers' dispute and caused problems for our children. The blame lies with them and they cannot escape it.

8.47 pm

Mrs. Anna McCurley (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): I am a former member of the teaching profession, a former member of a local education committee and a representative in the House of the Scottish Secondary Teachers Association. I am deeply saddened by the strike. I am extremely worried about the effect that it will have on educational prospects for thousands of youngsters. I am also worried about the effect that it will have on employment prospects for those youngsters.

When I heard the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) talk about the care and concern of the teaching profession tonight I was sickened, because only a couple of days ago I read an article which said that the EIS was planning to take the strike into 1986. That means not just one year but three years in which children's education is disrupted in terms of the national examination syllabus. Three separate sets of children will be disrupted.

The dispute is serious and tragic. I do not use the words "teaching profession" lightly. We must consider what

[Mrs. Anna McCurley]

professionalism means. Scotland is the only country in the United Kingdom where the teaching profession can be called a profession. It has a professional body which governs the conduct of its members—rather like the General Medical Council. I think it is right that as a consequence the people of Scotland expect professional standards from their teachers.

Historically, if not traditionally, teachers are poorly paid. All servants of the state in vocational employment usually are. In the 1930s, teachers were asked, if not required, by the national Government in an economic crisis to take a cut in salaries. One of the reasons no doubt was that women dominated the profession in Scotland. That is probably why they were low paid. In the 1930s and before, women were historically forced to choose between their vocation and marriage, and primary education was dominated by women. It is only in recent years that the colleges of education have granted access to males in the primary section on certification courses.

In the 1970s, the influence of male teachers expanded, and I expect, with the profession then bread-winner dominated, that is why there has been a demand for an increase in salaries. I am certainly not opposed to that. As a former member of the profession, I remember with horror receiving my first pay cheque and realising how lowly paid I was and that the status of teacher must also be very lowly.

However, the Goverment, and particularly the Secretary of State, have shown a considerable respect for the profession. Under the aegis of the Secretary of State, the profession has moved to an all-graduate intake. The professional now has to take a degree before he or she becomes a teacher or is part of a degree course.

The demand before the House is to bring the salaries of teachers back into line with the standards that prevailed in the mid-1970s. In the mid-1970s, possibly after the Clegg recommendations, teachers gained a little in standards of pay. Since then, it is not surprising that the little that they gained in the 1970s has been eroded because, upon receiving a reasonable pay increase, they were immediately hit by inflation under a Labour Government, indeed, under a Lib-Lab pact, which affected us all, and if a teacher could not survive with 27 per cent. inflation it is not surprising.

The present strike is the culmination of the frustration of the teaching profession. I have spoken to enough teachers to know that. Teachers want to be given finances commensurate with their status, and with that I agree wholeheartedly. However, today, on a picket line in Gourock outside a hotel, when I was with my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science, an unattractive and unacceptable section of the teaching profession reared its head: a thoroughly unkempt, untidy mob appeared spewing out invective, with a liberal helping of four-letter words. If I were the general secretary of the Educational Institute of Scotland, I would try to get their heads put in a bucket, because I would not like these people to represent my profession. I would attempt to hide them if I was trying to elicit sympathy from the public. It was a disgrace to the many hundreds of educated, cultivated, respectable and responsible people in the teaching profession who have daily care and charge of our children. Many, in fact nearly all, of these teachers are highly dedicated and have a great love of children.

In the beginning of the strike, I believed that it did not have——

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) *rose*——

Mrs. McCurley: I will give way to the hon. Gentleman when I have finished this point.

In the beginning, I believed that the strike was not politically motivated. I believed, like others, that it was a natural response to a sorry situation.

Mr. Foulkes: May God bless!

Mrs. McCurley: I have heard the hon. Gentleman speak in the House. I did not realise that I was also to hear him at prayer. I think that it would be more appropriate if he took himself and his prayers elsewhere and, believe me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, he needs all the prayers that he can get.

Not one Opposition Member who has spoken in the debate has condemned selective action but, by jove, if it happened to Opposition Members in another situation they would soon be bleating about it. They would probably have more influence—or perhaps not, I do not know—over the teaching profession. One of the reasons why Opposition Members are particularly thin on the ground tonight and are particularly silent on some aspects of the debate is that they have no sympathy with the teachers.

Mr. Foulkes *rose*——

Mrs. McCurley: One reason why they have no sympathy for the teachers is that some of the teachers on the general management committees are the biggest nuisances to some Opposition Members that one could possibly find.

Mr. Foulkes *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. The hon. Lady has made it clear that she is not giving way.

Mrs. McCurley: Another matter that Opposition Members have failed to discuss in the debate is the irresponsible way in which the cadet branches of their party were responsible for a disgraceful scene in George square, Glasgow the other day, where they incited children of under 14 to go out on to the streets and riot, and they are proposing to do the same again. Using children is quite immoral, and the way in which the strike has been organised in certain constituencies against certain Conservative Members of Parliament is also immoral.

Mr. George Robertson: The hon. Lady seems to be drawing a distinction between certain members of the teaching profession, in particular those who were lobbying her and her hon. Friend today, and the vast majority of the profession who she says, as I underlined, are concerned and dedicated teachers. Will she bear in mind the fact that there was a ballot in the dispute, and that over 80 per cent. of the teachers, which must include the vast majority of the concerned, respectable, responsible members of the profession, felt it necessary to vote for strike action? How will she take that on board?

Mrs. McCurley: One reason was that the profession was in a white heat and ignored the prospect of a negotiated settlement. The offer was overridden by the

union. Perhaps the teachers thought that there was some advantage in going along with their union to press the point home to the Government. The Government have taken aboard the message about the poor pay of teachers and offered a way out, but the EIS has singularly failed to take it up.

My union — I have pleasure in representing the Scottish Secondary Teachers Association in the House— and other unions are as concerned as the EIS to obtain a solution. The problem is that the members of the EIS appear to be led by the nose by an unrepresentative bunch of deadheads, one of whom in 1961 was voted the most boring man at Glasgow university, and he went on to be voted the most boring man there in 1962 and 1963. For him the strike represents the zenith of his political career to date. [HON. MEMBERS: "Name him."] There are many ways to skin a cat. That member of the Educational Institute of Scotland has chosen a way that will serve to furnish him with the ultimate patronage of a safe Labour parliamentary seat, or perhaps even a higher and greater honour in another House. But he does not seem to be concerned about the future of his members.

The Secretary of State for Scotland has convinced me on many occasions that he is prepared to negotiate with the teachers. There is a flaw in the independent pay review body argument. It is that if somebody outwith the profession—not understanding the nuances involved—struck a rate that the Government could not accept because it was miles above average pay settlements, how would a settlement then be possible? There would be an impasse. The independent pay review body idea has been presented, not only to the profession but to the general public, as a seductively simple-sounding answer.

I want teachers to be paid a salary commensurate with their status. They have said that they now have a more complex job. Negotiations could prove that. People in other professions have obtained negotiated settlements by proving what they had been claiming. The teachers could do the same. I would prefer the Scottish Joint Negotiating Committee to be in a position to negotiate terms and conditions. I say that in the belief that the cause for which the teachers are fighting is just and that they could prove it to the Government and public alike.

This is the opportunity for the teachers to prove their claim that they have a more complex and exacting job. Nor should we forget that they have constant in-service training, which occupies more of their time than used to be the case. If the position was presented properly to the teachers by their union's leadership, the teachers would accept it.

As for the bone fide status of the Secretary of State in this too emotive situation, it must be spelled out unequivocally to the majority of teachers in the EIS that the intransigence of their leaders is leading to an NUM-like disaster. The Secretary of State's door is open for negotiations.

For the sake of the future of the children of Scotland and the profession in general, this strike must end soon. If we took the so-called party politics out of the strike, it would end soon. I urge Opposition Members to accept that if the teachers are led up the same path as Arthur Scargill led his miners, the same will happen to them as is happening now to Scargill.

9.4 pm

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): I regarded the speech of the hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mrs. McCurley) as a sad effort. She seemed to be endeavouring to be like the Prime Minister. Such an attitude does not help the situation that we are discussing. The strike has not been caused, nor is it being prolonged, by party politics. If the hon. Lady believes that it is, she is mistaken. It is the result of a large number of teachers believing that they have a genuine grievance and being committed to their cause. It is not a conspiracy involving the Labour party, the Socialist Workers party or anyone else. It is based upon the commitment of a very large number of teachers. That is the truth of the matter.

I am anxious that some progress should be made in the dispute. I accept that no one would argue that disruption in schools is welcome. No one wants it. The only question that we can consider productively is why it has occurred. We can then see whether there are ways of making progress. Disruption will harm teachers and pupils in the long run, and it will also harm parents. No one would argue on that point.

I do not think that anyone would argue about the basic cause. There has been a severe slippage in teachers' pay over the last few years. Anyone who looks around his own contemporaries and considers the position of those who are teachers and those who have gone into comparable professions will realise that the teachers have done badly. Despite the big rise that was given at the time of Houghton and the boost as a result of Clegg, if I were a teacher who had been teaching in a secondary school in Scotland for eight years and was earning £8,000, I would have considerable problems with my mortgage and family expenses.

That problem has been compounded by the fact that teachers have had to respond, as they were willing and anxious to do, to the Munn and Dunning reforms to the 16 to 18 action plan. They had to cope with that professional challenge at a time when the personal resources which they had to deploy were inadequate and when funding for the education sector was declining.

I do not want to rehearse the arguments in the Scottish Grand Committee on Monday, when we considered what had happened to education finance, but if we compare 1984-85 with 1985-86, we see that there will be a drop in cash terms from £1,763 million to £1,696 million. In real terms, that is substantial. There are counter arguments about declining pupil rolls. No doubt we could argue for many an hour and many a day, and probably will, but if we consider the projections for the next three years to 1987-88, we see that an increase of only £7 million on a budget which stood at £1·7 billion means that in real terms there will be considerable difficulties. The repeated message from Conservative politicians is that there can be more pay for teachers, but that will mean fewer teachers and an increasingly swift deterioration in the pupil-teacher ratio. That is one of the reasons why there has been so much discontent.

What are we to do about it, and how can we make progress? The hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde made one useful suggestion. To her credit, it puts her out on a limb almost in comparison with her colleagues. As I understood what she said, she believes that the Scottish Joint Negotiating Committee should get on with the job and should be able to arrange a settlement.

[Mr. Donald Dewar]

I took that from her remarks, but I may have been wrong. She went on to imply that when it had reached agreement and negotiated a settlement, that should be it, and it should be implemented. If the Government were prepared to say that—of course, the Government have places on the Scottish Joint Negotiating Committee—that would be an enormous incentive to start the kind of negotiations which the Government say they want but which they have done very little positively to encourage.

The Government have more or less said to the teachers, "Go to the joint negotiating committee, negotiate with the employers' side and reach an agreement, but we give no guarantee that we will consider the result favourably. If you come up with something that we regard as a good buy for us, we may consider trying to find additional resources." There is nothing more than a rather dismissive suggestion which in the context of the way in which the dispute has been conducted by the Secretary of State has fairly been interpreted as an invitation to negotiate a settlement which will bring about a substantial deterioration in the conditions of work and which will attract little additional cash from the Secretary of State.

If the negotiating committee, with the Secretary of State's representatives, could reach an agreement, the Secretary of State should indicate his intention of considering it. I do not suggest that he should give a cast-iron guarantee that he would honour it all. That would be asking a lot, because he would not know what would be in it. If he would make genuine, favourable noises about trying to reach a settlement, rather than the luke warm, discouraging noises that we have heard, that would be helpful.

I shall give an example to the Under-Secretary of State, who is looking puzzled. During the last Scottish Question Time I asked the Secretary of State whether the Scottish Joint Negotiating Committee could come up with not just a formula which would buy extra money by handing over terms and conditions of employment, but a package which included an improvement in conditions. The right hon. Gentleman said that I had raised an important point, but the best that he could manage was to say that he was neutral at that stage. That is typical of what has happened.

Mr. Barry Henderson (Fife, North-East): The hon. Gentleman seems to be saying that there is much to be said for going for the Scottish joint negotiating procedure. The hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson) took a similar line. If the only objection to going through that procedure is the fear that the Secretary of State might not fulfil what came out of it, the time to kick, scream and shout and perhaps even take disruptive action would be after that procedure was followed. Surely disruptive action at this stage cannot be right.

Mr. Dewar: The teachers want an independent pay review, and I have a great deal of sympathy for that aim. The Secretary of State has said that it is impossible. I am trying to take a reasonably conciliatory approach—judging by the speeches of Conservative Members, that has not been a mark of this debate so far—to ascertain whether we can make progress and find common ground.

If the Secretary of State is genuine in saying that we should use the established negotiating position—I take it that the hon. Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Henderson) agrees—the right hon. Gentleman should do something positive to encourage that. The EIS executive split 13:13 on such a proposal. The Scottish national council of the EIS was summoned to meet on the following Monday. Clearly, there was a possibility at that stage that the EIS would follow that road and watch what happened.

What happened was that there was extraordinary disarray among ministerial ranks, with displays of different lines, approaches and degrees of softness and hardness. Ultimately, a ridiculous series of demands were put out at that crucial time by the Secretary of State, demanding that schools should open at unusual times, that subsidy should be given to private tuition, and so on. I could only interpret that as an attempt to set up a series of standards whereby it could be alleged that local authorities were failing to do their duty, thus enabling the powers under section 70 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 to be used. Those powers allow the Secretary of State to take action against local authorities for failing to carry out their duty as education authorities.

I am trying to find some rationale in the actions of a Government who are trying to tempt teachers to move from an independent pay review towards genuine negotiation. The Government's effort was amazingly maladroit, and that is the most charitable thing that I can say about it. Our message is that we believe that the teachers have a valid pay claim. That is self-evident on examining the facts. The teachers should have an independent pay review. If there is to be an entrenched struggle—none of us wants this—and if the Government are genuinely to put an offer on the table, the offer must be put forward in a spirit that is attractive to the teachers so that they can consider it in the context of the harsh reality of the industrial dispute.

The Secretary of State has shown a hardening of attitude at all the vital moments, and the offer of which he boasted has turned out to be extraordinarily unattractive to the teachers whose interest he is trying to engage. The offer is not as attractive as Conservative Members try to make it sound.

I would be more impressed if the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Malone) were to say that he believes that a substantial pay increase should emerge from the negotiations. If the hon. Gentleman says, for example, that we cannot have an independent pay review, is he saying that the 12 per cent. increase for which teachers in England are asking is reasonable? Is the hon. Gentleman saying, as the hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde said, that the joint negotiating committee agreement should be honoured? Those are ways in which the deadlock could be broken if the Government are to be obstinate and take a stand against an independent pay review.

Mrs. McCurley: The hon. Gentleman is going soft.

Mr. Dewar: The hon. Lady has been shouting that I am going soft on this issue. I am not soft. I am genuinely interested in ensuring that progress is made. Until now, progress has been obstructed because of the obstinacy of Ministers. If we are to have an opening and turn from an entrenched civil war, which will disrupt our schools over a long period, there must be a much more positive and welcoming approach and recognition of the essential difficulties faced by teachers. If we had such an approach from Ministers, we would perhaps have the kind of progress that the Opposition want.

9.15 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Allan Stewart): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Malone) on his good fortune in obtaining first place in the ballot and on choosing as his subject an issue which all hon. Members recognise as being of major concern to pupils and parents and, indeed, to the population of Scotland in general. That concern has been expressed by hon. Members of all parties. I recognise that the concern of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) is genuine and that he was endeavouring to make a constructive speech.

Time is rather limited and I hope that hon. Members will recognise that it is simply not possible for me in this debate to respond to all the points that have been raised. This debate focuses on the effects of the action. The dispute itself has been discussed previously and the Secretary of State set out the Government's position very clearly in the Scottish Grand Committee yesterday.

May I say to my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, South, who expressed his sympathy for the teachers, and to the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson), who talked of the strong feelings of teachers, that it is precisely because we are sympathetic and appreciate those feelings that we suggested that the SJNC conduct a substantive review of pay and conditions of service. I must emphasise that the SJNC has a statutory responsibility for both areas, has conducted no such review in the past and has the expertise. That review could have taken place at any time, certainly since the Secretary of State pointed to the possibility. The SJNC could have completed its work by now. There could have been a settlement by now.

To those who say that the Government have been obstinate or unreasonable, I must point out that we emphasised again and again that the methods adopted by the SJNC for such a review were a matter for the SJNC, and that if it wanted separate working parties, that was acceptable to the Government.

In answer to a question from the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) about a particular method of approach, we indicated that that would have been acceptable to the Government.

Mr. Foulkes *rose——*

Mr. Stewart: I apologise to the hon. Member, but I have only five or six minutes left.

I must emphasise that the Secretary of State's offer remains open. This is an offer which has been made to no other group of public sector employees—the offer of considering a review and re-ordering expenditure priorities within existing plans if an attractive package is brought forward from the SJNC. But, of course, that offer becomes more difficult as time passes because decisions are made about expenditure.

It is important that we realise and appreciate the precise position adopted at this crucial stage in the dispute by the various parties. I spelt out the Government's position. The employers, the local authorities—and I must say to the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson) that I did not think from his speech that he thought that the employers really existed in this situation—accept that a rational dialogue within the SJNC on both pay and conditions is the best way forward. They put forward a particular formulation for that. That was acceptable to the Government as a way forward.

Opposition Members have talked in general terms about the teachers' unions, but it is a fact that two of the unions — the Scottish Secondary Teachers Association represented by my hon. Friend the Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mrs. McCurley), and the Professional Association of Teachers — have accepted and said publicly that it now makes sense to negotiate in this way. I understand that the position of the fourth union, the National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers is that negotiations should now start in the normal way on the 1985 pay round.

It is against that background that the Educational Institute of Scotland is continuing to maintain—as my hon. Friends the Members for Aberdeen, South and for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde emphasised to the House —that the strikes will go on next year and beyond. That is a no hope position, which the Head Teachers Association of Scotland was reported in the weekend press as describing as

"the EIS's bleak inflexibility in refusing to discuss conditions of service".

I emphasise that the employers have always wanted a link between pay and conditions.

My hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, South particularly mentioned the targeting of his constituency. The EIS has been open about its targeting of Conservative-held constituencies. That is a disgraceful tactic. It makes the dispute unique. Selected schools in the constituencies of Ministers and Back Benchers have been subjected to a sustained pattern of strike action. Some schools in my constituency and that of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State have been hit for three days a week for up to eight weeks each. That is a totally unfair and vindictive method of making a point, which harms people just because they happen to live in particular constituencies. This tactic of victimisation is unprecedented. To my knowledge, no trade union either in Britain or elsewhere has ever used the strike weapon to attack those who live in particular constituencies. The implications are most serious. I agree that such a tactic is an affront to democracy.

The campaign is cheap to operate, but I agreed with my hon. Friend the Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde when she said that the strike was losing the EIS public sympathy. As a nation, we do not like unfairness on such a scale, and the unfairness of the EIS action has been widely acknowledged. The Head Teachers Association of Scotland yesterday described targeting as indefensible. Even the EIS itself has accepted that targeting is unfair. I underline the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, South when he said that this form of action can and will achieve nothing. It is entirely counterproductive. We do not yield to blackmail. The right way is reasoned negotiation.

Strike action and disruption has spread on an intermittent basis throughout Scotland. It does not have the same effect as sustained strike action. The EIS has also struck directly at this year's SCE examinations and, as has been said, it has attempted to cripple curricular reform.

The Government are doing everything possible to counter the effects of the teachers' dispute, particularly to minimise the difficulties for pupils in examination years, as my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, South emphasised. We are also doing everything possible in relation to considering the appropriate future for the standard grade, and in pointing out local authorities'

[Mr. Stewart]

obligations. As the House knows, we have been asked to explore action under section 70 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980.

In conclusion, I must say to the House that the management and two of the unions involved are prepared to——

In accordance with MR. SPEAKER'S *Ruling—[Official Report,* 31 January 1983; Vol. 36, c. 19]—*the debate was concluded.*

Mr. Bruce: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wonder whether you agree that in a debate on such an important subject as this, which arouses considerable interest and concern throughout Scotland, such an issue cannot be fully discussed when a party representing one quarter of the electorate in Scotland has not had an opportunity to contribute. In view of that, I ask whether you will use your discretion in future to allow the issue to be debated in full, for example if an application is made for an Adjournment debate on this subject by myself or one of my hon. Friends.

Mr. Speaker: That is a hypothetical question. The hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) had better try his luck.

The debate has lasted for an hour and a half, and, although I have only just taken my place, I note that only four Back Benchers were called during that hour and a half. As the longest Front Bench speech lasted for only 11 minutes, I conclude that some of the Back Benchers must have been rather greedy.

Arts (Funding)

9.25 pm

Mr. Francis Maude (Warwickshire, North): I am sorry that my time will trample upon the tender sensitivity of the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce).

On the last occasion when I spoke in a debate on a Consolidated Fund Bill, I rose to my feet at about 3.30 am. I am delighted by the fact that today I am starting to speak only three or four hours after most people have finished work and gone home.

This debate is to be about public funding of the arts. It may be helpful if I set out at the outset the basis of my arguments. I am in favour of the arts, but opposed to direct Government subsidy of the arts. I am not moved especially by the idea of saving Government expenditure, although I am not indifferent to that consideration in a number of other respects. I believe that direct Government subsidy has a malign effect upon the arts and that only when we move away from it will we witness a real regeneration in the arts in this country.

I know that we shall hear some drearily predictable remarks from the Opposition about Tory Philistinism. I do not wish to parade any credentials that I may have in terms of being an art lover, a theatre-goer or an opera-goer. Since 9 June 1983 my opportunities to attend the theatre, the opera and so on have been somewhat reduced, but I do when I can.

This debate takes place at a time when a much wider debate is in progress in the country about how the Government should treat the arts. There have been loud cries about crisis and disaster in the arts. No superlatives have been too far over the top for some of the protagonists. At times, one might have thought that a battle was taking place.

What are the dimensions of the so-called crisis or disaster in the arts? My noble Friend the Minister for the Arts has set out in another place the amount of public money devoted to the arts. In 1985-86 it will be £272 million. That is a real increase of 18 per cent. since the Government came to office, and this year's increase is above the rate of inflation. A further £250 million is spent on broadcasting — as a subsidy to the arts in broadcasting. That is not direct public spending, but nearly every other country would include that figure as public spending on the arts. In total, therefore, about £500 million is spent on subsidising the arts in this country.

Furthermore, the arts now receive more in Government subsidy than in voluntary contributions from individuals. Among voluntary contributions, I of course include box office receipts. That peculiar situation should give rise to deep unease about the state of the business. It means that people paying income tax at about one third of average earnings are subsidising the pleasures of those who, by and large, are in much higher income brackets. That should be a source of deep worry, especially to the class warriors in the Opposition. I shall be interested to hear what they have to say about that.

During the past 10 years there has been a rebirth of sponsorship of the arts. It used to be called patronage, and came from individuals. In the rebirth, the patronage comes principally from companies, so we are now required to call it sponsorship. The attitude of the arts establishment towards it is ambivalent to say the least. In some sections it is downright hostile. Private money is sometimes

regarded as tainted money—the proceeds of capitalism —which must somehow detract from the sanctity of the artistic endeavour. Nobody should underestimate the extent to which that attitutude prevails in the arts establishment. It is thoroughly dangerous and has had an enormously bad effect on how the arts establishment is run.

My feelings about the malign effects of public subsidy of the arts was summed up by one of our most distinguished contemporary novelists, Mr. Kingsley Amis, when he wrote to *The Times* on 21 February as follows:

"Subsidy damages art by tending to foster irresponsibility, showiness, cliquism and self-indulgence in the artist. At the same time the public's power to choose what art it wants, by financial pressure on the artist, is dangerously weakened. And whatever might be said about public taste it is better than the taste of the people the subsidised artist is likely to set out to please or impress: critics, colleagues, friends, experts, bureaucrats."

That sums up in a masterly way the malign effects of direct subsidy of the arts. The consequence of 40 years of increasing art subsidy has been that the arts have become introverted. They have yielded to the temptation to insulate themselves from their audience and communities. That is understandable. When the principal source of money is the Government, the arts lobby and establishment increasingly turns in on itself as it becomes the corridors of power within which that money is dispersed. That is unsatisfactory.

Another of the malign effects is that subsidy leads to the imposition of taste on the public—by committees and drama panels. It is unsatisfactory that the decision about which theatre should receive money is made by a drama panel. The matter should be decided by those who have the money to give. Have we had a significantly better arts scene since 1945, when the Arts Council was created?

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): Yes.

Mr. Maude: Will the years 1945 to 1985 be seen by posterity as a golden age of the arts in Britain? We have an artistic heritage which started somewhat before 1945, and it will continue beyond 1985, no matter what the extent of the subsidy that we give.

Mr. Michael Meadowcroft (Leeds, West): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the arts have always been subsidised in one form or another, whether by royal patronage or individuals? Because business and the landed gentry have become so few and far between, the state has been prepared to help. Surely that is the same as has always happened.

Mr. Maude: The hon. Gentleman anticipates my argument. We should encourage sponsorship by individuals and by companies to replace direct involuntary subsidy by taxpayers. I do not see there being a net gain to the Treasury at the end of the exercise. I see the direct subsidy being reduced at the same rate as that at which tax incentives take effect and increase direct sponsorship of the arts.

I know the argument against sponsorship. It is said there would be sponsorship only of enterprises which are safe, cautious and establishment. Many people were exercised about the pile of bricks at the Tate. It did not exercise me. I did not see the bricks, but I have seen other piles of bricks and I did not understand the point. However, I do not dispute that that may have been a genuine artistic activity. From such experiments, genuinely worthwhile artistic enterprises can and do emerge. However, I wonder whether it is right for such experiments to be subsidised by the involuntary contributions of taxpayers. The sort of outcry that that type of exhibit generates is likely to make it much more difficult to sustain public subsidy in the long run, to lead to a clamping down, and to a much more cautious attitude by the arts lobby.

The other aspect of subsidy which interests me is the relationship that develops between the arts establishment and the Government. It was rather uncomfortable at the beginning when the arts lobby wheedled the Government for money. In the 1960s it became a comfortable relationship — some people would say much too comfortable—because the Government provided plenty of money for the arts, and the public did not fit into the equation. Now, wheedling has given way to an arrogant assumption by the arts establishment that if they call themselves artists they have an automatic call on the public's involuntary contributions. That is unacceptable.

One of the most strident exponents of that arrogance has been Sir Peter Hall. During the past few weeks we have witnessed that increasingly. He has resorted to ruthless blackmail, threatened to close the whole of the National theatre if he does not get his way, and put in great anxiety the 100 people whose jobs depend on the Cottesloe theatre continuing in existence.

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): Nonsense.

Mr. Maude: The hon. Gentleman obviously has not seen the article in *The Sunday Times* of 17 February, which flowed directly from Sir Peter's remarks. He said that if the Greater London council carried out its threat to withdraw its annual grant, he would close the theatre, and that the reason why it was so difficult for him to manage was that the building cost a lot to run. He said:

"the National's budget has been distorted by the building's £2·8 million running costs."

Whose fault is that? He was a member of the building committee when the theatre was being planned, was responsible for much of the outfitting of it, and must bear his share of the responsibility. Everyone else must work with the buildings that they have. Why should the National theatre be exempt from that?

A consequence of the arrogance in the arts establishment has been its tendency to build gigantic grandiose palaces, some would say, to indulge its vanity. If, in the fullness of time, it comes to regret that because the costs are more than it thought, my sympathy is lacking. I await the day when the Royal Shakespeare Company regrets its grandiose expansion into the Barbican. It will not be long before we hear complaints about the expensive costs of running it.

The National theatre has a total income of about £14·4 million, of which more than half comes in direct public subsidy. That is not a bad deal. In every base year except one it has increased ahead of inflation. I do not wish to make too much complaint about Sir Peter. My right hon. and noble Friend the Minister for the Arts said in a recent debate in another place that we should have a plurality of revenue for the arts. Sir Peter is a good example of that. On top of his salary as a part-time director of the National theatre, he is director of productions at Glyndebourne and has been a producer and director at Bayreuth. I make no complaint about that. He might be thought to be an embodiment of the virtues of entrepreneurial Britain,

[Mr. Maude]

seizing opportunities and advancing himself. Many would say that it is splendid stuff, but it tends to make one a little less than sympathetic when he continues his pontificating humbug about the so-called dismantling of the subsidised theatre. He would do well for his sake, as much as for the sake of the cause that he espouses, if he left the public platform, for which he is frankly unsuitable, and returned to the theatre, of which he is an adornment.

One is forced to ask: is there a need for direct subsidy for the theatre to continue? We must ask whether there is a need for subsidies of more than 50 per cent. The Everyman theatre in Liverpool manages to do business in a deprived area on a much smaller subsidy. The Royal Exchange theatre in Manchester, which also has a much smaller subsidy, produces experimental, avant garde and extremely fine works.

Mr. Mark Fisher (Stoke-on-Trent, Central): When has the hon. Gentleman been there?

Mr. Maude: I have been there several times and have seen many good productions.

The west end theatres have survived without subsidy successfully for many years. When we debate this subject, many people say that the subsidised theatre is essential because it brings tourists to the country and is a great money-earner. Of course, that is right. It generates revenue, but the unsubsidised west end theatres generate just as much revenue. Indeed, they generate more revenue because they do not have the original public subsidy to begin with. Some argue that the west end theatre is fertilised by productions from the subsidised theatre. Of course, that is right. The argument is that if we cut off subsidised theatre, we cut off that fertilisation. I do not accept that, because the west end theatre has a product to sell. If it cannot get new and good quality productions from the subsidised sector, it will develop those productions from elsewhere. It has something to sell, and it must have products. I have no doubt that the reduction of the subsidy to theatres would have no bad effect on the ability of west end theatres to continue in business.

What of other theatres which can survive without subsidy? For example, Glyndebourne survives completely without subsidy, except for a small subsidy for its touring operation. It has one or two new productions every festival, which compares favourably with the heavily subsidised Covent Garden and the Coliseum. The Chichester festival is also completely unsubsidised. It is successful, and is never shy of putting on new productions which test the frontiers of the arts. In recent years there has been an enormous growth in privately run, specialised museums, which is a development of sponsorship and of commerciality in the arts.

As a replacement for direct subsidy, I should like to see tax incentives to encourage individuals and companies to increase their sponsorship of the arts. This has increased from virtually nothing 10 years ago to quite a substantial proportion. However, the proportion of private sponsorship to public subsidy in Great Britain is almost exactly the reverse of the situation in the United States. In the United States it is roughly 10 to one, but in this country it is about one to 10. This happens in the United States because tax incentives are offered.

The Select Committee on Education and the Arts suggested concessions on private sponsorship three years ago. Eventually, in January last year, the Government produced their response to that suggestion. Effectively, they said that this could not be done and should not be done. The reasons are fairly sketchily set out, but they are worth looking at. They raised a number of interesting points. The Government said:

> "To exempt business companies from tax on a percentage of their profits on donations to the arts would be a concession that it would be difficult and inequitable to confine to the arts."

That is nonsense. In the United States it is done perfectly successfully. As for how difficult it would be to justify confining it to the arts, that is a matter of pragmatism. It is acceptable to raise money to use as tax concessions to act as a catalyst to encourage certain desirable activities. This may not be necessary in the long-term, but it is necessary in the short term to develop this activity.

The Government's answer went on to say:

> "Moreover, the gain to the arts would not necessarily be in respect of a wide range of deserving cases, while the loss of revenue would mean substantial falls in the substantial sums within the Government's direct control."

That is not the robust voice of my right hon. and noble Friend the Minister for the Arts. That is the authentic voice of the arts establishment, which sums up in a sentence all that is worst about the system of direct subsidy to the arts.

The gain to the arts

"would not necessarily be in respect of a wide range of deserving cases"—

Who is to decide that? Is it to be the drama panel of the Arts Council? What a poor fist it has made of that in the past. Why should companies not decide which should be deserving cases, or the audiences? Are we to assume that the drama panel of the Arts Council, the committee sitting isolated from the public, is a better judge of what is a deserving case than the public? That is an intolerably arrogant attitude.

The Government's reply said:

"the loss of revenue would mean substantial falls in the sums within the Government's direct control."

If that is the result, good, so much the better. We want to see much more control over the way in which money goes to the arts in the hands of companies which can make decisions and of the public who take decisions to go and fill seats to see performances.

The argument set out sketchingly in the paper put out by the Office of Arts and Libraries does not meet the case. It has dismissed sponsorship lightly, but this matter would repay much closer consideration. I hope that when my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary winds up the debate he will hold out some hope that the Government will reconsider this matter as the only long-term solution to this problem.

The argument is that sponsorship will always go to the safe and cautious projects, but that has not been shown to be the case. Initially it was so, and was bound to be, but it is an activity that is developing. As it becomes more and more ingrained in society, and into the business community that it is a good thing to do to sponsor the arts, sponsorship will become more and more adventurous. There are a number of encouraging examples of business sponsoring adventurous projects. For example, BP gives substantial subsidy to the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, which is not a particularly cautious or unadventurous project. It is good to see a big establishment, a multinational company, going in for that. IBM sponsors the Scottish Museum of Modern Art. Again, that is a good development. The award scheme run by the Association for Business Sponsorship of the Arts and the *Sunday*

Telegraph singles out imaginative and adventurous schemes. There is a growing tendency for sponsorship to move away from safe and cautious art, which will always predominate. If there are signs that private sponsorship is moving into more adventurous areas, that must be welcomed.

Direct subsidy of the arts is not the only aspect that worries me. The Treasury accepts works of art and property in lieu of tax. Parliament imposes capital transfer tax, thus forcing people to sell their properties to pay the tax, in lieu of which the Government accept works of art for the nation. I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave) will make representations to the Treasury about the malign effect of this tax on the arts generally. The redistributive effect of capital transfer tax is negligible, its yield is slight, its collection cost is heavy, but its indirect effect upon the arts is considerable. Abolition of capital transfer tax would not only discourage the export of works of art and reduce Government intervention, but would open the way for wider patronage of the arts by individuals. There would then be a return to the occasionally eccentric, occasionally dotty patronage of the wilder types of artistic endeavour that took place in the past. It would be better if such patronage came from private individuals rather than from the public purse.

I hope that my hon. Friend will consider favourably the introduction of tax concessions for sponsorship of the arts and that eventually the abolition of capital transfer tax will revolutionise the funding of the arts. Eventually I should like taxes to be so low that the public could exercise their own choice about how they spend their money. That would be much more desirable than the extraction of involuntary contributions from taxpayers, which amount to one third of average earnings, thus forcing them to subsidise against their will those who are usually much better off. I hope that my hon. Friend will consider this point.

9.53 pm

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): I had intended to be brief and I still intend to be brief. I want to deal specifically with funding, but it would be quite wrong if I did not say a word or two about the extraordinary speech of the hon. Member for Warwickshire, South (Mr. Maude). It is unbelievable that anybody in Britain can say that the period from the mid-1940s onwards has been the worst ever period for British art, given the background of Olivier, Richardson, Ashcroft, Gielgud, Redgrave, and, secondly, that there should be a substitution for public funding which is accountable to a very large number of people. The alternative is private sponsorship.

The hon. Member put forward two arguments for private sponsorship. The first was that it would be chosen by individuals. The mind boggles at the the thought of Rupert Murdoch in charge of the choice of works of art in this country. That is what it would amount to. Secondly, the hon. Gentleman says that private sponsorship has proved to be adventurous because it has put up money for the Edinburgh Festival Fringe.

As the man who started the Edinburgh Fringe, I am pleased about that, but in the initial years no such money was forthcoming for our productions. No money is being given for the present production of the play about the miners, "The Garden of England". When that comes, we might talk.

Such nonsense can be equalled only by the Minister for the Arts in his infamous speech in the House of Lords when he said that there had been an 18 per cent. increase in real terms in arts funding since the Government came to office. The funding and the figures are important. The Minister for the Arts claimed that the arts had received an 18 per cent. increase since 1978-79. He claimed that on television, in an argument with Peter Hall and others, and in the House of Lords. I assume that he intended to cover the Tory period in office.

The year 1978-79 was a curious year to choose. It was the last year of the Labour Government and therefore refers to a Labour programme. I am curious about why the Minister for the Arts should have sought some spurious credit. The answer is even more curious. In that year there was a computer strike and £6 million from the Labour programme was transferred to the following year's programme. About 5 per cent. of the total was therefore paid in the following year, thus producing an artificially low figure for 1978-79 and an equally high jump in the following year. That means that the 18 per cent. claim can be reduced by more than one third in real terms. The claim is nonsense, but it reveals creative accounting by an Arts Minister who was once a Treasury Minister. The claim is strange because, according to the Minister for the Arts, public expenditure is, by definition, evil. The Government say that all public spending is bad and that it must be cut. It is strange that they should take credit for a Labour Government spending programme.

Within one month of the general election in 1979, the Government started to cut money for the arts. Within a month they cut the programme which they inherited from us by 2 per cent. Well over 10 per cent. of that 18 per cent. was spent in a single year—in 1982-83, the year before the election. The 18 per cent. figure is the combined result of our actions, of the computer strike and of the 1983 election.

The Government's first action after that general election was again to cut the arts budget. To be fair, that did not take place within a month. It took two or three months. In October the Government cut the arts programme on which they fought the election. Two elections were successfully over, and two cuts faced the arts world. So much for Government claims about total spending. The claim is nonsense.

Two matters are important. We are dealing with a tiny —some would say mean—overall budget for the arts, libraries and museums. Therefore, any single major item can immediately and adversely affect others. For example, this coming year alone necessary expenditure on the British Library of over £7 million will take half the apparent planned increase in cash terms.

Many museums and galleries such as the National gallery and the Victoria and Albert museum are in difficulties. The increased cost of necessary repairs to such museums and galleries will be three times the rate of inflation in the coming year. That single aspect accounts for over 10 per cent. of the total Department budget.

I deal next with the immediate issue, to which the Minister for the Arts referred in scathing terms as the crisis in the arts. Any claimed increase in real terms for Arts Council spending in the Tory period of office suffers from the same spurious and creative accountancy as the overall budget for the Office of Arts and Libraries.

In 1983-84, after the pre-election mini-boom in arts funding, the old cycle was repeated—a cut in the arts. Then came the attempt to demonstrate that the national institutions were all profligate and inefficient spenders.

[Mr. Norman Buchan]

The Government tried to do this through the Priestley report, and it boomeranged, because they were wrong. Those institutions turned out to be more efficient than most of the capitalist organisations that the Minister has been praising. This error cost £3·5 million. The Government were determined that somebody else should pay for it. Instead of the Government paying for it, it was paid for by cutting what was made available to the rest of the arts. It turned out that the arts would have to pay for this.

Priestley became a camouflage. Whether from pique or from another burst of creative accountancy, the Government used Priestley to make a savage cut of 4 per cent. in real terms in the provision for the rest of theatre and music in Britain by claiming credit for fulfilling Priestley. With the inclusion of the extra amount in Priestley, there was still an overall cut. That in itself is a measure of what the arts have had to face. The effect only two years ago was a cut of 4 per cent. in real terms in the rest of the performing arts in Britain. It is a devastating figure for the arts world to sustain. The factor of over £4 million a year is applicable to last year, this year and next year.

As to the talk of an increase of £5 million, four fifths is coming out because of the pledge in Priestley which has been borne not by the Government directly but by the rest of the arts. Thus there is the continuing factor of the drop of 4 per cent. because Priestley has continued into 1984-85, when total art funding is virtually frozen in real terms. That is the reason for the crisis and why it is correct for Sir Peter Hall, Melvin Bragg, others and myself to say that there is a genuine crisis in the arts.

In the coming year, there is to be a new factor. On top of Priestley, there is "The Glory of the Garden". This developed a strategy for devolution of the arts, but without the funds to carry through the strategy. Three million pounds was allocated for the strategy and its development this year, when the total grant in real terms has been cut, even taking account of the Priestley money. The real problem is that the development will cost £3 million, which has not been provided, and it must therefore come from the existing art world.

It is not the Government who are paying for "The Glory of the Garden", but the rest of the arts. It is a repeat of the Priestley sleight of hand. To that £3 million must be added another £1 million of costs that have come out of the Arts Council budget because of the £600,000 properly allocated to Scotland to compensate for the loss of local authority funding following the implementation by the Government of the Stoddart report. Another £400,000 is to come out of arts expenditure to prepare for the running of the South Bank by the Arts Council following yet another piece of political pique and stupidity by the Government in seeking to abolish the Greater London council.

Taking these factors into consideration for last year, this year and next year, we are witnessing a cut in real terms of about 5 per cent. for the majority of the existing performing arts. That is serious, but the story does not end there—the worst is yet to come.

Great play has been made—correctly—of the value of the plurality of funding in the arts. The main source of funding in the arts other than central Government — indeed, greater than central Government — is local authorities. They gave 50 times as much money to the arts in 1981-82 as private sources. In 1984-85 they gave between 15 and 20 times as much. They are the main bulwark of support for the arts today and without them the arts would collapse.

We now know the depth of the crisis and the reason for the fear. In the same period about which the Conservatives boast — from 1978-79 to the present time — there has been a collapse of over 8·5 per cent. in local authority finance. The 5 per cent., in effective terms, from central Government, plus the 8 per cent. from local authority funding, proves the point.

We are only now beginning to appreciate the effects of cutting, capping and abolition. The Scottish experience shows how changes of this kind can drastically affect support funding for the arts. In total public spending there has been a real decrease in financial terms and a major decrease in effective terms.

Each day my post contains letters from companies throughout Britain which are in increasingly desperate straits. Today I received a letter from the director of a major music festival outlining anxieties about the festival. The British Council is worried about the general effects on the arts. Another letter tells me of a major British city that is anxious about the consequences of the Government's policy on library provision. From a group of young unemployed actors seeking to mount a new company comes a letter telling me about their fears. I suspect that many hon. Members with an interest in the arts receive similar letters.

We shall reverse the trend. We find it shameful that Britain should be at the bottom of the league in Europe in provision for the arts. The very existence of our national theatre is threatened. More important, we see being threatened the flourishing work that was done in the last decade or more by local communities, ethnic groups and local authorities. What has occurred has been a national scandal, and the trend must be halted and reversed before deeper damage is done.

With that in mind, I give a pledge. Bearing in mind the present level of central Government funding through the Arts Council, my intention is to double that amount within the first 12 months of taking office. That will be done either through direct central Government funding or through additional earmarked support to local authorities. I stress the latter point, because we recognise—I regret to have to say this—that the present leadership of the Arts Council has failed. Where they should have fought, they have surrendered. Where they should have spoken as advocates for the arts, they have acted as apologists for the Government.

We recognise, further, that if the principle of devolution of the arts—ill-thought out in "The Glory of the Garden"—is to be rescued and made effective, it must be through the strengthening of the regional and local control of funding. We shall therefore begin immediately on taking office the necessary structural changes in the funding of the arts to bring that about.

Next, I pledge that if the philosophy of the Conservatives in the arts is extended to charging for museums, galleries and so on, we shall reverse that process too, as we had to do on a previous occasion.

This is a philistine as well as a monetarist Government. Indeed, they are a philistine Government because they are monetarist. They cannot understand art in any terms but cash. They fail to understand the deeper value of art because they see it only in cash terms. We value the arts because we are committed to the arts. We recognise the

importance of public expenditure in relation to the regeneration of the economy as a whole, but we, who are concerned to change the world, recognise that the engine of change can be through the arts.

Shelley described poets as the unacknowledged legislators of mankind. We accept that. Marx once said:

"The Bourgeoisie erect statues to the great writers of the past. If they had ever read their books, they would have burnt them."

That is the difference between the two sides of the House. I am glad that we have had this opportunity—although it is no substitute for a major debate—to discuss the matter. We promise as quickly as possible to reverse the disastrous effects of this philistine Government on the arts in Britain.

10.9 pm

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): I listened to the first two speakers in the debate with total amazement. Government support for the arts should take three forms — subsidy by the Arts Council, tax relief and the encouragement of business sponsorship. These are not, as my hon. Friend the Member for Warwickshire, North (Mr. Maude) suggested, to be seen as alternatives; they can and should be complementary. We need all three.

The hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan) pretended that Government support for the arts has been cut. That is not so. The budget for the arts and libraries increased from £124 million in 1978-79, when his party went out of office, to £272 million for 1985-86, the year that is about to begin. That is a rise in real terms of 18 per cent. I do not accept the hon. Gentleman's figures. The increase for next year will be 5·8 per cent. I wish it could be more still. Anyway, it is slightly more than inflation. In London £16 million is to be made available to the Arts Council to make up for the abolition of the Greater London Council.

The arts are enormously important because of the way in which they enrich and enlarge people's lives and the enjoyment they give. Even if the arts are seen merely from an economic aspect, they are of tremendous value to Britain. The arts, the heritage and the monarchy, to which the heritage is linked, comprise the main attraction which draws people to Britain. Foreigners come here not for our weather but to see our old towns and cities, our historic houses, churches and cathedrals, our art galleries and museums, the royal family and everything to do with it, our theatres, concerts, opera and ballet.

The chairman of the Arts Council, Sir William Rees-Mogg, in a remarkable address earlier this month, said:

"The arts are to British tourism what the sun is to Spain . . . As British manufacturing declines, there must be investment in the expansion of invisible earnings; and the arts are an essential part of any rational policy for such investment."

He also said:

"The state also has important benefits in tourist revenue".

In a pamphlet published recently entitled "New Jobs from Pleasure" my hon. Friend the Member for Harrogate (Mr. Banks) wrote:

"Tourism is Britain's biggest growth industry. According to the English Tourist Board it employs about 1,300,000 people, has a turnover of £10,000 million and generated £4,150 million in foreign exchange earnings last year. It is creating more new jobs than any other industry—about 50,000 a year. Tourism is an unsung hero of the British economy."

Later he wrote:

"Fine art and drama continue to help make London one of the world's major tourist centres."

Indeed, London is the arts capital of the world; and there is a great deal else in the arts in other parts of the country.

We will be crazy if we do not continue to build on our strength. Last year 12 million visitors came to this country. The number is increasing. It could increase faster still. The arts need a little more pump priming by the Government. The budget of the Arts Council, which is the main instrument for support of the arts, was £100 million last year. That is only one thirteen hundredth part of public expenditure.

Mr. Maude: Does my hon. Friend accept that the subsidy, which exceeds other forms of revenue, is pump priming? It is a massive amount. It is more than private individuals give to the arts, including what is spent on actually going to see things.

Mr. Jessel: I do not accept that it is more than people pay for going to see things. My hon. Friend himself said that, apart from the National theatre, the London theatre, which is very buoyant, does not receive any subsidy.

Indeed, I could not agree with what he said in the main theme of his speech. He spoke in favour of business sponsorship. Everyone on this side of the House is in favour of business sponsorship of the arts. It has increased dramatically. It has multiplied tenfold over the last 12 years due to the excellent work of the Association of Business Sponsorship of the Arts. Business sponsorship is now £15 million a year, and there is scope for further increases. My hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Murphy) has made a special study of this matter. It is not realistic to say that business sponsorship could replace the subsidy. My hon. Friend the Member for Warwickshire, North has paid no attention to the amounts involved — £15 million from business sponsorship compared with £100 million from the Arts Council. The amount given by business cannot begin to reach the level of subsidy.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth), who I hope will catch your eye, Mr. Speaker, has made a special study of the tax aspect. I believe that people should be allowed tax relief for support of the arts just as they can, through deeds of covenant, obtain tax relief for their support of charities. This is done in the United States. I agree on this point with my hon. Friend the Member for Warwickshire, North. I hope that that theme will be developed during this debate.

10.15 pm

Mr. Michael Meadowcroft (Leeds, West): It is inevitable that, because of electoral exigencies, Alliance Members tend to make speeches only about matters on which they are party spokesmen. It is a great pleasure to be granted this minor indulgence and to speak personally.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Warwickshire, North (Mr. Maude) on introducing this subject. I had thought that I would make a different speech, but, having heard the hon. Gentleman, I thought that it would be worth while to put the opposite case. The hon. Gentleman and I come from different backgrounds—that is the fault of neither of us. I suspect that my experience of the arts differs from his. I fumbled my way, trying to find an outlet for art through my background and faced difficulties. No encouragement was given. I was not able to look at the kaleidoscope of different opportunities and naturally find a way to take advantage of them.

[Mr. Michael Meadowcroft]

Certain aspects of the arts are seen as legitimate, proper and valuable, though there is a strange dichotomy in the arts in class terms. For example, in the north, Gilbert and Sullivan is acceptable across the spectrum, but, by and large, grand opera is not; the brass band tradition is acceptable, but the ordinary concert hall is not necessarily acceptable. Apart from one occasion when I was given tickets to what were called the industrial concerts of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, I had never been to an orchestral concert in my life before coming to London some years later.

The same is true of other aspects of the arts. Jazz is acceptable in certain cultures, but playing in string quartets is not necessarily acceptable. There is a strange artificial division based on one's experience. Artificial boundaries are put around the arts, and they are detrimental and disturbing.

Some of our cities have taken on board the prospect of widening people's experience of the arts. Leeds has done a great deal to develop music education in schools. But unless children have something to go on to on leaving school, outlets and participation in music making will not be broadened. In a city such as mine most families cannot afford to purchase the instruments that their children will play. The instruments are provided at school, and the children do not have further access to them.

There is a type of pyramid in the arts. Hundreds of young people are helped — brilliantly at times — to express themselves. The pyramid begins to narrow as those with no great talent fall by the wayside. Suddenly, when the children leave school, the pyramid virtually disappears. Economic constraints and the problems faced by people—even those with talent—in continuing to use a musical instrument mean that few people are involved in the arts.

What worries me is that those young people often do not feel frustrated by it. They accept it as normal that once they have left school that aspect of their life disappears, and they do not bother to continue with it. It is a tremendous shame that we do not understand what happens in whole areas of our urban society, and for all I know in our suburban and rural societies.

One of the things that was crucial to my own experience of the arts was being a member of the Leeds city council when the Leeds Grand theatre and opera house was threatened with closure. The city, under a Conservative administration — I give Sir Frank Marshall, now Lord Marshall, full credit—stepped in and bought that theatre from the private owners to make sure that it continued. I was appointed, as a token Liberal representative from my own group, a director of that theatre. From that day, the whole panoply of what was possible in the arts was open to me because I was a part of that board.

Soon after that came the proposal to establish an opera company in Leeds—the Opera North company. Again, that was a tremendous seminal point in the experience of many people in Leeds. It was not that we needed Opera North suddenly to come and provide 10, 11 or 12 weeks of opera in the city. We could buy that in; we alwys had had Welsh national opera, Scottish national opera, English national opera and many other. We had even had the Dortmund opera company from our twin city.

The crucial difference was that, instead of just having week after week of opera which was well patronised, we had 60 or 70 musicians and 40 singers resident in the city. Suddenly they became part of the musical life of that city, straight out into the schools, the clubs, the pubs, the highways and byways. They taught and took on pupils. The staff producers gave assistance to the youth opera in the city. Suddenly the whole thing began to pick up and become much more vibrant because we had the opera company in the city.

Standing back from that and observing what happened was a tremendous experience. We suddenly realised that, by establishing an opera company in a city out of nowhere it was possible to create a tremendous new interest in the arts. It was always there; it was not something that had been absent; but it had never been catalysed, drawn out as it was thanks to the skill of the professional.

I have come to believe very deeply that some aspect of the arts can enliven every individual in our society. It may not be the same thing. For some it is the visual arts, for some it is music, for others it may be opera.

In my own city, one thing that has burgeoned amazingly in the last 10 years or so is dance. There was a time when only one ballet company could hope to fill the Grand theatre in Leeds. Then a second came and began to do very good business. The third company, the Ballet Rambert, could barely fill the Leeds playhouse at one time. Now it is packing the Grand theatre. Now we have the London Contemporary Dance packing the theatre.

Why is that? Is it because there has suddenly been a great interest in dance? No. It is because some brilliant people within the schools in the city have developed the skills that were always there. We have the Phoenix dance company, a group of black youngsters from the depths of Harehills in Leeds, who have now become one of the great star supported groups from the Arts Council. They also travel around the country. That is because the excellence of some small groups has developed interest in dance across the whole city, and the theatre is full for that as well.

The effect of drama and the theatre is not confined to the few. It is very interesting to look at the correlation between anti-social behaviour, violence and vandalism in Leeds and the expression that comes with the arts and see the change that makes. The school in the city that has the greatest involvement in theatre and drama is situated on a council estate in my constituency, simply because there was a headmaster there with the skill to draw from those students the expression so crucial to drama. That school now houses the drama course for the skilled students in the whole city. It is not by accident that things happen like that. It is because somebody has a vision and understands how to draw that expression from those people.

However, sad to say, if one looks at the audience profile for the major centres of excellence of the arts in Leeds, one does not find it broadly based across the whole city. The leafy suburbs of Leeds are where the audience is massively concentrated. That is not because it is only people in those areas who have the ability to appreciate different aspects of the arts; far from it. If only we could get people to those centres—to the playhouse, to the Grand theatre, to see the opera company and dance — I am sure that they would appreciate the arts as well.

The problem that I have with the hon. Member for Warwickshire, North is that he does not really understand the problem of the psychological and transport barriers — the physical barriers — that prevent people from

believing that the arts are for them. If one could overcome that problem, people could appreciate, understand and participate in the arts.

In many parts of the country we have community arts that take the arts out of the council estate and the down-town areas, but they will flourish only in so far as there are also centres of excellence. Unless there is also that professional focal point in the city as well as the dedicated people who are taking the arts out to the community, it is not possible to have the whole range of opinion, expression and participation in the arts that is so crucial.

Mr. Maude: What the hon. Gentleman is saying does not go against what I was arguing. What I do not understand is why direct public subsidy is necessary to meet the desirable end that he is talking about. It is not necessary.

Mr. Meadowcroft: I shall start with a point of agreement. I do not disagree with the hon. Gentleman in his wish to assist private sponsorship by tax concessions. I do not dissent from that. The ambivalence of the tax laws at the moment is a great problem and inhibition of sponsorship; for example, whether an advertisement in a programme is tax deductible depends on the precise wording. That is ludicrous.

However, I differ from the hon. Gentleman in that I do not believe that business sponsorship will ever do this on a sufficient scale. Unless there is a local authority, an arts council or even a Government who understand that the arts have to belong to everybody or they will belong to nobody, one will not get the support that is necessary. I do not believe for a moment that business, marginal as much of it is in profit terms, will ever be able to pick up the bill that the Arts Council picks up. It will never be able to pick up the bill that the local authorities pick up. The breadth of the vision for the arts is crucial. If business sponsorship can add to that, and business can sponsor a production or performance, or a visit by a company from abroad, that is tremendous. I do not want to prevent that, but it is the workaday support for the broadening of arts provision that is crucial.

In the public service, whether local or national, we do not regard it as odd when we assist those who have particular handicaps to overcome them and express themselves. We do not regard it as odd in the educational system to assist those who have a sight impediment to overcome it. We do not believe it odd to assist those who have a speech defect to overcome it. We do not believe it strange for the public services to be able to assist those who have a hearing defect.

With the arts, we are saying that people who do not realise it have such defects—they cannot see what is there before them, because it is not part and parcel of their ordinary life. They cannot hear what is there and available to them because no one grabs them and takes them to a concert. They cannot express themselves because no one takes them to the place where they can take part in drama. If we help people with physical handicaps in ordinary life, why are we saying that that should not happen in the arts? In no sense can the arts be an afterthought in society. At times like the present, when we have an economic crisis and a social crisis, one needs the arts more than ever.

Without the arts, no other human value can express what people need and feel, and how they relate to their community and neighbours. The arts enliven them and are part and parcel of our humanity. Unless we can support them publicly, as well as through other methods, I do not believe that they will survive. In that event, such communities will not be healthy and able to express themselves and see their humanity as crucial to our survival rather than as part of a housing estate or an economic machine that grinds them.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. It might be helpful to the House if I announce that I understand that the Minister would like to rise at 10.45 pm and that the debate ends at 10.55 pm. If hon. Members bear that in mind, perhaps all of those who wish to be called will be.

10.30 pm

Mr. Christopher Murphy (Welwyn Hatfield): In debating Government funding of the arts, discussion is inevitably about two inter-related but distinct topics—economics and our artistic heritage. Professor John Galbraith brought the two together with special relevance when he said in his "Economics and the Arts":

"Hard economic truth even against art, must prevail".

Overlying both topics, perhaps unfortunately but inevitably, is politics. The slogan of the Government's opponents is that there is a crisis in arts funding, but it tends as much to obscure as to falsify reality. Such current sloganising leads to the current controversy — private funding versus public funding.

I shall not detain the House with the respective arguments, because of lack of time, but the conclusion is usually plural funding. Such a conclusion often fails fully to appreciate the inescapable importance of government in ensuring the best opportunities for the private sector to play its invaluable role, be it through tax advantages, matching grants, advice or other forms of stimulation. To guarantee a bigger part for the private sector, which it must be right to seek, means an even more starring performance from the Government in creating the conditions that I have mentioned. Nevertheless, they deserve great credit for the successes that they have already achieved.

Having started with a quotation from the world of economics, I should like to end with one from the realm of the arts. Sir Ian Hunter, as president of the Royal Society of Arts, said in "Arts in a Changing Society":

"All has to be related to the economic facts of life."

Such realism, when applied to the Government's funding of the arts, is surely the key for the politician seeking the philosopher's stone.

10.32 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): One of the good things that have come out of the recent row about Arts Council funding has been the explosion of the myth that the Arts Council is non-political or that there is in reality something called an arms-length principle.

During arts questions on Monday, the Minister with responsibility for the arts said that the Arts Council was non-political. That was a typically cynical comment. Tory politicians are good at completely politicising an institution and then declaring it to be non-political. In respect of the Arts Council, that cover has been well and truly blown. I do not see how the Government can say that they defend the impartiality of the Arts Council when they appoint a Tory monetarist as its chairman and an ex-Tory councillor as its secretary-general. It is well known that the

[Mr. Tony Banks]

Prime Minister's dictum for public appointments is, "Is he one of ours?" That dictum was clearly employed in making those two senior appointments.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan) said, arts funding in Britain is a disgrace. It is the lowest in Europe, with the exception of Ireland. When making comparisons, we should compare spending on arms. About £18 billion is spent on arms each year—roughly £321 per head. The figure for the overall total of national and local funding for the arts is about £12 per head of the population. Clearly, the Government prefer guns to culture.

Lord Gowrie as Minister for the Arts, when trying to make a lame excuse for the cut in arts funding—there has been a cut in the past three years—compared arts expenditure with that on education and social services, and asked us to make a choice. If we compare arts expenditure with arms expenditure, the choice for a civilised person is easy.

The hon. Member for Warwickshire, North (Mr. Maude) spoke at length about why he preferred private expenditure to public expenditure on the arts. Labour Members take the opposite view. The state and local authorities have replaced private patronage, which is perfectly fit and proper. Finance from the public purse is disinterested finance and less partial than private finance. It is far more likely to be innovative. Business sponsorship is small—between £14 million and £15 million. There are no accurate statistics, but that is an intelligent guess. It is minute compared with the general level of both local and national public funding.

I do not want our artistic tastes to be determined by the sums that Barclays Bank, Trusthouse Forte, Unilever or the wealthy put into the arts. I do not wish to see the corporate state emerging with big private companies becoming the arbiters of artistic taste. Conservative Members may want us to move nearer to the United States example, but in America military bands receive more funding than the arts from national central funding.

Sir William Rees-Mogg said that the arts provide a large number of jobs. With the £100 million that the Arts Council receives, it finances £250 million of arts turnover. That in turn provides 25,000 jobs, which produce £60 million in national insurance and taxes, and £15 million in value added tax receipts for the Treasury. The Treasury does well out of the moderate sums that it puts into the arts through central funding. Therefore, the Government compound philistinism with economic illiteracy by not providing more generous support for the arts.

I welcome what my hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, South said, and look forward to the next Labour Government at least doubling national support for the arts. A Labour Government must suitably reward local authorities on a pound for pound basis for the sums spent on the arts. It is about time that the Arts Council was scrapped. I would like to see the next Labour Government examine ways of democratising the arts grants machinery. I certainly wish to see them set up a Department of State responsible for the arts, leisure and all cultural activities, including broadcasting, the press and sport. We should look to the cultural industries for economic growth.

One day we shall look back upon these times of national penny-pinching of the arts as unbelievable and inexcusable, but until then we cannot call ourselves truly civilised.

10.38 pm

Mr. Alan Howarth (Stratford-on-Avon): The lamentations and jeremiads that we are hearing from the subsidised arts world illustrate well the frustrations and public antagonisms to which our present system of funding the arts is bound to give rise. We should in my view embark on a strategy of moving progressively from a system of grants to one of tax relief akin to the American system.

The system of an aggregate grant disbursed at the discretion of the Arts Council made sense so long as we proceeded on two assumptions: first, that economic growth would finance ever-rising levels of public expenditure; and, secondly, that the way to improve the quality of life was by enlightened mediation by public bodies. Neither proposition any longer commands widespread assent.

I do not argue for an instant for rapid demolition of the subsidy system. The effect of that would be catastrophic. But we should proceed with determination in the direction that I have indicated. We could proceed by phasing one system in as the other is phased out, but there would be difficulties in that, including the uncertainties of time scale and of which institutions would be likely to attract support. It might be better to say that at some time, perhpas two years ahead, we would move to a different basis of funding, which would give time and opportunity for those seeking patronage to find it on new principles.

If we moved towards replacing state grants by a system of tax relief, a number of advantages would accrue.

First, the discussion of the totality of arts funding would be depoliticised, and arts funding would be removed from the vagaries of central and, especially, local government.

Secondly, the dominant characteristic of the system would become the direct link between private patrons and the arts. In this way, we would encourage a more authentic and creative interaction between artists and the public than we do by treating the arts as a small province of the welfare state.

Thirdly, I do not for one moment suppose that we would see an end to lobbying, but the clients of patronage would buzz round a much greater variety of pots, and they would probably buzz less angrily.

Fourthly, more funds would be available for the arts. The American experience, even taking account of the greater wealth of the United States of America, shows the willingness of individuals and corporations to respond to tax incentives to support the arts. We can draw much encouragement also from the great success of the growth of business sponsorship in Britain.

The fifth reason why we should prefer the system that I have suggested is that it would mean lower taxation and an alleviation of the pressure on the Government for higher public expenditure. Of course, the Treasury is suspicious of tax reliefs which it regards as tax expenditures, but I draw some tentative encouragement from the statement of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his Budget, when he announced the Green Paper on the reform of personal income tax:

"We need to make sure that the reliefs we can afford are concentrated where they will do most good." — [*Official Report*, 19 March 1985; Vol. 75, c. 794.]

By concentrating relief on support for the arts, as one among several candidates, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor would do much good.

It is not my purpose to criticise the present leadership of the Arts Council. There are strong arguments for the strategy to achieve a fairer balance in public patronage, which Sir William Rees-Mogg is seeking to implement. The problem is that whatever policy the Arts Council embarks upon, it will be invidious and will give rise to cacophonous complaints so long as money is tight.

As a governor of the Royal Shakespeare Company, which receives support from the Arts Council, I should emphasise that I am speaking in a personal capacity. I would not wish to embarrass the company by associating it with my views on the changes that are necessary. It must live in its relationship with the Arts Council and the Government; on its behalf, I would say only that I regret very much that, while we have the present system, the Government have not honoured in full the Priestley recommendations which we understood they were committed to accept.

At the general election, the Conservative party manifesto included a commitment to

"examine ways of using the tax system to encourage further growth in private support for the arts and heritage."

Against a background of genuine difficulties, both for a Government who wish to give good support to the arts, and for artists who look to state support, it is important that we should explore this line of thought virorously.

10.44 pm

Mr. Jim Callaghan (Heywood and Middleton): In her first term of office, the Prime Minister announced that there would be no candle-end economies in the arts. There was great relief throughout the arts world that grocer-shop economies would not be applied to the arts. Unfortunately, that relief was short-lived because of the application of the Government's monetarist policies.

The warning signals could be seen when Lord Gowrie was appointed as Minister for the Arts, because he is not only the Government's spokesman on the arts, but holds a Treasury brief. Accordingly, he must face two ways at the same time. He is on record as saying:

"I can in no way dissociate the arts from the Government's economic and fiscal policy. To do so would be damaging to other parts of the economy."

We know exactly where the Minister for the Arts stands. We in this House, cannot even question him directly on the Government's economic and fiscal policies, because he sits in the other place.

Last year, the Minister for the Arts defended the Government's cuts by saying:

"I was at least able to protect them by restricting the cut to 1 per cent. — nasty, but nicer than 2 per cent. — [*Official Report, House of Lords*, 30 November 1983; Vol. 445, c. 766.]

And when she first came to power, the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) spoke of no candle-end economies in the arts.

Recently the Minister also said:

"The party is not over, but the limits of hospitality have been reached. From now on central Government funding will remain broadly level in real terms."

That statement shows that, while the noble Lord may be devoted to the arts, he appears to be more devoted to monetarism.

The Minister mentioned a party. What party does he mean. The paltry £105 million that the Government give the Arts Council could not be called a party. This can be shown by the figures. Four years ago, Britain was spending £6 a head of public money on the arts. In the same year, West Germany spent £16 per head, and France spent £23 a head. Since then, the gap has widened. Frankfurt, with a population of 670,000 — the size of Leeds — gives a subsidy to the opera of £12 a head, twice what the Government gave the English National Opera. Berlin gives £17 million, Cologne £16 million, Munich £15 million, and Hamburg £15 million to the arts. France doubled the fund to its ministry of culture, in 1982 to £545 million, and in 1985, it will spend £778 million. That shows the generosity of France and Germany to the arts.

The arts are seething with discontent. There is open revolt among some of the beneficiaries of the Arts Council because they are being deprived of the funds that they need to fulfil their obligations to the communities that they serve. They feel that they are being betrayed by the Arts Council. As Sir Peter Hall said:

"The Council has become an instrument of Government."

That first casualty has been the belief that the famous arms length principle is not working any more. It is felt that the Arts Council, like every other spender or distributor of public money, should conform to the Cabinet's monetarist diktat. I call on the Government to reconsider the cut in grant, and to give a supplementary grant large enough to prevent the closures that threaten to stop the quality that we have grown to accept, and to set up an inquiry into the system of Government relationships to the arts, which will result in a system with generosity, imagination and coherence.

10.47 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. William Waldegrave): I hope that I shall be forgiven if in my congratulations to my hon. Friend the Member for Warwickshire, North (Mr. Maude) I say that there was a certain amount in his speech with which I did not agree. On the other hand, it set an interesting note for the debate, because for once we got to the heart of the argument about what the relationship between the state and the arts is supposed to be.

We have had the usual knockabout stuff about the increase. However, if it is unfair to take 1978-79 as the base, although it would seem reasonable to do so, we can take the next year, in which case we get an 11 per cent. increase in real terms, which is a major increase in the present climate, and compares pretty well with the 12 per cent. increase of the Labour Government.

The similarity is not between parties, but between who is in opposition and who is in government. The hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan) made a typical Opposition pledge, namely that he would double Government funding for the arts in the first year, which was pretty good stuff. He may need to do so simply to keep up with inflation.

My hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) said that he disagreed with the speeches of both my hon. Friend the Member for Warwickshire, North and the hon. Member for Paisley, South, which was a good start, because so did I, I do not believe that the theory of *The Economist*, that one could wholly replace the role of the subsidised arts by tax allowance, takes into account one of the fundamental points.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) is in a curious sort of alliance with my hon. Friend

[Mr. William Waldegrave]

the Member for Warwickshire, North, because he says that he wants people to vote for what is to be done for the arts. In real life we know that that means a committee run by the hon. Member for Newham, North-West. However, if it were possible to invent a voting mechanism which was so sensitive that it enabled people to vote for what they wanted to be provided, I am not sure that it would be all that different from the kind of model envisaged by my hon. Friends the Members for Warwickshire, North and for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth)—that people should be able to vote with their money.

If they can be made to work, both systems are highly pluralist and both seem to me to suffer from the defect that was pointed out by the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Meadowcroft), with which I have great sympathy, namely, that we should face the fact that all decisions on the arts should not be devolved because of the teaching function. Teaching cannot be wholly devolved. Teaching involves bringing things to people which they may not know about. For that reason they will be unable to vote for them or buy them.

If one reads Neville Cardus's moving autobiography, one finds that he came from a background so poor as to be almost unimaginable today. He struggled into the titanic position that he held as the best writer on music and cricket in his day because he had the luck early in his life to meet people who taught him about the arts. That is what the hon. Member for Leeds, West and many Conservative and Opposition Members believe to be one of the essential functions of the state in its patronage of the arts. Its leadership function cannot be wholly devolved.

One cannot get out of it by saying that the democratic will, working in some mysterious way, will solve the problem, or that the market will solve the problem. Even if one could produce the Utopian democracy of the hon. Member for Newham, North-West, which would end up with somebody telling us what we ought to believe in, or even if one could find the Utopian market, which never quite seems to come about because there is always some monopoly which interferes with the proper working of the market, there would still be a role for teaching. In old Tory language, there is a paternalist role to be played by the arts. In the language of the Opposition, that is a teaching role. I do not believe that that role should be shirked.

The hon. Member for Leeds, West unnecessarily ran down the north of England. Neville Cardus's book makes me think of the north of England. He referred to the brass bands of the north. Certainly there are brass bands in the north, but there was a time when the Hallé under Richter was the finest orchestra in the United Kingdom. That is a good example of municipal subsidy. There was no lack of support for that orchestra in the north of England.

My hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Murphy) brought us back to the economic realities, and we all thank him for doing so. All Governments have to struggle with the economic realities. I hope that I am not being too offensive when I say that I disagree also with my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham. I have heard some strange definitions of "art" — Clive Bell's definition of art as "significant form", Aristotle's definitions, and Housman saying that he could tell what was a good poem because the hair on the back of his neck stood up—but it does not do as a definition of art to say that it has something to do with the profit levels of the Grand Metropolitan Hotels group.

A society which says that it values its art because of tourism seems to me to be a society in decline. I hope that we never fall into making that mistake. Of course there are useful spin-offs, and of course people should make money out of them, and good luck to Sir Peter Hall if he makes money out of them, too, but to define the arts as objects of tourism would mean that we were in a sorry state. I believe that my hon. Friend was referring to the useful spin-offs, not to the heart of the problem. A healthy society has art as part of its soul, as part of the definition of its culture, not because it wants to attract tourists.

I can encourage the hon. Member for Leeds, West further, because teaching is important, not only to those with no money. The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) looks threatening. We went to the same school—a school full of rich people. There was a need there to teach pupils about culture. It was by no means a Philistine school when we were there. I think that it had some effect upon him—perhaps neither entirely successful nor entirely unsuccessful.

The state has a role in leadership, in transmitting great things from one age to another and in bringing them to as many people as possible. All the voluntary sources available are also needed. There is no harm in that. We are talking not about tainted money but about money which is useful and which can be applied to great ends.

Rating Revaluation (Scotland)

10.55 pm

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): I welcome the opportunity to discuss the question of revaluation in Scotland. I am particularly grateful to you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing three hours for this debate.

The issue shows up the Government's greatest ineptitude in Scotland. You, Mr. Speaker, are not involved in the revaluation, since you represent and live in an English constituency.

According to newspaper reports, it appears that only when the Secretary of State received his own revaluation notice for Gargunnock—his estate in Stirling not in Ayr—did he understand what was happening. The chairman of the Scottish Tories, Sir James Gould, was so astonished by his 33 per cent. increase that he was photographed brandishing his rate demand in George square in Glasgow. He described the increase as "appalling."

Sir James was not the only one who was appalled. Councillors were appalled. *The Scotsman* carried the headline

"A Glasgow Tory attacks Younger".

The way events are moving, the headline could soon be "The Glasgow Tory attacks Younger."

According to *The Scotsman*

"Councillor William Aitken . . . suddenly stunned the Labour ranks by embarking on a surprising attack on Mr. George Younger . . . He said the revaluation was at least badly handled and at worst a disgraceful decision."

That is from an increasingly lonely Scottish fellow in Glasgow. I hope that by quoting from *The Scotsman* I do not offend my good friends from the other Scottish newspapers.

The hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) is not here, but he is normally one of the Government's most ardent supporters. He has often come gallantly to the Prime Minister's defence. Another article in *The Scotsman* states:

"A Conservative MP last night accused the Government of 'betrayal' over rates rises and called on the Prime Minister to redeem the situation when she attends the Scottish Tory conference at Perth in May."

We also read that the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro), chairman of the Scottish Tory group in the House of Commons, is to lead a deputation to the Prime Minister on the issue, understandably bypassing the Secretary of State for Scotland.

The hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), an Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, who is in the Chamber, had to appear before a "Star Chamber" in his constituency. A miraculous decision was made. He was cleared, but the Government were found guilty. I thought that the hon. Gentleman was party to all this as a member of the Government, but no, the honourable Burgher for Eastwood apparently thinks differently. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Ancram), who will have the pleasure of replying to the debate, no doubt knew a little more of what was happening in this revaluation. After all, he has one of the widest home ownerships in Scotland today.

On more sober reflection, after all the outrage from Conservative Members as well as councillors and ratepayers, given the reduction in rate poundage to offset the increased revaluation, is all this concern justified, is this uproar justified? The answer is an unequivocal yes. The overall increase in Scotland's rate bill is estimated to be some 21 per cent. Individual domestic increases will be much more, some well over 40 per cent. I will give a prize—a very small one, of course—for the largest verified percentage increase. This 21 per cent. increase in Scotland compares with an overall estimated increase of 9 per cent. in domestic rates in England where no revaluation is taking place—indeed, it has not had a revaluation since 1973, while we are experiencing our second revaluation.

The Secretary of State and his cronies keep trying to pile the blame on allegedly profligate authorities. This is a deliberate attempt to mislead and to divert attention from the real source of the problem. It is mischievous and malevolent. To eliminate the variable of authorities which may be spending over the Secretary of State's arbitrary guidelines, such as the variable is, let us take areas where region and district are within the Secretary of State's guidelines. There are 36 out of 65, as we have heard from the Secretary of State, Perth and Kinross notable among them. We note that Mrs. Rosemary Ferrand of Perth and Kinross, whom the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) knows well, said that her own council of Perth and Kinross

". . . had always been careful of its housekeeping and had always tried to keep within Government guidelines but though it had pruned spending to the bone it faced a penalty of £260,000 in claw-back".

The hon. Member for Tayside, North knows that this is one authority—and there are others in Dumfries, in Galloway and in Grampian—where region and district have kept within the Secretary of State's arbitrary guidelines. Thus we rule out the variable of the so-called profligate authorities.

In all these areas, there will be huge increases for the domestic ratepayer. There are two causes, both of which are the responsibility of the Secretary of State and the Government, including the hon. Member for Eastwood. The first is the reduction in rate support grant. Less Government money to local authorities inevitably means that more must come from the rates to maintain spending and services at the same level. The second is revaluation where the switch in burden from the non-domestic to the domestic ratepayer without adequate cushioning for the domestic ratepayer causes additional hardship and cost. With respect, the £38·6 million added under protest—the Secretary of State admitted in a written reply that he had received 3,800 letters earlier this month—is a mere fleabite. To add insult to injury, the £38·5 million came from harmful cuts in other areas of Scottish Office budget expenditure, robbing already poor Peter to pay a poorer Paul. The uproar is understandable. The Secretary of State is not with us today. No doubt he is elsewhere in the House drowning his sorrows following the salutary lesson last Thursday from the electors of north Kyle, who used to be well represented by my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, South (Mr. Lambie).

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): If the hon. Gentleman wishes to discuss by-election results, perhaps he will comment on the result in the Tayside region last week, when the Conservatives retained the seat with a substantial majority.

Mr. Foulkes: My hon. Friends have admitted that, on the basis of the present system in Scotland, the hon. Member for Tayside, North would be the only Tory in the

[Mr. Foulkes]

House representing Scotland. We give him credit for that. Nevertheless, in the north Hule by-election, regional councillor Tom Parish overturned a 1,500 Tory majority with an 11 per cent. swing from Conservative to Labour, and that in the Secretary of State's own constituency. If that swing were reflected throughout the constituency, it would be large enough to unseat the Secretary of State.

We appreciate that other factors were at work. For example, the Tory candidate was not the cleverest choice. Also, there was the teachers' dispute, and tonight we heard about the martyrs of Marr college. We saw them on television, although schools other than Marr were affected in the Secretary of State's constituency. Revaluation was the key issue, and the Secretary of State's standing in Ayr has never been lower than it is today.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Michael Ancram): I hope that the hon. Gentleman will continue with that argument, for if he looks at the average rate increase in Kyle and Carrick—and I suspect that this applies to some of his own constituents — he will find that the domestic rate increase is 5 per cent., level with inflation. How, on that basis, does he explain revaluation having such an effect?

Mr. Foulkes: That is not my information. Nor was that the information published in the *Glasgow Herald*. Nor will it be the information that the electors and ratepayers of north Kyle will get when they take their new valuation, multiply it by the rate poundage, work out what they are due to pay and compare it with what they paid last year. That is the test, that is what they did and that is why they voted Labour.

Mr. Ancram *rose*——

Mr. Foulkes: I will not give way again. The Minister has the right of reply, and many hon. Members wish to take part in the debate.

Hon. Members may rightly say that we should be looking for an alternative to the rating system. Regrettably, the panic and hysteria among Conservative Members has allowed some of the more sinister Right wing elements to preen and spread their feathers. The hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth), opportunistic as ever, is no doubt away making an honest penny or two——

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): Doing his midnight laundry.

Mr. Foulkes: Quite possibly.

Mr. Jim Craigen (Glasgow, Maryhill): The hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) is upstairs in Committee dealing with the Transport Bill. He is trying to privatise the buses.

Mr. Foulkes: I cannot think of anywhere where I would rather have the hon. Member for Stirling than upstairs on the Transport Bill. He put forward the proposal of a poll tax which, he said, could be levied in different ways—on every adult, on every elector or on every person with an income. We understand that that proposal is being taken seriously, not just by the Secretary of State but by the Prime Minister. To rush into such a tax would be to go out of the frying pan into the fire. If rates are regressive and unfair, a poll tax would be doubly so. It would be much more regressive, with no account taken of ability to pay. My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) has pointed us in the direction of a local income tax. That deserves careful study. The onus is on the Government. Reform of the rating system was a clear Tory election pledge in 1974 and 1979. Tory councillors and MPs—the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Hirst) was notable amongst them—have been pressing the case for further consideration of rates reform. Of course, the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden is in a marginal constituency, so he would, would he not? They are rightly asking what has become of that Tory election pledge. Scottish Tory councillors consider that they are becoming an endangered species. As I said earlier, Scottish Tory MPs will be equally rare.

Mr. Barry Henderson (Fife, North-East): The hon. Gentleman seems to have forgotten that at the last general election one in six of the Labour candidates lost their deposits. Would he like to take any odds that that is not likely to happen to at least as many next time?

Mr. Foulkes: I understand the hon. Member is talking about the United Kingdom.

Mr. Henderson: No, Scotland.

Mr. Foulkes: I will see the hon. Gentleman afterwards and take a bet on that. The other one was a prize. I will double it for the hon. Member for predicting the result in Fife, North-East, and it will not be a Tory retention.

What of the immediate rather than the long term disaster or debacle that faces the Tory Government? The Secretary of State should have stopped the revaluation. Is it too late to do so even now? I hope the Under-Secretary of State will give us an indication that it could still be stopped. If it is too late, however, the Government must make new money available, though not by robbing other spending areas in the Scottish Office, to provide a full cushion for domestic ratepayers. Nothing less will do.

11.11 pm

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): It is always interesting to follow the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes). He talked about opportunism, but he never misses an opportunity. He enlivens our proceedings as he enlivens the proceedings in Scotland. The House would be less fun if it were not for people like him. For him to suggest that a Conservative Member was an opportunist was rather like the kettle calling the pot black.

Revaluation is like blaming the wrong thing for the problems that we face. In Scotland for a long time those who have voted for expenditure have not been footing the bill. Many people who vote at local elections are not ratepayers. The information I have is that the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) favours a form of local income tax. If that is so, he and I are in agreement.

Mr. Craigen: Am I not correct in thinking that the Chancellor of the Exchequer took great pride last week in the fact that he was able to take many people out of the payment of income tax? I trust they will not lose their votes as a result.

Mr. Walker: That intervention is fascinating. It is typical of Socialism. Socialists want to spend, but they never want to pay. There could be a local income tax that would be fair. It would have to be used as an income tax

and not as a flat levy. I have no objection to those who can afford to do so having to pay. All I am saying is that those who spend and promote expenditure should make their contribution. Under the present rating system, that does not happen. The revaluation has not changed that iniquity.

I hope that the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley will not suggest that I have a marginal seat. For many years I have believed that the only fair way in which to make people pay for locally provided services is a form of income tax. Scotland is unique in having Centre 1. Other facilities could and should be used. Private sector large computers are under-utilised in down time. Once again I see the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) shaking his head. He has no idea what I am talking about.

Mr. Maxton *rose*——

Mr. Walker: He has risen to the bait.

Mr. Maxton: The problem with local income tax—I agree that the Inland Revenue is beginning an experiment to solve the problem — is that large numbers of employees in Scotland do not pay their tax to centres in Scotland. An argument is consistently put forward in the assembly against using income tax. By the time there is a Labour Government after the next election, the Inland Revenue will have solved that problem.

Mr. Walker: We do not have to leave it to the hon. Gentleman to solve these problems. Of course I am aware that many people living and working in Scotland have employers from outside Scotland. Many of them are large companies operating cost and profit centres from computer bases south of the border. Every employer has to register every employee with the Department of Employment. Cross-fertilisation is not as difficult and horrendous today as it was five or 10 years ago. Some of the facilities are not in the public purse at the moment, but they are available and under-utilised. There are machines with the necessary capability and capacity; we only require the will.

I hope that people will not be put off because Centre 1 has a limited ability and because of the difficulties. I have already written to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State putting concrete decisions. I have not simply grabbed these proposals out of the sky. The facilities are there. We need only management and co-ordination.

Of course, Government Members comment on the problems created because of the activities over long periods of profligate authorities. Governments, whatever their colour, always introduce cruel and arbitrary measures when faced with having to contain public expenditure. One cannot deal equally with the problems. Governments bring in across-the-board measures.

I have never argued with some of the actions of the Labour Government when faced with certain difficulties, because that was the correct approach at that time. I have never criticised the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) for those actions, because they were right. The Labour Government introduced across-the-board measures with massive reductions in expenditure, so that authorities that began from low-spending bases—such as Perth and Kinross—and willingly acquiesced were disadvantaged compared with authorities that did not acquiesce in the way desired by the right hon. Member for Govan. That meant that those authorities started from a higher spending base and retained that position as the years passed.

In 1979, when the Conservative party came to office, it introduced measures to curtail local government spending. Inevitably, the authorities that behaved were already in a weak position compared with the profligate authorities. No matter how much one tries, one cannot square that circle. The differential is too great. With the best of intentions, it will never be possible to make the present system fair to all authorities. Inevitably, the good authorities will be penalised more than the profligate ones.

I accept that the profligate authorities had grown accustomed to spending at a certain level, just as any spendthrift grows accustomed to living at a certain level. The adjustment for them had to be over a much longer period. The problem is that we do not have that length of time.

Revaluation is an attempt to spread the burden in a different and more acceptable way so that industry is not disadvantaged. We do not argue with that, because it is right that we look carefully at the way we tax jobs. This has done more than anything else in my judgment, to force employers to lay people off earlier than they should ever have done. Employers do not willingly lay off staff; they do so reluctantly, in my experience, and they do so because it is the one area in which they can act quickly. They can do little about their other expenditure but they can do quite a bit about the cost of staff, which is one of the largest cost elements, certainly for labour-intensive industries.

Consequently, it was inevitable that the rate support reductions and the transfer because of the present revaluation would produce ghastly problems and inequities. In my own constituency I have plenty of examples, but I am not going to bore the House with details because all of us can talk about ghastly examples in our own constituencies. All I will say is that the largest employer in north Tayside—one industry that has been showing more growth than others in recent years—is tourism, and that has been hard hit by the revaluation because it has hit the shopkeepers and hotels. In some instances, the increase in the rates to be paid is greater than the net profit realised in any one of the last five years. That can only mean more jobs lost, and no one can welcome that.

Therefore, I hope that Ministers are well aware of the mood in Scotland in favour of a real, positive change in the system. It is not promises we are looking for, but real plans, to be brought forward and implemented as soon as possible.

11.22 pm

Mr. Bruce Millan (Glasgow, Govan): I was rather surprised that the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker), who normally gives us a great deal of detail about his constituency, did not mention the increases which domestic ratepayers in the Tayside region will face in the forthcoming year. His own district has an increase of 24·6 per cent., Angus 23·8 per cent. and even the comparatively responsible authority of Dundee has an increase of 19·9 per cent.—rather lower, but a very considerable burden on the ratepayers none the less.

There has been a real sense of outrage in Scotland as these revaluation notices have come in. If ever a Minister was in a mess and thoroughly deserved to be, it is the

[Mr. Bruce Millan]

Secretary of State over revaluation. He was well warned about what was happening. It is not something that just came up and took him by surprise. If it did, he is even less informed about the realities of local government finance than some of us have considered him to be. He was well warned that there would be this kind of trouble in Scotland, but he took no effective action to deal with it.

Whatever the merits of revaluation, it cannot be sensible that there is a revaluation in Scotland this year when England has not had a revaluation since 1973. It simply does not make sense. It is impossible to explain this to the electors in Scotland. There is a considerable difference between 1978 and 1985. There had been only a five-year gap in 1978 between the revaluation in England and that in Scotland. There is now a 12-year gap. What is more, the revaluation in 1978, I am glad to say, reduced the burden on domestic ratepayers in Scotland. No one in Scotland can understand why the same Government can say that we can go 12 years without a revaluation in England, but that we must have a revaluation in Scotland now.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Millan: No, I do not think so. If my hon. Friend does not mind, I should like to finish this point.

At one time, the Government promised to abolish domestic rates. We knew several months ago that there would be considerable trouble. The argument was set out in the debate on the rate support grant on 24 January this year by my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) and some Back Benchers, but the Government refused to acknowledge the reality. The Secretary of State said that everything would be all right and the increase would be only 13 per cent. for domestic ratepayers, as if it were some great triumph, when he is trying to screw down public servants to wage increases of 3 and 4 per cent. We warned him that the rates increase for domestic ratepayers would be considerably higher than 13 per cent., and so it has turned out to be.

That need not have happened. The revaluation need not have happened. Even if the Government, for good reasons or bad, decided to go ahead with revaluation, when they saw the results that were coming out, there was no reason why domestic ratepayers should not have been effectively shielded from those considerable increases. In the original rate support grant settlement, the domestic element could have been considerably higher than it was. It has been slightly increased since, and I shall return to that matter. The Government could even have decided on a redistribution of the rating burden between the different categories and classes of ratepayers, with the balance between them remaining essentially the same as it had been before the revaluation. Incidentally, the Secretary of State toyed with that idea at one time and announced that that was the way in which he would proceed. However, none of those things happened.

We did not have an effective shielding of the domestic ratepayers, and the inevitable happened. The figures came out and showed that the average increase for domestic ratepayers in Scotland was to be not 13 per cent., but 27 per cent.—rather more than double what the Secretary of State had estimated. Horror of horrors, some of those substantial increases were happening in Tory areas—again as we had forecast in the debate on 24 January—where district councils had done their best to keep within the guidelines sent out by the Secretary of State.

At first the Secretary of State was going to brazen it out. Sir James Gould traipsed down to London and was rebuffed. He was told that he was causing an unnecessary disturbance and that he should go away and think again. He went home to Scotland with his tail between his legs and apologised to the party in Scotland for causing that little upset. The Secretary of State was not able to brazen it out, because of the real sense of outrage in his own ranks and among ratepayers in Scotland.

We then had the Secretary of State coming to the House on a Friday——

Mr. Foulkes: A Thursday.

Mr. Millan: Indeed. It was before the Scottish Labour party conference, when the right hon. Gentleman hoped that nobody would be here. He said that he was going to produce an extra £38·5 million by way of domestic element. We are meant to be grateful for the fact that he has produced that, but it has only come off another part of the Scottish Office budget, which is already in straitened circumstances. Even with the £38·5 million, the increases are still on average 21 per cent. in Scotland, according to the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities' figures that have been published.

There is now talk of a review. We have had many such reviews before. It will go over the same old ground. There is nothing new in that. It will not find some magic solution to solve all the problems which we now face. A poll tax is being considered. I can say right away, speaking for myself and, I think, for my hon. Friends as well, that we are absolutely opposed to anything that is so bitterly and fundamentally regressive as a poll tax. We shall oppose any such idea. Of course local income tax is a possibility, but the idea that we can replace the complete rating system with that is nonsense—it is a non-starter. For many years I have been in favour of a local income tax, but it will not solve the problems.

The reality is that the rating system can work reasonably well, provided that it is not over-burdened, but it has been over-burdened by the deliberate actions of the Government. That is why we are in such a mess. Revaluation is simply the straw that has broken the camel's back. The whole behaviour of the Government since 1979 has caused the trouble that we now face. I hope that the ratepayers of Scotland understand that.

We have not been living in halcyon days in 1984-85. The domestic ratepayer in Scotland has been paying two and half times as much as in 1978-79, the last year of the Labour Government. He paid £132 then and has paid £328 in the year now ending. There will be an average rates bill of £397 in the coming year, despite the £38·5 million to which I have referred. The rate burden on the average domestic ratepayer in 1985-86 will be just over three times what it was in 1978-79.

The Government have deliberately taken the burden off themselves and put it on the backs of local ratepayers. They have reduced the rate of grant which they inherited of 68·5 per cent. to 56·6 per cent. for the forthcoming year. Indeed, in reality the figures will be lower than that because it is paid on inadequate and unrealistic figures.

I and my hon. Friends have consistently pointed out the problems in every rate support grant debate, and especially

in the debate on 24 January. According to the Government, local authorities over-budgeted by £114 million for the year about to end and are paying the penalty of £90 million. I warned the Secretary of State in explicit terms that there would be considerable over-budgeting in 1985-86, and that is what has happened. The so-called excess budgets stand at £90 million for 1985-86.

Before Conservative Members say that that simply illustrates the profligacy of local authorities, I must tell them that COSLA estimated — and the figures have never been denied — that if local authorities had standstill budgets in real terms, even using the Government's inflation figures—which, needless to say, are underestimated—they would require £101 million more in the current year just to stand still. If the figure is £90, they are not standing still but are actually reducing their budgeted expenditure in real terms.

Mr. Ancram *rose*——

Mr. Millan: No, I shall not give way. This is a short debate and I am aware that many of my hon. Friends want to contribute to it.

In effect, we have standstill budgets. There is no real increase in local authority expenditure. In the forthcoming year the average domestic ratepayer in Scotland will pay 21 per cent. more than he did in 1984-85. He will pay three times more in cash terms than he did in the last year of the previous Labour Government. At the same time, he will receive poorer services for the additional payments that he is making. We shall again go through the dreary business of penalties. There will be fire and brimstone from the Secretary of State for Scotland about how tough he will be and all the rest of it.

Over the past five or six years we have seen a deliberate attack by the Secretary of State on local authorities, on local democracy and on local services. At last the Secretary of State has been found out. It is a pity that he was not found out sooner. He is responsible for the crisis. It is clear that responsibility rests on his shoulders. If he would deal decently and honestly with local authorities, even at this late stage, he could undo some of the damage that he has done.

11.37 pm

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): This much-heralded attack on the Government has fallen astonishingly flat. We expected to see at least 30 or 40 Scottish Socialist Members in their places to mount the attack, but we see only 13, of which two are from the shadow Scottish Office, two from the shadow Foreign Office, two from the Opposition Whips' Office and one from the shadow Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. There is hardly a Scottish Opposition Back Bencher in his place. Even the Chairman of the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs is in his place to help pad out the attendance of Labour Members.

Where is the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. Hamilton), who was making snide remarks on Monday about the probable attendance this evening? I have a very good idea where he is. Scottish Labour Members have been shouting the odds in the press ever since the debate was announced. We were told that it would be a devastating attack on the Government. If the Opposition can get only six Back Benchers to attend, it is a pretty miserable affair for them. Of course, I did not expect any Scottish SDP Members to be present.

Mr. Home Robertson: What about the rates?

Sir Hector Monro: I am coming to the rates. For the moment I am directing myself to the non-existent attack from the Opposition. The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) might have been playing the halls tonight as a rather second-rate Billy Connolly. He would do rather better if he stuck to the Belgrano. I suppose that it is unfortunate that he does not have his other half in the Chamber this evening, the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell).

I was called to take up the remarks of the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan), and that was reminiscent of the mid-1970s, when he was Secretary of State for Scotland. The then Conservative Opposition complained bitterly about the way that he was handling rate support grant and revaluation. I recall frequently saying to the right hon. Gentleman, as I have since he left Office, that we were a long way from getting—Well, we have another starter. The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) has entered the Chamber. I was saying that I remember saying frequently to the right hon. Member for Govan that there was no balance between authorities within the guidelines, especially in the rural areas, and the rate support grant.

I accept that there has been a reduction in the RSG over the years, and rightly so in terms of public expenditure. As both sides accept, that greatly affected authorities which were keeping within their guidelines. Coupled with revaluation, it has brought about a very serious situation.

The Opposition, however, have not given sufficient consideration to the great improvement in domestic rates due to the relief provided by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. The figure of 21 per cent. that is bandied about in the press may well turn out to be nearer 14 or 15 per cent. when the rates are actually paid, although much will depend on the revaluation of individual properties. Nevertheless, we should not underestimate what my right hon. Friend has done. As it was done in two stages—first allowing 5p and then a further 3p—it is clear that he was always well aware of that issue.

We should also like to know—my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State may not be able to tell us, as it is not his responsibility—how the assessors arrive at different factors for different areas, whether it be of 2·6 as in one district in my constituency, 2·4, 2·3 or whatever. That has a serious impact on the resource element available to district authorities as well as on regional rates. Whatever the reason for the difference in the factors, this has become one of the most serious issues of the revaluation. It will be interesting to see how the figures stand up to the many appeals that I predict will take place in the coming months.

Great concern has also been aroused among my hon. Friends—and, one hopes, among the Opposition—about the actual figures put on domestic, commercial and industrial property. I have heard of increases from £5,000 to £25,000 for shops in Dumfries and of threefold and even fivefold increases for other properties. As my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) has said, the increases applied to hotels will inevitably affect the tourist industry and will cost owners and occupiers a substantial amount when the rates have to be paid.

Mr. Ancram: As I said the other day in relation to the Borders, although in areas such as my hon. Friend's

[Mr. Ancram]

constituency valuations for commercial properties have been increased, there are also gainers, albeit not in my hon. Friend's constituency. It is interesting to note, for instance, that the North-West Castle hotel in Stranraer has had a reduction of 30 per cent. in the actual rates to be paid.

Sir Hector Monro: That is splendid news for the North-West Castle—a hostelry of the highest repute and an excellent curling club. I hope that it will now be able to offer special discounts to regular customers.

My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State may also have some helpful news for us as to whether the provisions of the Rating and Valuation (Amendment) (Scotland) Act 1984 relating to sports grounds have proved effective. I appreciate that this is likely to go to appeal, but my hon. Friend may be able to impart some interesting knowledge with regard to Celtic, Ayr races, Ayr football club, and so on. I believe that there may be some good news for sports ground owners and it would be interesting to hear some figures when my hon. Friend winds up the debate. Indeed, I should be happy to give way now if he has managed to locate the information.

Mr. Ancram: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way, as he mentioned Ayr football club. I understand that the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) has some interests in that area. He might be interested to learn that what it pays in rates will be reduced by 48 per cent. as a result of the revaluation.

Sir Hector Monro: There we are. Let us have some cheers from the hon. Gentleman who lives in that beautiful countryside. I am sorry to see that he has departed. [HON. MEMBERS: "He is up there in the Strangers' Gallery."] From that exalted position, he has even further to bend to my hon. Friend the Minister, who has achieved such assistance for his football club.

We have all read with interest — I am sure that Opposition Members will have read every page — the Layfield report and subsequent Green Papers. We all appreciate that it is astonishingly difficult to find the right time to make improvements to the rating system. I shall not pronounce now how I think it should be done. I listened with interest to those with greater knowledge. The present system seems so unfair that it cannot go on for more than another year or two while the proper legislation is brought through the House.

A relatively small number of people pay the rates, yet they are the victims of Socialist Administrations which are profligate with other people's money. We must find a better system so that we can look after all ratepayers. I am sure that the Government will ensure that the present system does not continue one year longer than is necessary. I am sure that they will make every effort to ensure that an alternative system is in the pipeline and ready for operation as soon as possible.

11.47 pm

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I should like to bring a note of rationality and reasonableness to the debate. Anyone who thinks that the present system is a shambles, as I do, has to make clear his view on the revaluation. Given the present system of rating reviews to raise local government finance, it is imperative to have regular revaluations.

The Minister should consider closely the work done by the Anderson commission of inquiry into commercial rating in 1970. It concluded that it was reasonable to have regular revaluations only on the basis of their being carried out simultaneous north and south of the border. Those whose live just across the River Tweed from England find it unreasonable that they must bear burdens which their English neighbours escape. That point must be borne in mind. We would accept a regular revaluation, although I must qualify that by saying, as the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) eloquently said, that the Government could have anticipated many of the difficulties more sensitively. There are devices and ways of cushioning the blows. Although I give the Government credit fro bringing forward extra domestic relief, it may not be enough.

Earlier, the Government were criticised for the sums that they were giving away. I give them credit for putting back some money, but the fact that it was necessary to do so when they did it demonstrates that they had not fully anticipated the effects of the combination of revaluation and reductions in rate support grant. That is the Government's philosophy and policy and they are entitled to hold that view, but they are culpable for not looking sufficiently far ahead and anticipating the way in which the reduction in rate support grant would compound the revaluation. The Government should be condemned for that.

I agree with much that has been said about the effects of the domestic increases. My experience shows that retired and elderly people who live on fixed incomes without the benefit of large capital sums are extremely nervous about the way in which the domestic position is affecting and will affect them in future.

More important is the position that affects commercial ratepayers, especially small businesses. The National Federation of the Self-Employed and Small Businesses has done a great deal of work in my constituency and other areas in trying to assist appeals that will be necessary. The Minister has said in exchanges with me that he believes that the appeal mechanism will deal with the problem.

Mr. Ancram: If it is unfair.

Mr. Kirkwood: The appeal mechanism will deal with the problem, if it is unfair. However, the problem is more fundamental than that. Money is now much tighter than it was at the time of the last revaluation, which caused tremendous heartache. We must take into account the present high interest rates. Small businesses have had commercial increases visited on them which bear no relation to their profitability, as the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) said. They cannot anticipate the increases, such as those from revaluations and changes in the rate support grant this year. There is no security for them in future.

Family businesses find it extremely difficult to control their costs. They often employ members of the family and, like everyone else, they face increased costs, but can increase their income only by increasing the number of customers. In some cases that is impossible. The Under-Secretary comes from an area where there is a huge landward population, and knows that many such

businesses are situated in small villages and towns. Local authorities throughout Scotland are working hard to sustain landward populations. Changes such as these will have a dramatic impact. The Minister may say that it is localised, but I have examples from my constituency and from my hon. Friend the Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace), and, although the hon. Member for Tayside, North did not regale us with examples, all over Scotland there are many small businesses in rural areas which will suffer. If they do not suffer to the extent of closing, they will let the fabric of their heritable property suffer, whether it is a shop, a garage, a hotel and or whatever. They are laying in store problems for the future. The problems of tourism are also intimately involved, and the Government will have to take them into account.

Mr. Michael Forsyth (Stirling): The hon. Gentleman has defined the problem eloquently. What is the solution? Does he favour the Liberal party's previous solution of a local income tax, given that it would take until the early 1990s to introduce such a reform?

Mr. Kirkwood: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for intervening, because he brings me to my concluding point. If people criticise what is happening now, they must say what should happen in its place. If I were the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland now, the position is so serious for commercial ratepayers that I would introduce an emergency package of relief for them. The hon. Gentleman may say that the machinery is not easily available for that, and I accept that. As he says, commercial ratepayers are not represented locally in terms of votes on local authorities. Therefore, it is unreasonable to expect them to suffer increases of more than 50 per cent. in the short term.

It may not be easy to resolve the problem, but one device could be investigated. If the average multiplier of commercial rates is 2·6 across the board, why do we not consider giving cash relief on an established needs basis to every commercial ratepayer who has suffered a rate increase of a multiplier in excess of 4? In some parts of the country the multiplier is nothing like 2·6; it is somewhere between 4 and 7. The Stirling area is one such area. In the Scottish Grand Committee on Monday the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Corrie) and the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) talked about such increases. We can all show cases where the multiplier is more than 4. I do not believe that, numerically, that would be a big number. I would guess—it is a fag-packet estimate—that between 1,000 and 1,500 businesses in Scotland are in that position. If they all received an average cash payment of £1,000—that is another fag-packet estimate — the Government would have to spend only £1 million or £1·5 million, which would be a lifeline to those small businesses. That is what I would do, because the problem is so serious that it would merit such treatment.

If the Minister is searching for gestures that are slightly more hollow but which nevertheless would be welcome, he could increase the percentage that commercial ratepayers could retain while they appeal. At present, the proportion is 10 per cent. Some of those businesses will not last a year. If the Minister made the proportion 50 per cent., to give those businesses a breathing space until their affairs were in order, he would do much to help. Those are the short-term measures that we should be considering now.

For the long term, the Liberal party has a well-developed policy on local income tax which could be brought forward. The computerisation programme could be put on stream earlier. I know that that is the argument which the Minister will put forward in defence of the local income tax not being introduced earlier.

The right hon. Member for Govan said that a local income tax would not be the complete answer, and I agree with him. It would have to be supported by central funding. But it is not impossible. This revaluation is my first—I hope that it is my last—and I do not believe that the present system can survive.

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Motherwell, South): Is the hon. Gentleman aware that small business people in my constituency are being told that the appeals delay will be not one year but two years? Does he accept that they have no chance of staying in business if their cases take so long?

Mr. Kirkwood: That is a valuable point, which gives me a good point on which to wind up my speech.

In my constituency I have had meetings, and I know that other hon. Members have had similar experiences, which have shown that traders are getting together and are systematically and in concert using the appeal procedure, which will get clogged up. If that happens, there is no early prospect of getting this business resolved. I make no apology for indulging in special pleading for small businesses in the commercial sector. I hope that the Secretary of State will consider some of the ideas that I have put forward.

12 midnight

Mr. Michael Hirst (Strathkelvin and Bearsden): I feel that I am uniquely entitled, if not well qualified, to speak in this debate, as my constituents have the invidious distinction of paying the highest rates in Scotland, and probably, outside central London, the highest rates in Britain. I was somewhat rueful to note in *The Times* this morning that the average rates for Kensington and Chelsea for next year are £743, when many of my constituents would give their eye teeth to be paying only £743.

It was perhaps inevitable that the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) should choose this subject, but it was wrong and unjust of him to try to make political capital out of the understandable fears of the people of Scotland. Labour's position on local government spending bears just a moment of examination. Labour party members are the people who invariably support higher spending. Has one ever heard of a Labour-controlled local authority that wants fewer services? Labour party members can find the money for the striking miners when it suits them. They are the people in Edinburgh district council who have not spared any expense to put up signs all around the city advertising their peculiar notion that higher local spending produces more local authority jobs. They are the people who are sending their councillors off on a freebie to Cordoba to study nuclear-free zones, with not the slightest consideration for the poor ratepayers at home who have to pick up the tab for them. They are the people who, in Glasgow, were prepared to knock down a block of tenements rather than sell them to the private sector.

I invite the House, although it is gone midnight, to consider what the prevailing level of rates in Scotland would be if it were not for the efforts that my right hon.

[Mr. Michael Hirst]

Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland has made to restrain local government spending. The Conservative party does not take credit for the fact that local government spending is higher in quantum terms than it was in 1979.

Some Labour Members support revaluation, and I give them credit for their honesty in admitting it. They did so in 1982 when the matter was first discussed, and do so now that it is back on the agenda. They are the people who want higher spending and are not willing to compromise over any restriction on services. That cocktail must mean higher rates for ratepayers. It was an unconvincing performance for the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley to weep crocodile tears on behalf of Scottish ratepayers when one looks at the example of his friends in local government.

I recognise the widespread concern in Scotland, and the bewilderment and anger of many people who will have to pay substantially higher rates next year. They ask two legitimate questions. The first is why they in Scotland should have a revaluation when there is no revaluation south of the border, and the second is why, on this occasion, the domestic ratepayers are suffering.

Although the principles of rating may be similar north and south of the border, the practices are different. I notice that the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson) is here. He rather likes the way of organising our rating system that we have in Scotland. The fact that the assessors are bound by statute to have regular revaluations in Scotland, but that the Inland Revenue south of the border is able to postpone, apparently indefinitely, its revaluations is a grievance that Scottish ratepayers are right to articulate.

I note that Scottish requirements are dealt with under legislation that was passed by the last Labour Government, supported by the Liberal party. Is it not the ultimate hypocrisy that the Opposition should now be weeping crocodile tears about the increases? Scottish ratepayers must not be allowed to forget that the Act of Parliament which calls for periodic revaluation in Scotland was passed by a Labour Government.

Mr. Home Robertson: Will the hon. Gentleman reflect upon the fact, since he referred to hypocrisy, that the manifesto commitment of his party was as follows:

"We will also take steps to bring the Scottish and English valuation systems more into line, to prevent anomalies occurring."?

What has gone wrong?

Mr. Hirst: I spent most of last winter sitting in Committee all through the night on the Rating and Valuation (Amendment) (Scotland) Act. The hon. Gentleman was the Whip on duty and I was convinced that he was blinkered, if not asleep. The fact that he has asked that question, when I recall that we spent about six hours talking about English comparators, proves to me that the Committee discussions went right over his head.

The other question which many of my constituents are asking is why Scottish domestic ratepayers have come out worse. Few domestic ratepayers recall that the result of the 1978 revaluation was that industrial ratepayers were hammered while domestic ratepayers were treated relatively lightly. However, inflation was running at 25 per cent. under the last Labour Government. Although the amount paid by domestic ratepayers went down after the 1978 revaluation, none of us noticed the difference because of the prevailing rate of inflation.

This time, however, there is a partial redress of the imbalance, or so we are told. Industrial ratepayers will pay less while commercial ratepayers come out about even, but I have heard of no commercial ratepayer in my constituency who finds himself the uniquely favoured recipient of a neutral rates bill. I very much hope that the Minister will be able to leap to his feet, as he has already done with unfailing regularity, and tell me about some of the commercial ratepayers in Strathkelvin and Bearsden who have been presented with a neutral rates bill.

The domestic ratepayer will bear a larger share of the burden, and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State was prepared to acknowledge that fact. Although the Opposition may scoff, he was prepared to come to the House and offer Scottish domestic ratepayers more relief than their friends in COSLA had requested. The 5p initially and the extra 3p subsequently may be scorned by the Opposition, but it is not scorned by my ratepayers, who appreciate the relief that has been given.

The right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) was right when he said that one of the causes of higher rates was the reduction in rate support grant. That fact has to be recognised by all hon. Members. It would be quite wrong of me to welcome higher spending on health, social services and law and order without at the same time accepting that other budgets will suffer a consequential reduction. Although I regret the reduction in the level of rate support grant, I accept that it is part of the package which my right hon. and hon. Friends in the Scottish Office believed it right to implement.

My concern does not stop at the quantum of rate support grant but extends to its distribution. This has caused much anguish in district councils. The needs element of rate support grant has been substantially curtailed. I have made representations privately to the Minister and publicly—*[Interruption.]* Hon. Members do me a disservice if they think that I am thinking of only one local authority. I am concerned about both local authorities in my constituency. Both have suffered reductions, although they are of different complexions. The irony is that, if ever there was an example of a local authority running its affairs in a prudent and careful way it is the Bearsden and Milngavie district council. I am grateful to the Minister for his assurances. He acknowledges the prudent way in which that council has conducted itself. I am grateful for his extra support on the non housing revenue account allocation this year.

Such a substantial reduction puts pressures on local authorities, their officials and councillors and ultimately upon the ratepayers. I am not ashamed to admit that I argued for a slower shift of resources from the districts to the regions because I believe that a massive shift will create difficulties. As a pragmatist, I am a gradualist in all things. *[Interruption.]* I am sure that the people of Scotland will be reassured by the fact that after midnight signs of life come from the Opposition Benches.

I repeat the concern that I expressed on Monday in the Scottish Grand Committee about the rate support grant allocation for 1986-87. I was heartened by the Minister's assurance that he and the Secretary of State would consider my representations carefully. However, like many other hon. Members, I find rates an unsatisfactory method of financing local government expenditure. They are

regressive. They take no account of ability to pay. The people who are most severely affected by rates are those on modest incomes, those who have retired but have some savings, and those who are on a level of income which is just too high to obtain benefit, but for whom rates take a significant proportion of their income.

The rating system takes no account of the use made of local services. How many times is resentment expressed to hon. Members on all sides of the House by people who can see that some neighbouring households enjoy four or five incomes, but pay the same rates?

The Rating and Valuation (Amendment) (Scotland) Act 1984 made several welcome improvements to the rating system, but one of the objections to the system is that overspending is passed back to the ratepayer. The real losers are the ratepayers who suffer loss of grant, not the people who enjoy the extra services which contribute to the overspending. Construction firms and small businesses who could have a share of the capital spending cake, which is forfeited because of overspending, also suffer.

Mr. Henderson: Is my hon. Friend aware that an overspend of only 5 per cent. by five regional councils, which does not sound very much, works out in practice, for the reasons that my hon. Friend is giving, in ratepayers having to face a 22 per cent. increase in rates, whereas if there is a cut of 5 per cent., the effect on rate increases in regional councils would be only 2 per cent.?

Mr. Hirst: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making the point. He has made with eloquence a point which can be repeated in councils the length and breadth of Scotland. It is the same old thing, that he, like me, must reflect ruefully upon the fact that the local authority was prepared to churn out money as though is was from a printing machine when it came to helping its friends in the mining community, whose misery was self-inflicted, unlike the misery inflicted upon ratepayers as a result of what has been done.

I have to argue strongly for a review of the system, not least because the relationship between local government and central Government must be reformed. I believe that there are substantial advantages to be obtained from removing the inevitable haggling that results year after year, the penalties that are imposed on local government for profligacy and the objectionable results that are often passed back to the ratepayers as a result of overspending.

I believe—here I may be at variance with some of my hon. Friends—that, when the history books are written, revaluation will be shown to have been the catalyst that brought about the reform of the domestic rating system which we all want. I believe that the injustices of the system and the way in which it has worked out in practice have created an irresistible momentum for change which I hope will be picked up and reflected in action by Government.

I have to utter a word of caution, because there will be those who will argue that there is advantage and merit in Scotland being the guinea pig for some sort of United Kingdom change. The great beauty of the Government is that we have the breadth of vision and the breadth of debate. Unfortunately, that is not be found on the Opposition Benches, whose Members have given us a predictable response. I urge caution because I recognise that a Scotland-only solution will narrow the alternatives. At this stage, I should like to see the field left as open as possible. I do not believe that there is any advantage in hurrying towards a solution which will take us off one hook merely to impale us upon another. *[Laughter.]*

I think that it is tragic that the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley should be bursting with laughter about a serious matter which afflicts his constituents as well as mine. I believe that, when Opposition Members read *Hansard*, they will reflect upon the matter.

I do not want a botched solution. I want to see a solution that takes account of the momentum for change both north and south of the border, and one that properly takes account of ability to pay and the use made of local services.

I am bound to confess to a preference for a system of local income tax with some control. I accept that there will be problems in achieving this, although hon. Members who were present last Wednesday to hear the Financial Secretary to the Treasury winding up the debate on the Budget will be aware that he explained that the developments in the computerisation of taxpayers' records south of the border were likely to take place sooner than many of us had otherwise expected. In bringing together the tax and Budget systems, I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends in Government will not forget the possibility that must exist for developing a system of income tax.

Mr. Forsyth: Allowing for the problem of computerisation, how would my hon. Friend overcome the problem, with a local income tax, that the Inland Revenue say that the minimum by which the tax could be increased would be a halfpenny, meaning that local authorities would have to increase their revenue by amounts of 10 per cent. on each occasion. That would encourage the very profligacy about which he has been complaining.

Mr. Hirst: That is a legitimate point. If the political will exists, such problems can be overcome. At the end of the day, a hybrid solution may be produced, though I am not attracted by that possibility.

I hope that tonight the Minister will be able to reassure the beleaguered Scottish ratepayers that the Government understand the problem, that an important element has been the overspending—which seems to be encouraged by Opposition Members—and that there is at least the prospect of a commitment to reform.

12.22 am

Mr. David Lambie (Cunninghame, South): The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) said that many small businesses would find themselves bankrupt before their appeals were decided. Indeed, he thought that appeals could take a year or two to decide. I am one of the few hon. Members who participated in a major appeal at the time of the 1978 revaluation. Four years passed before we received a decision from the appeals tribunal in Edinburgh, and that appeal concerned just over 50 ratepayers. Today, almost everybody who has recently received an assessment has indicated an intention to appeal.

Appeals of this nature must be based on comparisons. The only way to obtain a comparison is to check the valuation rolls. As those documents are not printed and available locally, an appeal cannot even be started. For that reason, the hon. Member for Roxburgh and

[Mr. David Lambie]

Berwickshire made a valid point when he said that small businesses would be bankrupt before their appeals were resolved.

Mr. Ancram: It is worth remembering that under section 9 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1975 there is a proviso for rating authorities to agree with the appellant for the payment of less than 90 per cent. until the appeal has been determined. Local authorities may wish to consider that.

Mr. Lambie: On that basis, people who have been charged an increase of, say, £100, could be told, "If you appeal, we will save you £10 this year, but you must pay £90 of the increase." The important part is the £90, not the rebate that they will be given while the appeal is under consideration. The Minister's point represents only a sop. He has no experience of these matters. He should consult the Secretary of State, who knows how long it takes to get these matters settled. Many of the right hon. Gentleman's constituents in Ayr were time-barred from appealing because of the delay that was involved in reaching what has become known as the Troon decision. Therefore, before the hon. Gentleman tries to be smart, let him consult the Secretary of State for Scotland.

The point was made by the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Hirst) that the Government have said that in regard to commercial property the revaluation is neutral. Let them tell the shopkeepers in the main street in Callendar, or the people in my area, or the people in the constituency of the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Corrie), that it is a neutral revaluation. It is all right for the Under-Secretary to come to the Dispatch Box and say that everything in the garden is lovely and that Ayr racecourse and Ayr United football club will get massive reductions in their rates bills.

What will the hon. Gentleman say to all the bowling clubs in North Ayrshire? What will he say to Ardeer bowling club, for example, with a membership of 82 men and 44 women, where the rateable value of £1,750 will be increased to £4,400, an increase of 251 per cent.? The members will be well pleased when I tell them that all the supporters of Ayr United are doing well. All the friends of the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) who go down to Ayr racecourse will be pleased that it is doing well. What about the ordinary people who are members of bowling clubs which will be put out of business because of the effects of revaluation?

My hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) talked about the by-election result for the North Kyle seat on Strathclyde regional council. That is an area I know well. I was glad to lose it from my old constituency of Central Ayrshire under the boundary revision, because there were not many Labour voters in it. Some of my Labour colleagues were angry when I said that that part of Central Ayrshire should go to the constituency of the Secretary of State. He was happy to get it.

One of the reasons why the Tories lost that by-election may have been that they sent down their old friend, John Davidson, the Scottish director of the Confederation of British Industry, to speak to the young Tories in Troon the Saturday before the by-election. What did he speak about? He told them that revaluation was the greatest thing since sliced bread and that ICI's rates had been substantially reduced. The week before, John Harvey-Jones, the chairman of ICI, made a statement in London that ICI had made £1,000 million profit last year. The ratepayers of Troon had to cheer that. ICI, Beechams and Roches are getting their rates reduced, but the ratepayers in Troon are getting their rates increased. That was probably why the Tories lost the by-election. If the Labour party ever wants a spokesman before a by-election, it should send for John Davidson. He will make a good job of it; he is certainly honest. The CBI is organised and financed by big business, and he is not interested in the small businesses in my area.

I shall have to say to the garage owners in my area and in that of the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North, "It is all right. ICI is getting its rates reduced." During the past three years local garage owners have slimmed down their organisations to the bone. Throughout Scotland, garages are going bankrupt because of the economic conditions, and now they are facing increased valuations. For example, in Irvine, one garage rateable value was £4,555; it is now up to £8,500. In Dalry, in the constituency of the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North, the old rateable value of another garage was £10,247; the new rateable value is £19,150. What is the solution? Men will have to be sacked and facilities curtailed.

Mr. Home Robertson: Sack the Member of Parliament.

Mr. Lambie: The hon. Member will speak for himself, and I am sure that he will support me when he catches your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I am sorry that the hon. Member for Dumfries is not here, because earlier he participated in much banter. Matters are too serious for ratepayers in Scotland for hon. Members to make party political speeches. The ratepayers want decisions—now, not by and by. There should be a united front of all hon. Members interested in being fair to Scotland's ratepayers—not just the major industries—whom we are supposed to represent.

Mr. Bill Walker: In what would the hon. Gentleman like Conservative Members to join him? It is lovely to be "fair". How does the hon. Gentleman propose to be fair?

Mr. Lambie: It is always wrong to give way at this stage of a speech. If the hon. Gentleman had waited, I would have answered the point.

Matters are too serious for party political speeches and for people to indulge in banter about what happened in 1971, 1976 and 1982. As a Member of Parliament representing Troon until the last election, I know how substantial increases in valuation can effect people, especially those on low incomes. It does me no good to say that there is a voice shouting in the wilderness, although I must be fair and point out that our campaign had the full support of the right hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger) from 1978-79 until he became Secretary of State for Scotland. He then left the team and battled with me. I am looking for support from hon. Members so that immediate decisions can be taken to help people.

The foundation of the modern Scottish rating system was the Poor Law (Scotland) Act 1845. Since the passing of that legislation, there have been a series of royal commissions, departmental committees and working parties looking into the rating system. There is nothing

new in examining complaints about the system. Every one of those major committees, with one exception, has until recently come out in favour of the present rating system.

In 1976, the Labour Government set up the Layfield committee to investigate rates in the United Kingdom. It too, after all its investigations, came out in favour of the present basic rating system, although it said that it should be modified by the introduction of an element of local income tax. In 1982, when the Select Committee on the Environment decided to investigate the rating system, it also came out, after all the evidence, in favour of the present rating system. Therefore, those who want to change the system must do so in a way that counteracts all the evidence that has been given to the various royal commissions, departmental committees, working parties, Select Committees and so on since 1845.

It is not right that, as the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden said, revaluation was stopped in England and Wales because the Inland Revenue refused to do it. That is not true. Revaluation was stopped in England and Wales in 1979 when the present Secretary of State for Defence, who was then Secretary of State for the Environment, went to a Tory party conference and told the ratepayers of England and Wales to tear up the assessment forms that had been issued by the Inland Revenue.

If the Secretary of State is really serious, why does he not tell the ratepayers of Scotland to tear up their revaluation notices, get us back to square one, and give us a chance to look at the alternatives? Let us not interfere at this stage with the balance between domestic ratepayers, commercial ratepayers and industrial ratepayers.

That is one of the things which the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) and all of us should be advocating if we are serious. I cannot expect the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden to support me, because he is a young guy looking for promotion, as are some hon. Members on this side as well, but old stagers like the hon. Member for Tayside, North and my old friend the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) have nothing to gain in the promotion stakes. The latter has already burnt his boats. He should be speaking up in support of the ratepayers.

In 1981, after the Secretary of State for the Environment had told the ratepayers of England and Wales to tear up their assessment notices, the Government published a Green Paper on alternatives to domestic rates. They looked at the alternatives—a local sales tax, local income tax, the poll tax, so dearly loved by the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth)—and rejected them completely.

The Government also put forward the other alternative —the correct one, which I think we should be following —which is assigned Exchequer revenue for such things as education and police, even considering 100 per cent. Government grants. Education is now 50 per cent. of all local government expenditure. Why do the Government not finance education completely? That would solve many of the problems. I know that many councillors and other people, including myself until a certain stage, said that we could not have 100 per cent. Government grants because that would be doing away with local democracy, but there is no local democracy now. Why do we not change the Government? It was a Labour Government who brought in indicative costs. Local authorities are never again to be given a free hand. We have to accept that. The Government set the sum of money that is given to local authorities. Local democracy should then consist of the local council deciding on the priorities within the budget.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Lambie: I am just about to finish.

I can remember the old days when my father was treasurer of the borough of Saltcoats, and when the councillors could sit down and say, "How can we benefit the people who stay in Saltcoats?" My father could manipulate grants by the Labour or Conservative Government, no matter how they were paid out; for example, the old equalisation grant. Saltcoats always did well because we had a person who could use local democracy. We built houses when the rates of interest were low. It might not have been a Socialist solution, but we stopped building then when the rates of interest were high. There were no developments then. When the subsidies came down, we stopped building. When the subsidies went up, my God we built. When subsidies were stopped for general housing and the Government started to give subsidies for multi-storey development, we said that Saltcoats would build two blocks of multi-storey flats. We were the smallest town in Britain, but we built multi-storey flats. Because of Dick Mabon we got permission, although it was against the advice of the then Secretary of State. We got the highest subsidy available.

That was local democracy, but it cannot happen now. My right hon. and hon. Friends and I should say to the Secretary of State, "Let us scrap the rate order tomorrow." The Secretary of State should withdraw it. We should say to him, "Let us tear up the valuation notices and get back to the old valuation." He should give us the opportunity of looking at the alternatives. We could find quick alternatives. My right hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) said that we could not change things overnight——

Mr. Millan: I never said anything of the sort.

Mr. Lambie: I thought that my right hon. Friend said that.

The people in Southern Ireland abolished local rates on domestic properties overnight. Why does the Secretary of State not do that? If we want to give a lead, we should do that.

If Conservative Members and my right hon. and hon. Friends in the Opposition are thinking of helping the ratepayers of Scotland, let us unite and stop all this party political battle and banter from one side of the House to another. Let us get things done. We shall force Ministers on the Front Bench to pay fair to the ratepayers.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Order. I remind the House, as speeches seem to be getting longer, that we need brevity if all those anxious to speak are to be able to do so.

12.42 am

Mr. John Corrie (Cunninghame, North): I find myself in trouble again because I am going to agree with much of what the hon. Member for Cunninghame, South (Mr. Lambie) has just said. Before I go any further, I should like to be the one to claim the small prize of the hon. Member

[Mr. John Corrie]

for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) for the highest revaluation, at 550 per cent. No one has yet made such a claim.

I remind the House that the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) stood at the Dispatch Box in July 1982, when we had the postponement of rating revaluation. He insisted that the Government went ahead with that revaluation when it came about in 1983-84. I assume that, when he stood there and said that, he hoped that he would win that election, so he must have been perfectly happy to see a rate revaluation coming up.

I am probably the only person on Conservative Benches who sat on the Committee with my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in 1974, looking at ways of changing the present system. It was agreed, as many Opposition Members have said, that we should repeal domestic rates. However, in 1974, it would have taken a few hundred million to wipe out domestic rates. After five years of the Labour Government, by the time we came to power in 1979, that figure had increased to a few thousand million. When we came to power, that was part of the reason why it was not done.

It is interesting to note the reactions to poll tax from the Opposition. There is no doubt that, whatever else it would do, local authorities would be less inclined to push up a poll tax when it affected people who were also the voters. That may be right, when there is so much opposition to a poll tax from the Labour party. However, it is at that moment that I part company from my hon. Friend the Minister, because no issue in Scotland has angered my constituents more than revaluation has over the past few months. During 11 years in Parliament, I have never had such bitter, angry and, on many occasions, vile letters as I have received during the past few months.

People do not want even to try to understand why revaluation has taken place—they are against it and that is the end of it. Reasoned replies trying to explain why it has occurred are not accepted. Even more worrying, it has provoked nationalistic feelings in Scotland such as we have not seen since 1974. That is bad for Scotland.

The regular theme running through many of the letters is that Scotland has become a second-class nation. People wonder why they should be hammered when the English have escaped revaluation. It is no use saying that it is 12 years and England is out of phase, so when the time comes there will be 1,400 per cent. increases in England. We do not know whether that time will come. It is no use saying that domestic rates in Scotland are more, on average, than they are in England because the whole thing is distorted by housing in Scotland. It is no use saying that we must compare like with like because that does not hold water.

Hotels, sporting grounds and shops are not just hundreds but often thousands of pounds out of phase between England and Scotland. The whole rating system is now so discredited that the public will no longer tolerate it. There can be no more ifs and buts—it is no use tinkering with the rotten system, because the more we do so the more rotten it will become. We must change the system.

Many constituents are angry about the way that the assessors work. They believe that assessors, at the stroke of a pen, can decide the valuation of any property. Because there are so many assessors and so many variables throughout Scotland, there is a real distortion in the valuation of properties. The worry is that if someone appeals and uses a friend's property with a ower valuation as an example, that friend's property valuation might be raised. Can my hon. Friend the Minister confirm that?

I make no apology for putting forward some examples, such as the small island of Cumbrae which is a tourist island with a small population. It depends on its tourists, hotels and shops. I thank Mr. Bill Reid from the local tourist association for producing figures. The domestic rateable value in total has risen from £173,000 to £493,000, a factor of 2·86. That of the house has risen from £56 to £308—an increase of 550 per cent. The domestic rate paid has risen from £246,000 to £326,000 — an increase of 32·1 per cent. On commercial properties, the rateable value in total has risen from £74,000 to £175,000—an increase of 229 per cent. The rates payable have risen from £103,000 to £122,000—an increase of 17·3 per cent. The rates bill in total for that small island, which depends on its small shops and businesses in the short summer season, has risen from £377,000 to £478,000—an increase of £101,000 or 26·3 per cent. That is about £90 per head of the population.

I was there last week and saw tears of despair among many of the shopkeepers, who cannot face such an increase. There was one small bar whose rateable value increased from £800 to £4,400. Businesses cannot cope with such impositions. The story is the same throughout the constituency. I was reading the local newspaper only today about a famous restaurant in the area that is called The Moorings. The business hoped to reopen for the tourist season, but it has been told that if it did its new rateable value would be £60,000, an increase of £15,000 since last year. The management has decided not to reopen the restaurant. That is a disaster for Larga, which is a tourist area.

There are three options. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State could do nothing. That would be unacceptable to both sides of the House and to the public generally. Secondly, he could find extra finance. I accept that he has already done so, and that has made a difference. However, it is highly unlikely that he will be able to do so again in the light of the present constraints. Thirdly, he could find a fairer way to spread the burden. That must be done so that those who pay are those who can afford to do so. We must overcome the unfortunate and, indeed, tragic circumstances that many are now facing.

12.52 am

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): I was interested to hear the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Hirst) attack local authorities such as Glasgow.

Mr. Hirst: I did not mention Glasgow.

Mr. Martin: The hon. Gentleman has a cheek to attack any local authority for spending, for he is not slow to spend himself. He spends his Tory party funds on sending out newsletters that sometimes consist of six pages. He does so every month.

Mr. Hirst: Private enterprise.

Mr. Martin: I put it to him when I was on the Edinburgh relief road inquiry that it was good of him to send a birthday card to a young girl in his constituency. He could not remember the girl to whom he had sent the

card. He explained that he sent out so many birthday cards that he could not remember the individuals. If local authorities emulate the hon. Gentleman's example, they will be spending a great deal of money.

Mr. Corrie: Cheap.

Mr. Martin: The hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden attacks local authorities when he knows that he imposed a burden of £39 million on the good people of Edinburgh by approving a relief road——

Mr. Hirst: I do not think that this is the time or the place to discuss the relief road. However, I remind the hon. Member that the merits of the case were well proved. Does he approve of the decision taken by his local authority, Glasgow district council, to prefer a hole in the ground to selling flats to private enterprise? That is the attitude that it takes in pursuit of political ideology.

Mr. Martin: The hon. Gentleman claimed that he did not attack Glasgow and now he has reminded us that he did.

Mr. Hirst: What is the answer to my question?

Mr. Martin: Those in glasshouses should not take a bath. The hon. Gentleman should not attack others for spending when he did exactly that only a few weeks ago. He was given legal advice by high respected Queen's counsel on the eighth day of an inquiry. He was advised that the inquiry should not proceed as it was not proper that it should. The hon. Gentleman could have stopped it after eight days but he decided that it should continue. The inquiry continued for 52 days, with six QCs receiving £750 a day. He cost the taxpayers nearly £1 million by not taking legal advice. He should not attack Glasgow for doing anything which might be considered illegal. He is not so good at taking legal advice himself.

Mr. Hirst: Oh dear. I understood the facts.

Mr. Martin: The hon. Gentleman forgets that the senior officials who give advice to Glasgow councillors all live in his constituency. They all live in Bearsden. He should not attack Glasgow too much, because he may be having a go at his own constituents and he badly needs their votes. He should remember how many people in his constituency depend for their livelihood on Glasgow district council and Strathclyde region, so when he imagines that he is attacking a Labour administration he is in fact attacking his own constituents.

The hon. Gentleman also forgets that his local authority, to which he gives a pat on the back, does not have the Scottish Opera, the Scottish National Orchestra or the world famous Burrell art collection in its area.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Martin: No, I will not give way. We have been asked to keep our contributions short. The hon. Gentleman was not here earlier.

Mr. Forsyth: I was upstairs in Committee.

Mr. Martin: I do not care where the hon. Gentleman was. He was not here to take part in the debate.

The hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden should remember that a great deal of Glasgow's financing goes to the benefit of people living in the peripheral areas of Glasgow who do not contribute to the rates.

Mr. Hirst: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Martin: No, I have given way to the hon. Gentleman already.

My secretary has been on the phone to the Scottish Office to inquire about the poverty fund that the EEC is supposed to have set up. If local authorities are under attack, that fund should be available for projects in Springburn because there is a great deal of poverty in my community. I understand that about £100,000 is available from the EEC to help projects such as the after-school care scheme devised by the Springburn single parents association. With the sum available we shall be lucky to finance four projects a year in Scotland. It is clear, therefore, that the millions of pounds that the Secretary of State says are available to help ratepayers are in fact coming from other funds within the Scottish Office.

If help is not forthcoming from the Scottish Office for projects in my community, there will be pressure on the local authority. As a result of high unemployment and the other problems faced by communities such as mine, more and more authorities have to consider schemes that they would not have considered in the past when help was available from the Scottish Office, the Manpower Services Commission or the urban aid scheme.

Mr. Hirst *rose*——

Mr. Martin: No, I will not give way. I have waited for hours to make my contribution. The hon. Gentleman has already said his piece. Indeed, if he had not taken so long about it, we should be a good deal further ahead.

There are now more burdens on local authorities than ever before because of the problems presented to them by the Scottish Office. It is nonsense just to listen to small business men as though they were the only people worth considering. As long as I have been involved in local and national government, shopkeepers and business men have complained about the rates. However, they do not tell us that they depend on local government spending to make a living. Lafferty, the building company, would not exist if it were not for local government spending. Sub-contractors who work for such companies would not be in business if it were not for local government expenditure, so they cannot complain about paying rates for their premises. Indeed, they often lobby councillors, COSLA, Members of Parliament and Ministers for more spending on housing and road building.

Many shopkeepers approached me about the building of the Blindcraft workshop in Springburn. That workshop will not bring business directly, but it will indirectly as there will be more passing trade and activity in the area. If it had not been for Strathclyde regional council, it would not have been decided to bring the biggest blind workshop in Europe to my constituency. They cannot have it both ways—they cannot have projects in Scotland and not pay rates.

No matter what we introduce, whether rates, a poll tax or any other form of tax, there is no such thing as a popular tax. Whatever we introduce, people will complain.

1.1 am

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton (Edinburgh, West): I have listened with great interest to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin). For small business men and commercial ratepayers, we have heard of rateable values increasing from £800 to £4,000. In one case in my constituency, the increase was from nearly £700 to well above £2,000.

[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton]

Commercial ratepayers should be considered sympathetically and urgently. They should be made aware of the accelerated appeal procedure. During an appeal they are entitled to a 10 per cent. rebate. Can it be increased? It should surely be possible to table a suitable amendment or new clause to the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Bill on Report. I should be grateful if my hon. Friend the Minister would give that serious consideration.

There is nothing quite so powerful as an idea whose time has come, and the commitment that the rating system should be abolished within the lifetime of a parliament is such an idea. Revaluation will act as a catalyst, as my hon. Friend the Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Hirst) said. The central issue is the unfairness of the system and the fact that only a small proportion of the electorate contribute the vast proportion of the rates burden.

We should also consider the lack of accountability of the assessors. I vividly remember taking a group to see the assessor in Edinburgh after the new runway of Edinburgh Airport was built. It was clear that those living near the airport would suffer much heavier noise levels and have to have double glazing and the rest; yet he would not give them a reduction in rateable value. They took him to court and eventually defeated him. He refused to give way until forced to do so. My constituents shared the legal costs so that none bore too heavy a risk.

Mr. Norman Hogg (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth): Did not the Conservative party say that the idea's time had come in February 1974, when they made a manifesto commitment to abolish the rates? By 1979, that time had moved on and it had been abandoned altogether by 1983.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I cannot speculate what would have happened, if the Conservatives had won that election, but since they did not, the matter is academic. The present position is very different from that which persisted in the past. Domestic relief will help, but something stronger is required now.

I now turn to the solution that would work well in practice. A block grant on its own is insufficient because it would lead to inflexibility and the risk of continual confrontations. A substantial block grant funded from income tax, which covered the main services to a large extent and contributed between 70 and 90 per cent. of the expenditure required, would go a long way towards meeting the problem. If a balance is required, poll tax is a possibility. A poll tax needs an equal sum to be charged per capita, irrespective of income. That is not an insurmountable objection if the block grant is sufficiently large. However, there would be the problem of collection of a poll tax. I hope that my hon. Friend will think through all the implications of collection seriously before any firm decisions are made on that matter. I hope that he will also consider small businesses.

We heard earlier about racecourses. Will my hon. Friend also consider Edinburgh zoo? It is the highest rated zoo in the whole of Britain. It has the finest national collection of animals in Scotland. In the overall scheme of things, that may be a minor matter, but nevertheless it is important for Edinburgh. The time for fulfilling the promise to domestic ratepayers has come, and I hope that it will not be long before it is fulfilled.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am grateful to the hon. Member for his brevity.

1.6 am

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): The hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton) made that ringing statement with all the conviction of a man with a majority of 498. In due course we shall see whether the time has come for the reform of local government finance, or for new representation for the city of Edinburgh.

The hon. Gentleman cannot escape the fact that, whatever the rights and wrongs of the rating system, the Government have distorted the way in which the rating system bears on ratepayers in Scotland. The Government have gone to enormous lengths to confuse the issue of rates during the past six years. Year after year, they have cut the rate support grant and blamed local councils for the consequences of those cuts. We have seen an unprecedented shift of the burden of payment for local services away from central Government rate support grant to the poor suffering ratepayers. The Minister and the House know that, and the penny is beginning to drop among the ratepayers.

The rate support grant comes from funds raised through relatively fair central Government taxation, while rates are a spectacularly unfair, arbitrary form of local taxation. We have known that for a long time. We have had seven years of shameless humbug from what is left of the Conservative party in Scotland. How well we remember the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Ancram) sitting on the Back Benches four years ago ranting about Lothian regional council being the rogue elephant authority of Scottish politics because it had the audacity to try to protect the services that it was elected to provide.

Year after year the Government have taken action to force up the rates, but each year, with yet another diversionary tactic, local councils were vilified and we had the fascinating new concept of mandatory guidelines, clawbacks of rate support grant and, finally, rate capping. The latest round of rate support grant cuts, compounded by the effects of the revaluation, have been the last straw for the electorate and ratepayers of Scotland. The Scottish assessors have finally blown the Secretary of State's cover, and the poor Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), has been left to face the music.

I have some sympathy with the ratepayers of Eastwood and Ayr, because some parts of my constituency are similarly afflicted with irrationally inflated rateable values. I am thinking especially of north Berwick. Those anomalies were more or less tolerable when rates accounted for only a relatively small proportion of local authority budgets, but since successive cuts have meant that rate support grant has been shrunk out of all recognition from what it was before the Government came to power, all Scottish ratepayers have something to protest about.

In my constituency, the ratepayers of East Lothian district must pay 14·1 per cent. more in rates, although the district council has cut its net expenditure by 6 per cent. I would have wished the district council to improve some services and to spend more money, but the restraints imposed by the Secretary of State compel that local authority to restrict its budget. The fact that, despite the cuts, rates have increased graphically illustrates the impact

of the latest round of rate support grant cuts. To make matters worse, the revaluation has shifted an even greater share of the burden onto domestic and commercial ratepayers.

The Secretary of State for Scotland has been caught with his hands in the till, and he has panicked. Domestic rate relief has been increased by 3p, and we have unprecedented fluttering in the Tory dovecotes of Scotland. But the fact that the Secretary of State is flapping his wings does not mean that he will necessarily take off. As my hon. Friend the Member for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth (Mr. Hogg) said, we have been through this before. In February 1974, the Prime Minister gave a manifesto commitment to scrap the domestic rating system. What be came of that? Earlier, I referred to the Scottish Conservative manifesto of 1983 which, under the heading, "Local government: saving ratepayers' money", said:

"We will also take steps to bring the Scottish and English valuation systems more into line to prevent anomalies occurring."

I put that point to the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Hirst), who tried to wriggle out of it by saying that the Government had done something about race courses. There is only one race course in my constituency, and I am unaware of any in the hon. Gentleman's constituency. I do not believe that that reform has been of much help to the commercial and domestic ratepayers of Scotland.

We know now that the anomalies between the Scottish and English systems are being aggravated. The Scottish Tory party manifesto continued:

"We will make the valuation system more responsive to changing economic circumstances and make it possible for ratepayers to appeal more readily and for appeals to be settled quickly."

My hon. Friend the Member for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth suggested that every ratepayer in Scotland should lodge an appeal with the assessor. We shall see whether that ploy works. I would certainly not blame anyone for doing so.

The Government have overloaded the rating system to such an extent that it has become intolerable. They could put matters right by restoring a realistic level of rate support grant or by extending a special rating relief package. If they fail to do that, the rating system seems likely to collapse. The Secretary of State is caught between the electors of Troon and the Chancellor of the Exchequer. It will be fascinating to see which way he jumps.

1.13 am

Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): The rating system is an undemocratic system of taxation. First, the two contributors of commerce and industry have no vote. Of those who have a vote, 60 per cent. receive rate rebates, and of the 30 or 40 per cent. who do not receive rebates, only the householder pays. Therefore, the great benefit is to those who receive the services, and the great penalty is to those who must pay for those services. The system must go. If there is one benefit from the split of the various mechanisms that we have had, it is that the death knell of this disastrous system has at last been sounded.

The Socialists have overspent in their regions, and as Jamaica street has been changed from a shopping street into a desert, so the assessor has had to assess Jamaica street down and the prosperous little towns in the country areas up. As that has happened the needs element has been depressed, and the ratepayers who had something of which to be proud in frugal communities have suffered. That has been the result of the formula.

I do not blame my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for that fact. I find little comfort from the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan), who put through the Act introducing this measure in the first place. He does not even have a house in Scotland, so why is he saying that this is unfair?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: He has two houses.

Mr. Fairbairn: If the right hon. Gentleman has two houses, he is a true Socialist.

It is no good having achieved a situation in which the formula has squinted everything and punished the frugal. It has benefited the rate support grant of Socialist, extravagent authorities, such as Edinburgh, while punishing those, such as Perth and Kinross, which have been frugal. Whether or not that was the intention, that is the fact. It is no good talking about averages and saying that the North-West Castle hotel in Stranraer has had a decrease in its rates. Hurrah, it has had a decrease in its rates and if my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary were to go to Stranraer for the weekend, I have no doubt that there would be a 24 per cent. decrease in the cost of his bedroom.

That does not alter the fact that in our ordinary ratepaying areas we have a dangerous situation. Let us take a typical coffee shop in Crieff. In real cash terms, its owners will have to pay an 83 per cent. increase in real terms. They will have to obtain £70 more a week. They can put up their prices by 3 per cent., and add that to the 5 per cent. increase on wages and the 5 per cent. extra that they will have to pay on goods, plus VAT, and so on, but that is not realistic.

The Government must face the reality of the fact that in Perthshire domestic ratepayers will be faced with real 30, 35, 42 or even 48 per cent. increases. It is no good saying that they can stay in some stupid hotel in Stranraer, or watch football somewhere, when on their principal bill —rates are the biggest bill—they will face an increase.

Many people who are old, or who own shops, or who support tourism, or who have bought their own houses, or who are saving for their retirement, and whom we were elected to help, will, as a result of this mechanism, be victims. I do not want to give any help to the Opposition, who love it when the ratepayers, the retired, those who live in Perthshire and those who own their houses, whom they despise, are victims.

If a revaluation system causes inequity for individuals and also unemployment by putting small businesses out of work, and if it damages tourism, closes hotels and harms frugal authorities which have done their best to be economical and sensible, or those who have saved up to buy their own homes or for their retirement, the formula is per se wrong.

I am not interested in averages, or in whether the rates for one bowling green or one hotel go up or down. With inflation at 5 per cent. there cannot be a rating system in Scotland which forces some people to pay a penalty which in no circumstances is it possible for them to sustain. Be it domestic, with relief provided by the Secretary of State, be it commercial, with no relief, or be it commercial— down or up I care not. A system which creates such inconsequential unfairness cannot be tolerated. It is unfair

[Mr. Fairbairn]

to those who have done their best by their families and to those who have tried to set up in business or attract tourists. The home is the biggest investment that most people ever make. People should not be turned out of their homes by taxation if their circumstances change. Any system that creates such inhumanity is, I believe, wrong and must be swept away forthwith.

Royal Commissions act like bureaucrats, who have a staggering capacity to find a problem to any solution. Nothing could be worse than this system. It is inequitable and unfair. The Minister believes, as I do, in home ownership and in small businesses, tourism and employment. We must not allow a mechanism to be justified by averages if that mechanism harms employment, tourism, commerce and industry. It must be prevented from doing so much damage. We must prevent it now.

1.25 am

Mr. Jim Craigen (Glasgow, Maryhill): The hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) is right to advise the Minister that a crisis is upon us. We do not have much time for reflection about reform. As the hon. and learned Gentleman said, many households and businesses are faced with immediate problems as a result of the 1985 revaluation and the cut in the 1985-86 rate support grant by the Government.

Ministers must have been alarmed when the number held by my hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) came up tonight in the ballot. Revaluation, as a five-yearly exercise, has always been dramatic, but the 1985 revaluation is nightmarish because of the postponement by the Government for political reasons of the one due in 1983. Many of us believed that it would lead to a reform of the system after the general election.

After dallying all these years on rates reform, it looks as if we shall be propelled within weeks into reform proposals by Ministers, or perhaps the Prime Minister. The Perth Conservative conference in May might be a dress rehearsal for the measures that are about to be inflicted upon us. I wonder whether the Prime Minister will make a major pronouncement at Perth. Perhaps we shall have another "Declaration of Perth." We know what happened to the last one.

The suggestion of a poll tax is being floated. I noticed the disparity in views between the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) and the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Hirst) tonight. Scotland is apparently to be the science lab for experimentation in rates reform, with Scottish ratepayers as the guinea pigs, possibly having attached to their heads £200 per member of their household. No one has yet determined the extent of the poll tax.

The hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Corrie) and I entered the House at the same time. He referred to comparisons between Scotland and England. For years, Ministers have said that ratepayers down south pay less than ratepayers in Scotland. Now they are changing their tune and telling us that we do not know how lucky we are in Scotland because south of the Tweed ratepayers pay more.

I understand that the average rate bill in England for 1985-86 will be £420 per annum, including water charges, whereas the average in Scotland will be £397 per annum. Many people rightly wonder how, without revaluation, local authorities in England can operate. I received a letter from a constituent only today asking that question. Perhaps the Minister will explain how authorities have been able to cope since 1973 without revaluation. As my hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley said, English domestic ratepayers are likely to have a 9 per cent. increase in their bills.

The period allowed for appeals was mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, South (Mr. Lambie). Although this will run to 15 September, the Scottish Office has spent nearly £100,000 advertising the appeals machinery. As my hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray) aptly pointed out, there may well be a two-year period of uncertainty about the amounts that have to be paid. No wonder that another constituent wrote to me suggesting that the Secretary of State for Scotland might be taken before what was called the Race Relations Board because the constituent thought that the Secretary of State was doing down ratepayers in Scotland.

The Minister knows that I had correspondence with him at the beginning of the year concerning an article in the *Glasgow Herald* about disparities north and south of the border. The Minister's reply to my letter dated 30 January was a marvel. He concluded by saying:

"At the present time we cannot say with certainty how the results of the coming valuation will be perceived . . . People must have the chance to consider the results of the revaluation and the new appeal provisions must be given a chance to work before anyone can conclude that there remain significant valuation problems to be resolved."

When I listened to the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) tonight, I wondered what we had been doing in debates on the Rating and Valuation (Amendment) Scotland Bill. He made many speeches during consideration of that long Bill, in the course of which the Government promised that the legislation was going to sort out all the anomalies, except for the zoos. We wait for this legislation to bring comparability between the two systems. The Minister on a number of occasions turned down a suggestion that I made that one cannot have two separate systems of valuation north and south of the border and expect uniformity as a result.

Mr. David Marshall (Glasgow, Shettleston): I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way, especially as I missed most of the debate because, in common with some other hon. Members, I was until recently entrapped in the Standing Committee which is considering the Transport Bill.

My hon. Friend referred to anomalies. I should like to give him one example in my constituency which emphasises the point particularly well. It is the case of a lady who advises me that she has an empty yard with no buildings on it; she is what is commonly referred to as one of the show people. She keeps a caravan in the yard for six months of the year, and then is out and about in the country as one of the show people for the remaining six months. Her rateable value has increased from £390 to £2,000, an increase of over 500 per cent. What sort of anomaly is that?

Mr. Craigen: I can only say to my hon. Friend that we were told that the derating of caravans would help sort out these problems.

I saw a press report that my hon. Friend the Member for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth (Mr. Hogg) had got quite

excited about remarks in the *Glasgow Herald* that the Solicitor-General was "dumbfounded" by the increases, and that the right hon. Member for Stirling was "outraged". My hon. Friend described them as a couple of chocolate soldiers. He does a disservice to soldiery in this country. I think that they are more like a couple of chocolate smarties. We awaited the rebellion on the Government Back Benches tonight. In fact, I saw a report that the hon. member for Dumfries was to lead a deputation to see the Prime Minister, no less. I have heard the hon. Gentleman's speech, and he sounded more like the grand old duke of York: he went up the hill, and now he is taking the troops back down again.

Conservative Back Benchers are stuck with the past actions of their Ministers in relation to revaluation and yearly reduced rate support grants. This is hardly the time for them to complain about those matters, to which they consented. We are indeed facing a crisis. The Government should at least restore the cuts that they have made this year, of all years with revaluation, in the rate support grant orders for Scotland.

That would help a little with the enormous bills that domestic ratepayers in particular, but also many commercial ratepayers, will face in the coming year. The situation is horrendous for ratepayers. I am seriously worried about the state of local government in Scotland because, as a result of this operation overload, the Government are imposing more burdens on the rating system than it is capable of bearing.

1.36 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Michael Ancram): We did not need tonight's debate to make us more aware of the concern and deep anxiety that is felt in Scotland on the subject of rates. There has been considerable seriousness on the Conservative Benches tonight on this issue. On the Opposition Benches, on the other hand, there has been much frivolity and laughter. If we needed proof that this debate was an opportunist attempt by Opposition Members to take advantage of ratepayers, their attitude and behaviour in the Chamber tonight provided that proof.

The concern that ratepayers feel is shared by the Government. It is important, therefore, that we have a chance—as the debate has provided—to put the matter into perspective and to canvass the problem. Many points have been raised, but the thread to have come through the debate most strongly is that the rating system is unsatisfactory. We have never made any secret of our dissatisfaction with the system, and I shall say more on that later.

We start, as the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) rightly said, from the fact that rates are at present the system by which we finance local government. I wish, in the light of that, to look at the revaluation and the points that have been made about it.

I was surprised by the remarks of the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan), who seemed to suggest that there was no reason for the revaluation. He also seemed to say that the wisdom that came after the event, and certainly after one had left office, led him to believe that there were other ways of doing it, and he put forward a number of different ways by which he thought it could be done.

Labour's shadow Minister of State, when the right hon. Member for Govan was shadow Secretary of State, said in July 1982:

"The Minister should make it clear now that there will be no more flirting with this halfway house and parboiled non-solution."

Those were the words of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) about a mixed system of revaluation. He went on:

"He should tell us that there will be a proper revaluation in 1985-86".—[*Official Report*, 28 July 1982; Vol. 28, c. 1195.]

That is the revaluation about which we are talking tonight, and at least the hon. Member for Garscadden has had the honesty in recent months to make it clear that he does not take the view that this revaluation is wrong.

The first main question to be asked tonight was: why the revaluation? I do not want to go into all the basic reasons for revaluation, except to point out that revaluations as a whole do not affect the total burden of rateborne expenditure. They share out that burden according to individual property valuations. It is important in such circumstances that those valuations must not only be fair but up to date. That is why we have always had regular revaluations.

It is interesting to remember that we have had revaluations in 1961, 1966, 1971, 1978, when again there had been a two-year postponement, and now in 1985. In Scotland we have revaluations regularly by statute. It is important to realise that that is different from the English system, where there are revaluations at the discretion of the Government.

Several hon. Members have called for a postponement. I have already made the point that the date of the revaluation was set in the order in 1982. That was already a postponement. The House decided at that time that it would postpone the revaluation until now.

I think that the hon. Member for Cunninghame, South (Mr. Lambie) was the only Member who raised the possibility effectively of a postponement or a cancellation at this stage. To cancel or try to postpone a revaluation after it has been effectively completed would be a practical impossibility. We would be saying to those who have gained, "Whatever the valuer thinks about your position, you will have to go on paying more." They might have good grounds for appeal, and that might have implications for the rating basis.

Also, to postpone the revaluation at this stage, once local authority budgets have been drawn up on the basis of what the revaluation has achieved, not least in terms of the resources element, would throw local government finance in Scotland into total chaos. Neither the local authorities nor the ratepayers would thank us for doing that.

In regard to the effects of revaluation, the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mr. Craigen) fairly pointed out that the average figure for England for 1985-86 will still be higher than the average rate expenditure in Scotland, the figures being £429 in England, compared with £397 in Scotland, despite the fact that we have had two revaluations since the English last had theirs. The real burden in terms of rates lies in rate poundage and not in revaluation.

I have to accept that there are variations. My hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Corrie) produced examples which we all have to take seriously. If there is unfairness in any valuation that has been arrived

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at by the assessor, there is a system of appeal which we brought up to date in the Rating and Valuation (Amendment) (Scotland) Act 1984. That is available to allow people to test the assessor's views in the court.

Mr. Craigen: My real question was: how did the authorities in England cope when they last had a revaluation in 1973?

Mr. Ancram: The hon. Gentleman must appreciate that valuations do not affect how authorities cope, because the authorities receive the money that they want, based on the rating base that they find. What has happened, I suspect, in England as much as in Scotland is that there are people who are sitting on valuations which are well out of date and which probably require them to pay levels of rates which are highly unfair.

The overall balance within the revaluation transferred the burden from the industrial to the domestic ratepayer, the reverse of the last revaluation. Overall, the commercial effects were basically neutral. That became apparent to us in the autumn.

Mr. Bill Walker: Rubbish.

Mr. Ancram: My hon. Friend may say, "Rubbish". He dislikes averages, but we have to look at the overall position. The overall effect on commercial valuations was effectively neutral. He raised one or two examples. Even within his constituency there are commercial operations, such as, for instance, the bakery in Dunkeld road in Perth, which will have a reduction in its valuation of £3,085. All I will say once again is that we have to consider a revaluation in terms of the balances that it creates.

When it became clear to us in the autumn that the main burden was falling on domestic ratepayers, we took action immediately, through the domestic rate relief and reduced industrial derating, to halve the effect of revaluation and the rate support grant settlement on the domestic ratepayers. Only later, when we saw the effect which the budgets of local authorities would have—the fact that, once again, we would see local authorities overspending —did we realise that we had to do more. We increased the domestic rate relief by a further 3p — overall a multiplication of eight times the previous level.

Many people may have scoffed at what they called the 3p increase. It is worth considering what that is worth to the individual ratepayer. On a valuation of £500, £40 is met by domestic relief on the rate bill. On a valuation of £2,000, £160 is met by domestic relief on the rate bill.

Mr. Home Robertson: The extra 3p does not come to that much.

Mr. Ancram: This includes the whole 8p. For the average ratepayer in Scotland it is a subsidy of roughly 11 per cent. on the average rate bill. Taken against the increases that are likely, especially in areas which have low rates and have spent within guidelines but still have high values, the subsidy will aid those ratepayers—in many cases, by more than 50 per cent. of their increases. To scoff at those increased subsidies is not worthy of Labour Members.

The hon. Member for Maryhill talked about the rate support grant. He seemed to forget that domestic relief is part of RSG. That rate support grant has now been increased by £42 million over last year's amount. The total of domestic relief has been increased by £88 million. It is worth considering that the cost of revaluation to the domestic ratepayer out of the total changes this year was £90 million, £88 million of which has now been met through domestic relief. Despite the variations, it would be arguable——

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): No.

Mr. Ancram: Those figures are available. Despite the variations the Government have effectively dealt with the whole cost of revaluation.

Mr. Dewar: Not the whole cost.

Mr. Ancram: Within £2 million of the whole cost of revaluation.

Mr. Dewar *rose*——

Mr. Ancram: I cannot give way, because I have only two minutes left to speak.

The basic problem is that two thirds of the increase of 17 per cent. in domestic rates is applicable to local government overspending. The effect of revaluation and RSG settlements accounts for 6·5 per cent., and the rest of the 17 per cent. is due to revaluation.

Mr. Dewar *rose*——

Mr. Ancram: I give way. I misread the time previously.

Mr. Dewar: The point has passed to some extent. The problem is that, however much the hon. Gentleman may plead his case, it will carry no credibility, because people will look at the bill which they will have to meet in the end. People are really suffering from the cuts in the rate support grant settlement that have been forced on them, with the support of the rebel Government Back Benchers, during the past few years. If the hon. Gentleman really wants to help, he will, as we have urged, remove some of the unreasonable burden which has caused the whole system to creak and reach the point of collapse. The general thrust of the cuts which his policy represents have created real problems for ratepayers of every kind.

Mr. Ancram: I assume that the hon. Gentleman is making a case for an increase in the needs element of RSG. Is he seriously suggesting that if there were an increase in the needs element of RSG, in the majority of authorities in Scotland it would go to the ratepayers, or will it go — as is most likely — to increase expenditure? *[Interruption.]* If the right hon. Member for Govan, would stop and listen, he might discover that things have moved on since the days when he was Secretary of State for Scotland.

Let me make the point again that the basic reason for dealing with the problems of the domestic ratepayer through the domestic relief is precisely that that relief goes individually to the domestic ratepayers and helps most those who have the highest valuation. Those who have been hardest hit by the revaluation benefit most from the domestic relief. It fits hon. Gentlemen ill to mock the fact that very large sums of money have been put into this. As the hon. Member for Garscadden said, when the bills come in those who feared very high increases will find that the Government have helped them.

Turning to commercial ratepayers, I believe that what has been said in this debate shows that within the variations very serious problems arise. If those

commercial ratepayers believe that increases of the kind about which we have heard tonight are unfair, they are entitled to take those on appeal against the assessor and require him to test his proposition in the courts. I hope that hon. Members who have mentioned this possibility will look at the way in which we improved the situation last year, not least by the accelerated appeal procedure. I hope that that will be tried in the weeks and months to come.

The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire mentioned the proposition of a special financial deal for commercial ratepayers. I must say in all honesty that there is no machinery; it would require primary legislation. I must ask him this question: what would happen to those who gained in that neutral balance? Would they be allowed to keep what they had got? That could not be done in any way that could be regarded as fair.

Finally, I turn to the basic question of where we go from here. A number of my hon. Friends have put forward various suggestions. The Government are listening to and looking at all the suggestions that are coming forward at this time. We have never made any secret of our dissatisfaction with the rating system or of our determination to make improvements in the way that local government is financed. Despite our disappointment that no agreed solution emerged from the very thorough and comprehensive examination that we ran before the last election, we have continued to work towards discovering a better way.

As was announced last October, well before the results of revaluation were known, we have set up a ministerial study, in which I am involved with my right hon. Friend the Minister of State and my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Department of the Environment. I would not wish to pre-empt the consideration that we are making in that review. It follows from what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said today that we are determined to find an agreed solution to the problem. We believe that the system that we have at the moment is unfair and discriminatory. Some of the anomalies have been highlighted by the revaluation. I do not believe that there is any easy way in which solutions to this problem can be found, but our determination remains undiminished.

Newspaper Industry

1.53 am

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): On 4 May 1984 I had the honour to initiate an Adjournment debate on the newspaper publishing industry. I make no apology for coming forward tonight, 11 months later, to propose basically the same subject yet again because of what I see as the great difficulties connected with the printing and composing unions. They seem to have got stronger while management has been bashed time after time. I believe very much that the industry is now being subjected to industrial anarchy, and I think it is a very important point to make.

We have to bear in mind that 69 per cent. of people now read a daily newspaper. Recent statistics show that 38·3 million read a daily paper, 35·3 million of them taking a popular paper and 3 million a quality paper. The average readership of a Sunday paper is now 33·2 million people. It can be safely said, therefore, that any strike or loss of copies by shortfall affects many people.

Some of us recently fought a campaign against VAT on newspapers and on the cover prices, as we saw it as an attack on learning. I believe that denying people the automatic right to buy the paper of their own choice is much the same. I do not knock the regular circulation wars between the papers, but I consider it intolerable when regular availability at every local newsagent of a particular paper is no longer assured because of union interference. The culprits are always, I am afraid, the National Graphical Association and the Society of Graphical and Allied Trades, SOGAT '82, which continue to kick the newspaper industry for petty political points. They do not understand the number of people they are affecting. I do not mean just newsagents, who do not get paid when they do not have the copies to be sold, but all other people involved who want to know what is happening in society. They can listen to local and national radio and watch television, but the permanent word comes from the local or national daily paper, and if they cannot get that, they feel let down, and rightly so.

Every time one has an industrial stoppage, effectively one is bringing about an increase in the cover price. Both prestige papers such as *The Times* and popular papers such as *The Sun* have fought back with large-scale advertising in the former and mass circulation in the latter. However, large increases in the cost of production and cover prices have reduced the number of people buying more than one paper. That must be bad news for the industry.

I said last year that the industry was fighting to survive. Eleven months later, sadly, I see no change to report to date. The numbers of days lost through industrial action in the past six years are horrific. In 1979, 640,000 working days were lost. Incidentally, 600,000 were for *The Times* alone. In 1980, 128,000 were lost, in 1981 13,000 were lost—that was quite a reasonable year—in 1982, 15,000 were lost, in 1983, 30,000 were lost and in 1984 the provisional figure is 27,000.

Let us look at the number of stoppages in the newspaper industry for each of the past six years, which is equally bad, and embarrassing and shocking because it is affecting the industry. In 1979 there were 17, in 1980 there were 17, in 1981 the figure improved, going down to 13, and in 1982, it went down to 12. But up the figure came again in 1983 to 24, of which four were in March and four in

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November. In 1984 the figure was equal to that of 1983, although the industry was supposed to be improving, self-regulating and watching itself for the future. There were 24 stoppages: four in May, six in July and four in October.

Stoppages are caused for a variety of reasons, no doubt, but they can be costly to the companies concerned. The *Financial Times* lost £10·1 million in 1983 through one of those kamikaze stoppages. In 1984 it lost £1·3 million in revenue and 2 million copies were lost in that 10-week dispute. That is appalling. In 1985, to date, the *Financial Times* has already lost 166,000 copies. On 14 March, 49,900 copies were lost. On 15 February, 36,225 copies were lost.

Therefore, the industry is certainly not healthy and alive and kicking, in the way that I would like it to be. Hon. Members would not be far wrong in considering Fleet street industrial relations as in a state of anarchy.

I trace the root of the problem back to November 1983, to the *Stockport Messenger* group, where there was thuggery on the picket lines, but, for a change, a united front by the newspaper companies, which sued the NGA for maximum damages under the Employment Act 1982. I welcome my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary for Employment to his place on the Front Bench. Action was taken under the Employment Act because of the unlawful industrial action of union members in halting production of national newspapers on 25 and 26 November. Believe it or not, an estimated loss of £10 million was caused by strikes against Mr. Eddie Shah.

It is important to consider what is causing the problems. They are often small incidents of which people may not always take notice — yet they cripple the industry. Between January and February 1984, a dispute involving 550 SOGAT clerical workers halted publication of *The Times* and *The Sunday Times*. The origin of the dispute was the appointment of a member of the supervisory section of SOGAT to the position of picture librarian—supposedly a post for clerical branch members.

On 29 February 1984, all London editions of national newspapers were lost because it was the day following the so-called TUC day of action demonstrating solidarity with the trade union movement against Government action at GCHQ. On 12 April 1982, there was no London printing of the *Daily Express* and the *Daily Star* because of a dispute involving SOGAT publishing staff working in a warehouse. In June and August 1983, the *Financial Times* lost 59 days because of a dispute involving the NGA.

The number of stoppages, their duration and the consequential financial losses to national newspapers during the past five years include the following. In 1979, *The Times* was out between 1 December 1978 and 19 October 1979; in 1980, there was no *Financial Times* between 5 December and 15 December; in 1981, *The Times* was out between 25 September to 1 October; in 1982, *The Daily Telegraph* was out between 17 November and 27 November; *The Times* was out again from 20 December to 31 December.

It was not too bad a year in 1983, but the figures for 1984 are shocking—and they have been updated since I last spoke in an Adjournment debate on this matter. *The Times* was out between 13 January and 1 February; *The Observer* on 26 May; the *Financial Times* on 5 July; *The Guardian* on 9 July; *The Sun* between 13 July and 28 July; and *The Daily Telegraph* on 11 October.

There is no doubt that the industry is in a difficult state, and for some strange reasons. On 24 October the dispute at *The Times*, which had not published for two days, was about a fifth press needed to increase output. The NGA was offered 70 more jobs to man the press, but instead asked for more pay for its existing workers. The Newspaper Publishers Association received a request from print union leaders on 29 September for a 12 per cent. pay rise. Quite correctly, Lord Marsh said that the claim would not be considered until industrial action at the *Financial Times* and *The Evening Standard* was called off. He also said that the employers would not negotiate under duress. At that time the *Financial Times* had already lost 1,250,000 copies. That dispute needs to be put on the record.

There was more trouble on 28 December at the *Financial Times*. The management expected to take a tough line and may even have decided to suspend machine room workers — the reason was that there was leap-frogging in the joint press room agreement being sought between SOGAT and the National Graphical Association.

On 5 January there were, yet again, problems at the *Financial Times*. They arose over a 48-page edition. The NGA did not want such a large edition and it claimed that it broke an ACAS agreement. The disagreement was underpinned by substantitive negotiations on pay and manning and a new sick pay scheme. All that the *Financial Times* wanted was a joint press room. However, the NGA wanted to narrow pay differentials between its members. In the composing room its members were to earn £700 a week, but in the machine room it was £350. That is a large disparity, but both figures are incredible.

The Times lost two editions, on 22 and 23 October 1984, as a result of disputes. I understand that 525,000 copies were lost on both nights. Between 1 September 1984 and 28 February 1985, the *Daily Mail* lost 5·6 million copies in total. In the same period, *The Guardian* lost slightly fewer than 3 million copies. The management of *The Guardian* refer to these problems as "production difficulties". A spanner can fall into a machine accidentally or by design.

I am not criticising the unions, but there are great problems in the industry and it is time that someone revealed them. The Times group lost £40 million during the 11-month closure of 1978-79. Some disputes may last only a day or two but the result can be catastrophic for the industry from which I come and about which I care. I spent two and a half years working in both printing and publishing for Mr. Robert Maxwell. I watched the industry from the inside just as much as other hon. Members.

Fleet street suffers continually from a distribution shortfall and something must be done about that quickly. I must blame the unions for the shortfall.

The greatest bill that Fleet street has to pay — the wages bill—is liable to rise by 12 per cent. It amounted last year to £530 million and the unions want a 12 per cent. increase without any reduction in manning levels. This is an industry which I consider to be overmanned.

There is fierce competition among the newspapers that are on sale. Each national newspaper must depend on regular publishing, and that is a feature that I want to see. Price rises must be on the horizon, because every time there is a dispute or a strike the price of the newspaper may have to increase.

All our daily and Sunday newspapers need to remain competitively priced, but that is becoming impossible with

the high wage bills that they have to meet. The perpetuation of the casual worker—a regular in Fleet street who is protected under the Employment Protection Act 1975 and who has a contract of employment—is putting the entire structure into great difficulties. I have evidence that some casual workers are receiving more than £700 a week. On a Saturday night they can earn £250 for a one-night shift.

The managements of all the newspapers must tighten up the conditions that apply to the casual worker. The casual worker should be paying tax and national insurance and meeting all the requirements that would normally be expected of someone in employment. He should not be paid if he has a fictitious name. I understand that Mickey Mouse and even Ronald Reagan have been listed as working on Saturday evenings for Sunday newspapers.

Mr. John Evans (St. Helens, North): There has been evidence in the past of Mickey Mouse, Errol Flynn and Sir Galahad, for example, being employed casually in Fleet street. However, this is something that the newspaper publishers allow and welcome. If they want to stop it, why do they not do so? The means of stopping the practice are in their hands, but they do not use them. Obviously they are satisfied with the practice.

Mr. Bruinvels: I welcome the hon. Gentleman's intervention. I am calling for managements to stop the practice. I am grateful to him for supporting my call.

Mr. Evans: I am not supporting anything. I am merely pointing out what needs to be done.

Mr. Bruinvels: The proprietors must co-operate to tighten things up and stop casual workers from nipping from one paper to another, perhaps doing the first edition of one and the third edition of another, which is all too easy when they are all based in Fleet street. Incidentally, I understand that during the strike at *The Times* the strikers helped to put out *The Guardian* from the same building.

The fact that there are so few proprietors has been criticised, and I know that the NGA feels this sincerely. That criticism may be justified to some extent, but how many people can afford to own a national paper? Robert Maxwell, with whom I am no longer associated, had the necessary funds, but he took his time trying to get a national newspaper and in 1984 spent £113,400,000 purchasing the Mirror group. Only today Fleet Holdings received a bid from United Newspapers Publications, owner of *Punch* and various provincial magazines. I understand that it was seriously considering a merger but that after discussions with Fleet Holdings the idea appeared to have no merit. No doubt we shall hear more about that in weeks to come.

I am concerned about the wages bills, which run to tens of millions of pounds. The proprietors must be tougher with the unions and there must be no climb-downs in the future. Plenty of people want jobs and can be trained, although I appreciate that that takes time. Proprietors must unite against the growing abuses by certain trade union members. A daily paper should be reporting the news out in the big world, not providing the main industrial relations story for every other paper, as *The Sun* has done in the past week.

The unions are destroying this great industry, and I find that very disappointing. Have they no shame? All too frequently, the industrial stoppages in the industry show the unions betraying the trust given to them by the proprietors who employ them and the people who support and buy their papers. The unions must face the fact that the industry is grossly overmanned and natural shrinkage is needed in the work force.

The industry is also overpaid. By taking such large pay rises, employees in the industry are not creating jobs but stealing jobs by not allowing other people into the industry. At column 713 of *Hansard* for 4 May 1984 my hon. Friend the then Minister of State, Department of Employment, now Paymaster General, rightly identified the main problem as the closed shop, but 11 months later the closed shop is just as effective as it was then. In 1985, as in 1984, a newspaper proprietor cannot employ whom he wants because the unions act as an employment agency. If one does not keep in with the union one's job is on the line, but if one co-operates one has a job for life. Like a dynasty or a legacy, the sons and grandsons of union members have first option on any vacancy notified by the employer. Of course, it is good to introduce someone to the company, but he must get there on merit and not just because of whom he knows. Retirement provisions are also not applied and many people over the age of 65 are still working in the industry. I do not criticise that, but it is interesting to note.

An unfair monopoly exists which should be ended now. Why should power rest with a small number of people who did not put any money into the paper in the first place? I really worry about the NGA, which I regard as the greatest offender in insisting on a tight pre-entry closed shop. Through the closed shop and the tight control that it maintains, the NGA is crippling the industry. Fair competition is denied and the advent of the new, key technology is hindered.

Industrial relations in the newspaper industry could not be worse. I blame both sides for that, but any stoppage now could finish a daily paper. I talked to the Newspaper Publishers Association today and it told me that, between 1 January and 31 August 1983, £7·1 million and 21 million copies of daily newspapers were lost and that, during the same period in 1984, £7·9 million and 59 million copies of daily newspapers were lost.

Closed shops in the newspaper industry protect only those in the industry and deny the opportunity for others to come forward. The print unions are too powerful and insular. From 1 November 1984, closed shops were supposed to be subject to employment legislation. That is especially important when a union member might be expelled, perhaps unreasonably, from the union, thus losing his job. I want newspaper proprietors to invoke the Employment Acts 1980 and 1982 to help themselves and to stamp out threatened industrial action when non-union members are providing services, such as at Warrington with the *Stockport Messenger*. There should be no blacking of work from non-union sources if it is good work. Companies must seek injunctions or damages from the union concerned.

Last Tuesday, 1 million copies of *The Sun* were lost because of a dispute between the NGA and SOGAT '82. Meetings were held by both unions in the middle of production and without permission, as *The Times* said on 20 March. The row is about the new plant for *The Sun* in Tower Hamlets, where it is planned to print the *News of the World* and *The Sun*, and has been going on for two years. The machinery is sophisticated, but I cannot see why the unions should object to going down to Tower

[Mr. Bruinvels]

Hamlets. Rupert Murdoch's organisation, News International, has spent £72 million on the plant. The row also involves certain plates, which were subject to a union agreement.

On Thursday, I asked my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House in business questions to provide Government time for a debate because, yet again, newspapers were at risk. He suggested this debate. I was worried, as I saw evidence of yet another long dispute. Until tonight, when the NGA and SOGAT '82 at *The Sun* kindly went back, the paper had lost 23,280,000 copies and the London edition of *News of the World* had lost 2,962,000 copies. How on earth can any paper carry on in such circumstances?

Having spoken to Peter Stephens, the editorial director of *The Sun*, it is clear to me that such continued industrial action will be catastrophic to the industry. Since June 1984, *The Sun* has lost 75,840,000 copies. The row involved plate breaking in the machine room, an activity operated jointly by the NGA and SOGAT '82. Was there really a major problem? I do not think so. The NGA claims renewed presence of its members in the day machine room. That is fair, but I want papers such as *The Sun* to be free and able to manage. Full-time employees will still be guaranteed their jobs after the move. There will be natural wastage, but there is in all industries.

Contrary to what the union says, Rupert Murdoch has created and saved jobs since he took over. When he came in, there were 8,100 employees. In 1984 there were 11,273. That shows a commitment to the industry. Circulation in 1969 was 750,000—in 1984 it was 4·2 million. He pays well. In 1969, £10,700,000 was spent on wages. That increased to £165 million in 1984. Compositors and piece-rate workers earn up to £50,000 a year. A typical pay slip for a compositor on a three-day week doing 24 hours is £700. A machine operator who works three days a week and a few hours on Saturday, totalling 21 hours, receives £300. It seems to me and, no doubt, to most people that *The Sun* is looking after its employees.

I understand that the National Graphical Association bosses have outside jobs. I am told that one has a car repair shop and another runs a few supermarkets. That is interesting, and I am glad that they can do two jobs at the same time.

Mr. Evans: Most Tory Members do.

Mr. Bruinvels: Industrial censorship was enacted when there was an editorial on picketing.

Mr. Evans: I expect that the hon. Gentleman has two jobs.

Mr. Bruinvels: I have not.

On 27 June the employees effected a complete ban on an edition of *The Sun*, which lasted three days, because they did not agree with the editorial. It is outrageous that an editor cannot express his own view. The Budget edition — the major chance for its more than 4·2 million readers——

Mr. Evans: They only look at the pictures.

Mr. Bruinvels: They might also look at the pictures. That edition did not come out, despite all the work done by the NUJ, people in the Institute of Journalists, and researchers who were brought in to make the top edition.

Tonight the paper was published in its usual form, and I welcome it back. It states

"You've seen the rest, now read the best!"

I understand that during the dispute, the other proprietors, did not keep solidarity—dare I, as a Conservative, use that word?—and say that, with a shortfall of 4 million copies a day, they would not give in to union abuses. Robert Maxwell immediately authorised the additional printing of the *Daily Mirror* in excess of 1·5 million copies, the *Daily Express* published 1 million extra copies, and the *Daily Star* an extra 600,000.

I would have thought that they should have stopped the unions from taking advantage. Do not the unions realise that they are cutting their own throats because, with other papers printing extra copies and providing greater interest, they may not attract their readers back? After three days, brand loyalty may be lost. That worries me. Why did not the newspaper proprietors stick together? I would have thought that the best thing for them to do was to fight as a united force. I have heard of awful incidents in print rooms, such as fires, torn rolls of print and broken plates. I urge *The Sun* to sue now for the 23 million copies lost. There are injunctions against SOGAT '82 and the NGA and damages worth £500,000.

The newspaper industry is great. I revealed how many people read a paper. Hon. Members should consider circulation figures, the power of unions in conjunction with editors, and the need of people for their papers. The circulation figure for *The Sun* is 4·1 million, the *Daily Mirror* 3·5 million, the *Daily Express* 2 million, the *Daily Star* 1·6 million, *The Daily Telegraph* 1·3 million, *The Times* 456,000, *The Guardian* 471,000, the *Daily Mail* 1·8 million and the *Financial Times* 166,000.

The circulation figures for Sunday papers are *The Mail on Sunday* 1·6 million, *News of the World* 4·6 million, *Sunday Express* 2·5 million, *Sunday Mirror* 3·4 million, *Sunday People* 3·2 millon, *Sunday Telegraph* 712,000, *The Sunday Times* 1·3 million, and *The Observer* 744,000. That shows how many people need, read and rely on papers, and why unions are seen to be taking advantage.

The provincial side of the industry is going well. The *Wolverhampton Express and Star* has experienced some local difficulties. It has agreed its copy, and writes and edits directly on to computer screens but is waiting to transfer the copy directly into print, without it passing through the hands of NGA compositors. If it can be done there, why cannot it be done in Fleet street? The row there will continue. That paper has set a good example and is to be admired.

As for provincial papers, there are 1,300 titles, 7 million daily sales and 9 million weekly sales. In an interview today, a representative of the Newspapers Publishers Society said:

"Every night of the week one of our members suffers some industrial action."

It is such a commonplace occurrence that they do not keep figures. There is a dispute procedure where members are supposed to report when there has been a breach. The reports are prepared for a fortnightly meeting, but they are not as accurate as they should be. During the first eight months of 1983, 21 million copies were lost; in 1984, the figure was 59 million. The financial losses are incredible.

We have a saviour in Eddie Shah, who is prepared to put his money where his mouth is and to get the investment. He believes in and supports the new technology. He wants a free team with greater creativity, and he wants his magazines and newspapers to be in full colour. He believes that the editor should have the freedom to edit, which strikes me as a sound proposition.

As was reported in the *Financial Times* of 19 December 1984:

"There is no single section of British industry where the new technology poses a more dramatic challenge than in newspapers."

We have a Minister for Information Technology. We have the technology, and I should have thought that the Fleet street unions would be prepared to accept that technology. But they have successfully blocked it for a long time. I assure members of the NGA—I have regular meetings with newspaper proprietors and publishers—that jobs will not be lost, apart from redeployment to other parts of the industry and through natural wastage. When the *Portsmouth News* moved three NGA compositors into sub-editors' jobs, immediately 73 National Union of Journalists members went on strike. The sooner we have one union, the better for the entire industry.

I want newspapers to report the news as it is. I want editors to comment on the news as it affects us, or should affect us. Proprietors should put up the funds, managing through delegation, and unions should put it together as good "inkies".

The contents of a tabloid front page are, of course, the easiest way of selling a paper. I am afraid that we must have sex, or headlines such as, "TV pop star divorced" or "TV pop star engaged"——

Mr. Evans: Who needs to have sex?

Mr. Bruinvels: It always seems to be on the front page of the papers. There also seems to be something about religion every time, with a bishop saying something. Anything to do with Lady Diana or any member of the royal family is there, and there must be bingo. That is the magic formula. I want to see decent papers selling because they have a good story to tell. I want the newspaper industry to act responsibly. I want the staff to have the right not to join a trade union if that is their wish. I want the union barons to be told that they have had their day, and that, although they should look after their industry, they will not reign supreme in future. I want the unions to act responsibly for a change. I do not want management always to have to pick up the tab for what the unions have done that night or the night before. If SOGAT '82 or the NGA care about the industry, they should put their money where their mouths are——

Mr. Evans: Earlier, the hon. Gentleman regaled us with stories about members of SOGAT or the NGA receiving £700 or £300, sometimes for a three-day week or, by the sound of things, only for a Saturday night. Does that not show that the NGA and SOGAT are looking after their members very well?

Mr. Bruinvels: It is fair to say that they are looking after themselves. I say that they are looking after themselves too well and are forgetting those who must pay the bill——

Mr. Evans: It is called free collective bargaining.

Mr. Bruinvels: If they are receiving too much money, and the paper cannot be published because the proprietor cannot afford it, or the price of the paper has to be increased, I would not call that a long-term investment in the industry.

I do not want management to come cap in hand, on its knees, giving in at the last moment to the unions. I want it to be strong for a change and to try to get the new keyboard technology accepted. It has already been well tested in the provinces, and I want Fleet street to take it up. I want SOGAT 82 to trust the proprietors when they say that no one will lose his job. The unions should be proud to represent craftsmen and professionals. They should be loyal to their newspapers. In my constituency, the *Leicester Mercury* has just such a relationship, which is why 74 per cent. of the households in Leicester buy it.

The unions should also remember us as customers and as readers. As I said earlier, if *The Sun* is unavailable for six days, brand loyalty can be lost for ever. If circulation falls, jobs will be put in jeopardy in the news groups as well.

To keep up circulation, the unions must be prepared to guarantee maximum output, but do they care? They are so interested in milking the company that they forget about the readers. Anyone can strike when they are still getting paid, or know that they are too valuable to be lost for good. I admire the printers for their work. The trouble is that they can step out of one job and join another paper—the Fleet street casual. They can nip down Fleet street, do a casual job, avoid tax and earn an exorbitant rate of pay, but, if the proprietors joined together, they could black troublemakers who did that. I should like to see employers doing the blacking for a change.

In case hon. Members are worrying about phoney names, we should ensure that no one with a phoney name is taken on—that should assure the hon. Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans).

Mr. Evans: They have been doing it for years.

Mr. Bruinvels: That may be so, but there must be a change, and I am calling for one.

The proprietors should keep a central register and no one should be paid unless it is clear who they are. The union anarchists and troublemakers in the unions should go. Companies should show increasing readiness to take legal action against unions that take industrial action.

As I said in *Litho Week*, not that long ago, I fully support the NGA document "The Way Forward" about the new technology. It makes a lot of sense. There will be some redundancies, but I hope that there will be very few. I want to see a production unit resulting from the amalgamation of the NGA, the NUJ and SOGAT. If they do not agree, some of our daily papers will be lost for ever. The unions must unite in helping to produce good papers.

We have a free press, and the freedom of choice to choose the paper that we want. The proprietors, publishers, editors and unions must work together to ensure a newsworthy, accurate and readable product paper—a paper that comes out on time. No paper or article should be blacked again, and no editorial policy should be dictated to by the unions. The country knows that Fleet street is overpaid, overmanned and overprotected, and this state of affairs cannot be allowed to continue.

The country needs to be well informed. The unions have a moral as well as a contractual duty to co-operate with the editor. There is no time for political dogma. The newspaper industry will die unless it puts its house in order. There is no time to lose.

2.32 am

Mr. Martin J. O'Neill (Clackmannan): I start by declaring an interest in that I am sponsored by the National Graphical Association. I thought that the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels), who I know takes an interest in the print industry, might have declared an interest. He fills those bits of the British press for which the NGA sets the type, and the Press Association provides the copy. He regularly contributes to the dial-a-quote system, or rent-a-quote system, and is always ready to provide a quotable quote to fill the space between the adverts, or, in the case of *The Times*, between the adverts and the semi-nude women.

I welcome tonight's debate. The hon. Member effectively re-read the speech that he made in an Adjournment debate last year, and is therefore already on record as having an interest, and not only on the basis of his previous employment with Mr. Maxwell's publishing enterprise, which was not then related to the newspaper printing industry. From the point of view of the trade union side, I welcome somebody with an interest in the industry, even if it is, with the greatest of respect to the hon. Member, a somewhat confused interest.

The print and newspaper industry has different parts and technologies, and different systems in industrial relations. There is a common thread through print houses, the provincial newspapers, the national newspapers, in that there are two main print unions, SOGAT '82 and the NGA. The NGA organises the compositors, the people responsible for the art work, and for general type setting in the industry. It is one of the last almost exclusively craft unions in the country.

One of the difficulties about creating one union for print workers is the division of the industry into print, craft and process sections. I believe that the difficulties are beginning to be fully appreciated by all sides. The mergers in 1982 that created the present structure of the National Graphical Association and SOGAT have largely been completed. It is the earnest hope of everybody who takes an interest in the printing industry that the two unions will merge and that eventually they will be joined by the National Union of Journalists, although that is a remote prospect. Nevertheless, I am conscious of the fact that the NUJ is meeting this week in national conference, and anything can happen at NUJ conferences. Hope springs eternal.

Mr. Michael Fallon (Darlington): I am not clear about whether the hon. Gentleman is saying that the two print unions should be joined by the NUJ or whether he is saying that the NUJ should be joined by the two print unions.

Mr. O'Neill: It is likely that within the foreseeable future the two print unions will come to some form of arrangement. It is less likely that the NUJ will enter into such an arrangement at an early stage. I think it will come eventually, but there are problems, to which I shall refer at a later stage, that put obstacles in the way of a merger. If we can get rid of those obstacles we may eventually have one union for all those who work in the printing industry.

The most recent problem to confront the industry was created by the Budget, namely the imposition of value added tax on advertisements in newspapers and periodicals. About 19 national titles, 1,644 regional titles and 6,408 magazines are produced within the United Kingdom. The nationals account for about 35,000 workers and the regionals for about 68,000. The magazines have a different basis for counting their work force. About 6,000 of those who work for the national newspapers are members of the NGA, while about 10,000 of those who work for the regional newspapers are members of the NGA. Employment throughout the United Kingdom in the industry is about 136,000. It is a major industrial producer of newspapers, periodicals and magazines.

The imposition of VAT at 15 per cent. will have quite an effect on the viability of this part of the printing industry, in particular on the viability of classified advertisements which in the main are paid for by individuals. The receipts from classified advertisements amount to about £800 million, or 36 per cent. of all advertisements. Fishing rods, old televisions, bicycles and the like are regarded as classified advertisements and the Budget will lead to the imposition of VAT at 15 per cent. on those advertisements. In regional newspapers and local newspapers that are paid for—that is, not free sheet publications — classified advertisements account for about 20 per cent. of total revenue.

Classified advertisements are used by small businesses and the individual trying to sell an item. The Government have introduced a start-up scheme, but the turnover of many small businesses is not yet big enough to warrant a VAT number and therefore they cannot pass on VAT charges. That is a restriction on a business in its early stages. The £50 million in VAT which is expected to be collected in a full year as a result of the change will cause more of a problem than it is worth. The Chancellor should think again. Detailed debates on the Finance Bill will provide an opportunity to discuss that. However, I have no interest in participating in that exercise.

The financial sector will also be affected. Banks, insurance companies and finance houses do not have arrangements for VAT and they will have to bear the cost of VAT in future.

The Newspaper Society, the organisation responsible for representing provincial newspapers suggests that about 3 per cent. of the income from advertising will disappear as a result of the imposition of VAT on newspaper advertising.

The imposition of VAT will endanger some of the firms which have invested heavily in new technology for the newspaper industry. By that new technology, more newspapers can be printed and excess capacity can be accounted for through free sheets. To ensure the maximum utilisation of the new investment, as many copies as possible must be produced. The existing steps being taken by local newspapers with the NGA and SOGAT could be halted or interrupted by VAT.

Sometimes provincial newspapers and newpapers produced in Fleet street are confused. Two different types of newspapers are produced by different technologies and they cater for different markets. In the last two or three years about 30 agreements have been made in respect of the new technology between provincial newspapers and the NGA. The 30 companies involved publish about 50 titles. The scale of the operation is such that about 30 per cent. of all English and Welsh provincial newspapers are covered by new technology agreements. The expense of investing in new technology is such that the operations must be fairly large. We are talking about large runs and large papers.

The new technology is being phased in. At Portsmouth the final stage has been reached and a measure of

agreement has eventually been arrived at. The process has been painful. We have no illusions about that. Pride is dented and old attitudes have to be set aside. The agreement between the NUJ, SOGAT and the NGA ensures single stroking—that is on a sub-editorial basis —one finger of one hand sets the print for the runs. For that to be achieved, an arrangement has been made whereby some compositors have been trained by management to undertake what hitherto has been the job of the journalists in sub-editorial work. Unfortunately, in the case of the *Wolverhampton Express and Star*, in which a similar stage was reached, the management chose to renege on the undertakings that it would not introduce the final stage of the new technology without complete inter-union agreement. It sold the deal to the NUJ, as I understand it, on the basis of £15 per week. This deal has now been put on ice at the insistence of the TUC which acceded to the request of the NGA and SOGAT, which said that they were not prepared to countenance the deal because they had not been properly consulted and all the matters had not been raised.

I realise that the dispute involving the *Wolverhampton Express and Star* is a messy one, and I do not wish to go into all the details now. However, in Portsmouth a deal has been struck between the unions and the management, while in the case of the other newspaper the management has been breaking out and adopting tactics that have resulted in confrontation and litigation. This, I believe, has not been resolved to the satisfaction of management which has won what can only be called a pyrrhic victory in the courts.

Another settlement is in the offing in Bolton. From what I understand, the agreement is now subject to ratification. This may be the first deal for settlement on the basis of the new technology which follows on from the Portsmouth agreement.

The local newspaper industry is, therefore, moving into the final stage of acceptance of new technology. The Newspaper Society as yet is not entering into the national council for the training of journalists scheme with regard to sub-editorial training. The Newspaper Society has made a national decision not to participate in a scheme which has the backing of the NUJ and the NGA. This is regrettable, because it is evidence of a reluctance on the part of the Newspaper Society to accept new technology with anything like the commitment which the NGA has indicated. The hon. Member for Leicester, East fairly paid tribute to the document "The Way Forward on New Technology" which, although it is printed on pink paper, will eventually be regarded as a blueprint for the industry. We believe that this document will show the way.

The Newspaper Society is not as concerned about training as it should be. In respect of the apprenticeship scheme, it has done no more than reduce the indentured apprenticeship from five to three years. It has not followed the example of the British Printing Industries Federation, which covers the print shops as distinct from the newspapers, the general jobbing printers, book printers and so on. It has not established what has to be regarded as probably the most flexible form of training in any industry in respect of what used to be called apprenticeships. There are modular schemes in the industry which do not require age entrance qualifications. People above the age of 16 or 17 can come back for retraining and gain qualifications in new forms of technology using the flexibility of the modules. In many respects, this will probably be regarded as a general example of training in industry. I hope that the Newspaper Society will follow this through.

I may seem to be making heavy weather of the point. I am stressing the fact that Fleet street does not train people. The national and main provincial papers traditionally do not train people but cream off the best of those who are willing to move from the old fashioned indentured apprenticeship scheme or the new modular scheme. Because those newspapers do not train, they recruit by what might be described as a process of graduation.

That has meant in some respects that the path towards new technology in Fleet street, and on the part of other national titles, has been more restrictive. Indeed, many Fleet street papers have turned their faces against certain aspects of the new technology. For example, the hon. Member for Leicester, East spoke of the *Daily Telegraph* moving to a new site. But that paper will not be taking up the new technology; it will use a modern form of the traditional technology because it finds that system better from the editionising point of view. In other words, that is regarded as being better for changing during the run. Perhaps the *Daily Telegraph* is not a good example to cite in this context because it has such a wide and thorough sports coverage.

The Minister, being a football fan, will appreciate that people in the north who read papers such as the *Daily Mirror* are not greatly worried about the fortunes of London football clubs, unless northern clubs are involved in matches. They prefer to read main reports in their own newspapers. Often, those reports are inserted in the middle of runs by what is known in the trade as editionising. It is an effective means of dealing with insertions of that sort.

The Fleet street newspapers have not shown a great willingness to move towards the new technology in that respect. Nor are their traditional structures such as to afford many opportunities for training because, as I say, they have not been in the business of training.

The hon. Member for Leicester, East spoke at length about the latest dispute at *The Sun*. I mention that as an example of the problems that create interruptions to print runs and the non-appearance of newspapers. My understanding of the dispute is different from his, and, if I tell the House what I know of it, that may supplement his account of the proceedings.

Metal plates which are used in the production of *The Sun* and other newspapers have a tendency on occasions —if there is something wrong with the quality or with the operation in which they are being used—to break. This causes a considerable hazard to the people working nearby. At *The Sun* there has been a great deal of anxiety about that and various investigations have been carried out by management and the work force with, I must say, varying degrees of enthusiasm.

The work force eventually decided that enough was enough and said that a chapel meeting woud be held during working time, which was the traditional way of expressing disagreement with the way that things were going. There was nothing untoward about that. It did not mark the end of western society or the start of a bloody revolution in Fleet street. It was the traditional means by which the workforce expressed disapproval.

There is a process of double locking. The plates are fitted and locked and the rollers are turned for a couple of revolutions. The plates are then tightened again to make

[Mr. O'Neill]

them doubly secure. This double locking process takes time. It was time in that case for which the management was not prepared to make allowance, and problems arose about bonuses and so on. The meetings of the chapel went on. Management said that the workers must go back to work or they would be laid off. Not only did management lay off the men in the machine rooms, but it laid off the rest of the print workers and, indeed, everybody but the administrative and clerical staff.

It was three and a half to four days before national officials were given a hearing, because *The Sun* management said that before union discussions started there would have to be a return to work, with guarantees that no further interruptions would take place. There then followed 12 to 14 hours of negotiation which has resulted in the production of today's newspaper.

So far as I know, everyone who was laid off, apart from those directly involved, has been reimbursed in full for the days' wages that were lost. A study group has been set up between health and safety executives from SOGAT, the NGA and the management. Subject to discussions with the local chapel officials a report will be produced. At the end of the procedure, provided agreement is reached, the work force who have so far not had any reimbursement may well get their money for the days when they were not working.

Hon. Members may draw whatever conclusions they wish from that agreement. Certainly it seems to be well balanced. It has got the presses rolling again and has got reimbursement for the unfortunate victims of the dispute between the union and management. There is a prospect of a complete resolution of the dispute. That is an example of how problems arise and can be resolved.

The hon. Member for Leicester, East seemed to suggest that in the next round of industrial relations legislation there should be a ban on strike action by print workers. Perhaps I am putting words into his mouth; he may not have gone that far. The logical conclusion, if that is the right phrase that one could use, given the cerebral processes of the hon. Member, is that we would expect some kind of ban on strike action if he were to draft the next industrial relations legislation. God forbid that he should be given the opportunity.

The problems which confront the print industry and which in many respects are encapsulated by the latest dispute can by and large be resolved. When managements seek to ride roughshod over the unions, as happened in *The Times* when management sought to introduce new work practices without consultation, they invariably run into difficulty and many papers are lost. When they take the measured pace that has been adopted in the provincial newspapers and go step by step by consultation and discussion, they can make tremendous progress in a relatively short period in taking advantage of new technology.

Last weekend no less a journal than *The Economist* paid a back-handed compliment to the NGA when it said, in regard to the introduction of new technology to the newspaper industry, that it was probably inadvisable for newspaper proprietors to have NGA members doing sub-editorial work because the NGA was a harder-nosed, more effective negotiating body than the National Union of Journalists.

It would appear that in Fleet street over the years the print workers have been able to get reasonable rewards for their efforts. Those rewards have been freely agreed by management. There has not been a dramatic increase over the past six years because of free collective bargaining under the Conservative Government. The print workers have achieved their reward because of a long-standing historical arrangement whereby the craft and the skills of the print workers have been acknowledged and their union officials have been able to get a wage struck.

I appreciate the fact that problems arise. The hon. Member for Leicester, East has thrown statistics about —many of them used in a previous debate and merely updated—but has not given anything like the reasoned approach that both sides of the industry require. We see in the provincial newspapers, away from the public gaze, that deals are being struck, new technology is being introduced and expansion is occurring. We see in the Fleet street and national newspapers that there is a concentration of ownership, a narrowing of choice and lost opportunities with respect of new technology. Often newspaper owners are concerned not so much with the process but with using the newspapers as a mouthpiece for their beliefs, prejudices, ideas—call it what you will. Editors should have the right to editorialise or to write editorials. At the end of the day, these editors have only the right to say what their proprietors will allow.

The Times under Harold Evans provides ample evidence of the fact that an independently minded editor was not acceptable to Mr. Murdoch and was sacked. It may be that Government Members preferred a new editor, and that is their privilege. The previous editor sought to exercise his independence and, because it was not in keeping with the views that the newspaper's owner sought to express, the editor was sacked.

We need to do more than look at the narrow focus of industrial relations, which the hon. Member for Leicester, East tried to do. We need to examine other aspects—who owns newpapers, how they should be controlled and the guarantees which, in the case of *The Times*, we thought had been established and would provide an editor with the independence that a national newspaper such as *The Times* was supposed to enjoy. Unfortunately, that has not been the case. If the hon. Member for Leicester, East had dealt with that aspect, we could have had a more meaningful discussion about a healthy and free press.

The National Graphical Association is proud of its record of speedy and effective co-operation with the management of local newspapers to ensure that new technology is brought in and that, as far as possible in our economic climate, it is not the fault of the association's members that newspapers go under. If other newspapers in Fleet street adopted a constructive attitude towards the newspaper unions, as the provincial papers have done, there would be a transformation in the fortunes of many of the papers that seem to be under difficulty.

3.3 am

Mr. John Evans (St. Helens, North): According to the Order Paper, the debate sponsored by the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) is on

"The future of the newspaper industry."

I assumed that we would debate what was in *The Times* today about a takeover bid being launched by another organisation for Fleet Holdings. I am sure that all hon. Members agree that the future of the newspaper industry

is of great concern. The threats that are often placed on newspaper groups by takeover bids of one group against another should be the subject of proper debate.

I thought that the mind of the hon. Member for Leicester, East might have been exercised by the fact that "United"—

the group seeking to take over Fleet Holdings—

"already owns 20·1 per cent. of Fleet, most of which it bought in January from Mr. Robert Maxwell, publisher of Mirror Group Newspapers."

I had thought that that was the sort of issue that we would debate, that perhaps we would discuss the great issues involving the right of reply, or that when people suffer at the hands of a newspaper they should be given the right to put their point of view in the newspaper concerned, or the role of the Press Council and whether it should be strengthened, or the lobby system, which is causing concern at all levels. Those are the sorts of subjects which I would have thought we could discuss. We certainly could have discussed the problems in Manchester, where there is concern about the closure of a great printing works because of problems concerning contracts with certain newspaper groups, and the redundancies and unemployment that will occur in Manchester over the printing of northern editions.

We did not get any of that. What we got—and my hon. Friend the Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) obviously knew a thing or two in this context—was a long litany of industrial disputes, the blame for all of which, according to the hon. Member for Leicester, East, should be placed upon the shoulders of the NGA and SOGAT '82. The purpose of outlining those disputes over the last three or four years to the House of Commons escapes me.

In that context, I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Clackmannan on his speech, and I am sure that when NGA members read the record of this debate they will be well satisfied with the case that my hon. Friend made out tonight in their defence.

The other thing that puzzled me as I listened to the hon. Member for Leicester, East was whether he was the official spokesman for the Newspaper Society or Mr. Murdoch, or was simply a self-appointed parliamentary spokesman dabbling in affairs which presumably he thinks will get him further publicity—although after listening to most of his comments I rather suspect that very few newspapers will want to publish any of them. I certainly have not the faintest idea why he bothered to read out the circulation figures of various newspapers. What purpose that served is absolutely lost on me, other than perhaps to prove that *The Sun* and the *News of the World* are at the top of the league of newspaper sales. Well, we already knew that.

The hon. Member for Leicester, East is one of the Conservative Members who are loud in their praise of the Prime Minister, all her works and all she stands for. From time to time the right hon. Lady makes it very clear that market forces and the voice of the market should prevail in all things. What the hon. Gentleman overlooks is that in whatever goes on in Fleet street in the newspaper industry the newspaper trade unions are entitled to defend themselves and their members at all times. The unions and the workers are part of the market forces.

I would point out a contradiction in terms in the hon. Gentleman's speech. He denounced the trade unions in Fleet street on the ground that the industry is overmanned and the men overpaid, regaling us with stories of wages of £700 a week. In the light of the hon. Gentleman's stand on most issues, I would have expected him to praise the NGA and SOGAT '82 for doing an absolutely splendid job on behalf of their members in getting them £700 a week. I only wish that my union, the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers, could get that for our members throughout the country. I am sure that my colleagues in the union would be absolutely delighted.

Finally, I want to refer to the stories which the hon. Gentleman told us about part-time or casual workers signing on in Fleet street under the pseudonyms of "Mickey Mouse", "Errol Flynn" and various other film stars. This is not a new story. It has been going the rounds for many years. Perhaps the Minister will address some of his remarks to this matter. If that practice takes place, the people to be condemned for it are the newspaper proprietors, the Treasury and the various tax inspectors, who are well aware of it. I do not know whether it is still going on, but, if it is, they are also aware that it has been going on for many years. I well recall a row in the parliamentary Labour party back in 1977 or 1978, when the issue came up. Many of us in the parliamentary Labour party denounced the suggestion that, provided it did not happen in the future, a moratorium would be declared against those who had committed what were criminal offences.

Let me make it clear that we in the Opposition deplore such practices and believe that people should pay their proper taxes and not be allowed to get away with not doing so. If there is criticism, it cannot be directed at the trade unions. It is a matter for the Treasury and the newspaper proprietors, who could stamp out the practice, tomorrow night if they so desired, but it is obvious that they do not wish to do so. They wish to let it continue. Presumably they allow it to carry on because it is in their interests to do so.

Not much has come out in the debate apart from the splendid defence by my hon. Friend the Member for Clackmannan of his trade union colleagues. I hope that the Minister will say just a few words about the Treasury and the Revenue presumably being defrauded of many thousands of pounds by those awful individuals who are signing on for £300 or £400 a night under the pseudonym Mickey Mouse.

3.11 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Peter Bottomley): I am grateful to all my hon. Friends who have come to listen to this important debate. They should join me in congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) on raising it. This is not the first time that he has raised the issue; he has drawn the House's attention on several occasions to something that probably matters to more people each day than almost any other issue that can be discussed here. People rely on the newspapers for their information. They rely on them for buying and selling goods. Many rely on the newspapers for their employment. We should remember, as my hon. Friend said, that more people might be able to rely on the industry for their employment if conditions were such that people could enter it as publishers. Therefore, there would be more titles, and more competition. Some newspapers would go out of business. I see no reason why it is any

[Mr. Peter Bottomley]

purpose of Parliament to protect every title that presently exists. We want to make sure that there can be free and fair competition within the industry.

The hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) made one or two unwarranted attacks on my hon. Friend, and I suspect that he led his hon. Friend the Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans) into similar behaviour. Given that it is the time when the final editions of the national press are being put to bed, it may be a sign that more of us should be put to bed. Perhaps we can conduct the rest of the debate in a more open and friendly way.

I had not realised that it was my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House who had suggested to my hon. Friend that he should raise this matter on the Consolidated Fund. I shall not be buying a drink for my right hon. Friend for some time.

I do not intend to give a direct answer to the point made on what may be connivance between workers, employers and possibly even trade unions when people apparently work under certain names so that their income tax is not deducted and their national insurance is not paid. My suspicion is that the situation has changed over the past two years, but I shall make sure that the remarks of the hon. Member for St. Helens, North are passed on to colleagues in Government. He will receive a reply spelling out the situation, which could also go to my hon. Friend and the hon. Member for Clackmannan.

The hon. Member for Clackmannan managed to put a more acceptable face on the NGA than almost anyone else could have done. I had my suspicions, and they were only confirmed when I looked up the hon. Gentleman in *The Times* guide. I see that he is really a member of the General and Municipal Workers Union, and the white collar section at that. I recommend to the NGA that it at least doubles the contribution that it makes to him for his advice and the way in which he puts across its case.

I should like to refer to the most significant points that underlie the debate and which——

Mr. O'Neill: Before the Minister goes further, to save myself any extra, if not undue, embarrassment, I should like to say that under the sponsorship arrangement, with which I am sure he is well acquainted, any moneys from unions that sponsor hon. Members go to the local Labour party, not to the individuals concerned. There is a certain nicety there, which should be made clear for those who take an interest in these matters but are not always as well informed as I am sure the Minister is.

Mr. Bottomley: I do not see any reason why I should be more precise in my remarks than the hon. Gentleman was when he referred to my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East. The honours, perhaps, are even.

I am sure that the House will return to these issues on a number of occasions. I do not want to launch into what might be seen as a reasonably standard attack on the unions. I certainly do not think that the Fleet street chapels are under the control of the national executive or the national union. Most people realise that they are independent, autonomous groups of people no more tied to Socialism than I am. Many of them live in my constituency, and when I am canvassing they tell me with pride that they have contracted out of the political levy and they often say that they are rather keen on earning a good deal of money.

Mr. Evans: What has that to do with the future of the industry?

Mr. Bottomley: I thought that we were talking about the people in the industry. The underlying issue is whether the trade unions are doing what their members want. In most cases, they are doing that. The questions whether there is a framework within which they can negotiate and whether there is a reasonable balance of power between employers and employees will also be covered in the next debate.

In the newspaper industry, there is a common acceptance of the priorities for the industry, but different interests in moving towards that. It is a matter of reconciling different union interests and trying to get a better developed common interest between employers and those working in the industry. We must always remember that those who will decide the future of the industry are not those working in it but the customers. It is the response that the industry gives to the demands of its customers that will determine the number of jobs, the pattern of production, the people involved and the industrial agreements that will best meet the needs of the customers.

It is sad, but true, that industrial relations practices in Fleet street, especially in the printing industry, can be among the worst in this country. When things go well, they are probably among the best. The difficulty is that today's newspapers are of interest today, but not tomorrow. If production is lost employers find themselves in a great deal of difficulty and feel that the bargaining strength is not balanced. I do not believe that Government should step in and try to make special industrial relations arrangements for the newspaper industry. However, we recognise that on occasions resistance to bully-boy tactics in the industry has not been as effective as it might have been. Government legislation — or Parliament's legislation——

Mr. Evans: Government legislation.

Mr. Bottomley: Legislation is passed by a majority in the House. It is no better and no worse than motions passed by a majority in a union conference, or even the Labour party conference.

Mr. John Major (Huntingdon): It is better when passed by the House, especially when the Conservative party is in Government.

Mr. Bottomley: I shall draw a line and start with a new paragraph.

Legislation has given employers the means to redress the balance of power. The provisions of the Employment Act 1982 on closed shop balloting came into force in November 1984. That is more important outside Fleet street, because in Fleet street the unions are relatively solid.

Examples have been brought to my attention of disciplinary action against members who have declined to come out on secondary action, which is unlawful, and also examples of some of the fines that union branches or the national union have tried to impose. I suspect that that will come out into the open and it will be difficult to defend the scale of penalty imposed. However, it will also be difficult to justify the weakness of employers in not standing up for their employees. As my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) said, we are not criticising only one side of the industry for there is fault on both sides—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Fallon: But more on one.

Mr. Bottomley: I think that my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon) wishes one of us to say that we recognise his presence in the Chamber. No doubt he will be participating in future debates as much as in this one.

We have seen the virtual legal extinction of the closed shop, although current legislation does not outlaw it. It is still legal for an employer to operate with a pre-entry closed shop and to make membership of a particular union a condition of employment. Where the closed shop is unballoted, there is nothing to compel an employee to remain in the union.

Legislation affords members of unions some protection. It is unfair if an employer dismisses an employee in a closed shop if he has lost union membership as a result of unreasonable expulsion or if there are complaints pending or proceeding before a tribunal.

Other factors are the balance of industrial power and protection for individual union members. It is important to recognise, as the hon. Member for Clackmannan did, that within the industry some of the hopes that people had before 1982 are being resurrected and that the idea of getting the NGA and SOGAT together, which as an observer I believe would make a good deal of sense for the members of both unions and would be welcomed by the proprietors and publishers, is likely to move forward.

That will not happen in a smooth progression because life is not like that. There are issues to be negotiated and bargained over. As my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington occasionally encourages us to recognise, these are matters where those concerned need to use their own perceptions of their own interests and to come to a deal which they believe provides the best balance in meeting those interests as well as providing a way forward for the future.

Mr. Fallon: These are not matters for the Government.

Mr. Bottomley: If my hon. Friend were to allow me occasionally to continue, he might hear me say explicitly as well as implicitly that when the Government start to describe these matters in the way that he accepts he should welcome it instead of commenting that they are not even for the Government to think about.

One of the greatest challenges facing the newspaper industry—and in this instance the Government—is the need to adapt to the introduction of new technology. I am a great believer in those in the industry — those representing the employees as well as the proprietors or managers — working together and trying to move forward together. I am sure that members of the newspaper industry have worked in a similar way to that outlined in the new technology report by the heavy electrical machinery economic development committee.

I shall pursue with a great deal of interest the movements in the newspaper industry. I look forward to seeing whether without Government interference the industry can put right the wrongs which have properly been drawn to the attention of the House this evening and whether more often the unions and the proprietors can manage to put a face on the industry that is rather like the one put forward by their defender this evening, the hon. Member for Clackmannan. I am grateful to those who have attended the debate. I hope that the newspapers do not feel that they will have to change their final editions following it. I look forward to more discussions on the subject in future.

Wages Councils

3.23 am

Mr. Christopher Chope (Southampton, Itchen): It gives me great pleasure to introduce a debate on wages councils. I welcome all my hon. Friends who have entered the Chamber to participate in it. I note that there is only one Opposition Member present, the hon. Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans), to discuss with us this important subject. A debate about wages councils is one about job opportunities and employment. It is the belief of Conservative Members that unemployment levels can be reduced. It is our conviction that wages councils contribute to unemployment, and that brings us to discuss the issue this evening.

I welcome the presence of my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State. I congratulate him on sitting through another debate at this early hour of the morning. I hope that in about three hours time he will be able to reply with the same freshness and lightness of touch that he exhibited in the previous debate.

Last Thursday was a historic day, when the Government's consultative paper on wages councils was published. That paper is another important landmark on the road to even more employment and a freer society. I know of no Conservative Member who is other than critical of the current operation of wages councils, although there are sincere differences of opinion about whether abolition or reform is the better course. Whichever one favours, however, I am sure that all agree that the Government should have a free hand. The freedom to create new job opportunities through deregulation should be cherished by every Government and it is sad that hitherto their freedom of action has been inhibited by International Labour Organisation No. 26, to which the United Kingdom is a signatory.

The opportunity to deratify that convention comes but once in five years. In the Budget debate there was much discussion about the advantages and disadvantages of being "boxed in". In my view, the Government should avoid being boxed in any longer by that convention, and I welcome the positive statement in the consultative paper that, subject to the outcome of consultations in conformity with ILO rules, the Government propose to deratify the convention in June 1985. It should be remembered that the United States and Japan—and, indeed, the Soviet Union —are not signatories. When the convention is deratified Parliament and Government will be free to make their own decisions in the best interests of the nation.

I will try to set out some of the basic facts about wages councils. About 260,000 employers in 400,000 establishments employing 2¾ million workers are controlled by 26 wages councils. The employees affected are mainly in the service trades of retailing and catering—more than 1 million in each—plus 400,000 employees in industry, about 250,000 of whom are in the clothing manufacturing industry. Up to two thirds of the employees covered by wages councils work part time—a fact often overlooked by those who argue for retention of the wages councils —and about 80 per cent. are female. Total expenditure by the taxpayer on wages councils is £4·2 million, but the cost to the employers, although unspecified, is clearly substantial when one considers the vast bureaucratic overlay that the councils produce.

The wages councils establish minimum rates of pay for about 11 per cent. of the employed labour force. Had I been alive in 1909 I should probably have supported the establishment of the wages councils. Indeed, as one who is concerned about poverty I should probably have been on a National Anti-Sweating League rally campaigning against people working long hours in unpleasant, unhealthy and unsafe conditions for low wages. The early wages councils governed tailoring, paper and cardboard box making, chain making and the finishing and mending of man-made lace, and the people affected by them were mainly full-time workers in manufacturing. Looking back, I think it is fair to say that those people were vulnerable to exploitation if not actually exploited.

Circumstances today are completely different. Our welfare state, with unemployment and supplementary benefits, guarantees a minimum standard of living for each person according to his needs. It is no longer a matter of working in a sweatshop or starving. Today no adult is forced to go to work. He can stay at home and live on supplementary benefit if he so wishes. Indeed, the operation of the poverty trap caused by high taxation and national insurance payments often results in people opting to live on supplementary benefit because they are better off not working. Family income supplement is a valuable resource to working families in relative poverty.

Wages councils must be justified according to the circucumstances of today rather than by a sentimental attachment to history. If they did not exist, would we wish to set them up? I think not. No Conservative or even the most hard interventionist-Socialist would want to establish anything like the present system, but would prefer a national statutory minimum wage.

There is something illogical in saying that there should be a minimum wage of £50·25 for a 40-hour week for an adult shampooist, but that for a flax and hemp worker it should be £65·10, for a boot and shoe repair bench hand it should be £77·65 and for a general assistant in the retail food trade it should be £75·50. Arbitrary distinctions are being made by these bureacratic quangos called wages councils.

Mr. Michael Fallon (Darlington): Is my hon. Friend aware that, under the Wages Councils Act 1959 and the Employment Protection Act 1975, the Fur Wages Council (Great Britain) has made the Wages Regulations (Fur) Order 1976 (Order Z (96)) revoking the Wages Regulation (Fur) Order 1975 (Order Z (94)) which ordains that the rate paid for hand fleshing 100 skins of the American opossum shall be £2·38 but that for the Australian opossum it shall be £2·75? Does he think that the Government should be ordaining such matters?

Mr. Chope: No. I congratulate my hon. Friend on reading so clearly a document measuring about 4 ft by 2 ft, the print of which is minute.

Who would argue that an assistant in a small shop in a village where rents are low and travel-to-work costs are negligible should be assessed as requiring the same minimum wage as an assistant in a large city? The flexible market approach is the one that works in practice. Many small shopkeepers cannot afford to take on additional staff, because their customers cannot support the required minimum wages.

Those who advocate the abolition of wages councils are caricatured as hard-hearted men and women who want to

do down the workers and grind their noses in the dirt. Nothing could be further from the truth. Wages councils are not concerned with poverty. There is now little overlap between poverty and low wages because of the welfare state. Single people with few dependants, or married women, tend to be in the low hourly rate of pay bracket, often working part-time. They should be paid at a rate determined by the market rather than according to a rate laid down by a wages council in the belief that such a rate will deal with poverty.

Many people believe that wages councils are pricing people out of jobs. My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Surrey, East (Sir G. Howe) said that on 27 July 1981. Lord Thorneycroft said so in a debate in the other place on 17 March 1982. The National Federation of Self-Employed and Small Businesses said so in an excellent recent publication entitled "Still Priced Out". Many distinguished economists said that. On Friday a shoe repairer in my constituency said that because of the impact of wages councils he could not employ two apprentices whom he would otherwise wish to employ. A mass of anecdotal evidence supports the view that wages councils are pricing people out of jobs.

The arguments against the minimum wages policy are the same as those against wages councils. Two distinguished black American economists, Professors Sowell and Williams, said that the federal minimum wage law in the United States leads to unemployment concentrated on the young, unskilled, inexperienced, female and, even more severely, on ethnic minorities.

Mr. Fallon: Blacks.

Mr. Chope: I used the expression "ethnic minorities" which was chosen by those two economists to describe those whom my hon. Friend describes as "blacks". Their point was that despite the good intentions behind minimum wage legislation, it creates unemployment among those who are weakest in the market place.

The opponents of the abolition of wages councils suggest many arguments. One is that abolition could lead to increased trade union activity. I would not object to that if it resulted from the abolition of wages councils. It is also said that employers like councils, which is why they should be retained. My right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) said during the Budget debate that he was reinforced in his view of the importance of wages councils

"by the fact that a large number of employers do not want the wages councils to be abolished. They believe that they do a good job for . . . 2·5 million . . . and . . . bring about good industrial relations."—[*Official Report*, 25 March 1985; Vol. 76, c. 52.]

That argument must be scrutinised carefully. Insight into the reality of the position is available by reading the publication by Professor Clegg in 1972 of his book

"The system of industrial relations in Great Britain,"

He referred to what happens when there is pressure to abolish individual wages councils. He states

"In most instances in which abolition of a council has been under discussion, the employers have been more reluctant than the unions. This is because they feared that without legal inforcement of the rates of pay and hours of work, some of the smaller firms might resort to undercutting in both wages and prices and their organisations would not be able to put a stop to it. The unions with their membership concentrated on the large firms were confident that they could ensure that voluntary agreement would be followed there and were less worried about the small fry."

The Confederation of British Industry and other employers' organisations representing the large employers — it is the larger employers who are represented on wages councils rather than small employers — benefit from the operation of wages councils because the wage councils restrict the labour market.

Mr. Robert B. Jones (Hertfordshire, West): Could that be the reason why the hon. Member for Rochdale (Mr. Smith) said in the House on 19 March that, as an employer, he did not want the wages councils to be abolished because they protected his business from competition?

Mr. Chope: That may well be the reason. We may hear that quote in the House in future.

Most people accept that wages councils have an impact on youth employment. A possible solution that I have heard discussed is that people aged between 16 and 18 might be removed from the operation of the wages councils, so that the latter affected only the employment of those aged more than 18. But that would not be an answer to the problem, because many employers who take on youngsters aged 16 and 17 are thinking to the future. They say, "We are taking on an apprentice. Will we be able to employ him when he is 18 or 19?" A small business may be inhibited from doing so because it will say, "When he is 18 or 19, he will be subject to a wage level laid down by a wages council." The problem would not arise with a 16 or 17-year-old. The Government should consider a wider area of the impact of wages councils on employment rather than only the impact on youth employment, important though that is.

Wages councils have outlived their usefulness. They are clearly an impediment to jobs. There are two options in the discussion paper put forward by the Government: one is to recognise that wages councils are obsolete and that they should be abolished; the other amounts to a recognition that they are obsolescent, and that in their dying moments there should be an attempt to revive or reform them and bring them up to date. The latter would be a futile exercise doomed to failure, because the wages councils have outlived their usefulness and are no longer relevant to today's markets.

Next year is 1986——

Mr. John Evans (St. Helens, North): That is the first thing the hon. Gentleman has got right tonight.

Mr. Chope: It will be the 75th anniversary of the introduction of wages councils. I hope it will also be the year of their abolition.

3.42 am

Mr. John Evans (St. Helens, North): In his Budget speech on 19 March the Chancellor of the Exchequer said:

"My right hon. Friend will be issuing a consultative document about the future of the wages councils later this week. Wages councils destroy jobs by making it illegal for employers to offer work at wages they can afford and the unemployed are prepared to accept. This applies in particular to small employers and to youngsters looking for their first job."

That statement so enraged me that I shouted so loudly that *Hansard* picked it up:

"The right hon. Gentleman should be ashamed of himself."

The Chancellor continued:

"The document will cover a number of proposals for radical change, including complete abolition. My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Employment and for Education and Science will be issuing press notices later today giving further details of these measures."

[Mr. John Evans]

I then intervened to say:

"Bring back sweatshops."—[*Official Report*, 19 March 1985; Vol. 75, c. 794.]

I was incensed by the Chancellor's remarks for two reasons. First, there is not a shred of evidence to justify the outrageous statement that wages councils destroy jobs. The Chancellor, the Secretary of State for Employment and the hon. Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Chope) have not offered any evidence to support that contention. The hon. Gentleman referred to anecdotal evidence—whatever that means. It probably means what is heard when a guy in a pub, having had two or three pints, regales his audience with stories that he is inventing in order to impress one of his listeners who he knows is a Member of Parliament.

Conservative Back Benchers have for 18 months carried on their disgraceful campaign to abolish wages councils, and I suspect that they have been egged on by the Prime Minister, but they have never offered anything like a shred of real evidence that wages councils destroy jobs. All that we have had is the big lie technique, in which Dr. Goebbels specialised during the period of the Nazi party in Germany, which is that if someone is going to tell a lie he tells a huge one, and, if he keeps on repeating it for long enough and loud enough, perhaps people will start to believe him.

The second and more important reason for my anger is that I believe that sweatshops will be brought back if wages councils are abolished. There is no doubt that sweatshops will again rear their evil head, and that leads to the most significant question that has to be asked in the continuing debate about the future of wages councils. I make it clear to the Minister and to Tory Back Benchers that we in the Labour party do not accept that a debate at 3 o'clock in the morning is the way that important matters of this nature should be considered.—[HON. MEMBERS: "Where are the Labour Members?"] Only one of my hon. Friends is present, but many of them volunteered to speak in the debate. I pointed out that there was little need for them to come to listen to the rubbish that we hear from the Tory Right-wingers—rubbish that we have heard for a long time—about wages councils.

Mr. Chope: Did I understand the hon. Gentleman to be suggesting that the constituent who came up to me was a liar? I understood him to be saying that I was wrong to believe what that person told me.

Mr. Evans: The hon. Gentleman referred to anecdotal evidence. We all know what that means. It is significant that he did not offer one shred of hard evidence that wages councils destroy jobs.

We have to ask the question which the hon. Gentleman mentioned in passing; why were wages councils created in the first instance. They were first introduced over 70 years ago to eradicate the evils of the sweatshop. I urge all those hon. Members who seek to abolish the wages councils, and I urge in particular the Secretary of State for Employment, to read and bear in mind the speech of the then President of the Board of Trade, Mr. Winston Churchill, on the Second Reading of the Trade Boards Act, which created the first wages council. In particular, they should read and digest the following passage:

"It is a serious national evil that any class of His Majesty's subjects should receive less than a living wage in return for their utmost exertions. It was formerly supposed"—

I impress this point on Tory Members—

"that the workings of the laws of supply and demand would naturally regulate or eliminate that evil . . . where you have what we call sweated trades, you have no organisation, no parity of bargaining, the good employer is undercut by the bad, and the bad employer is undercut by the worst".—[*Official Report*, 28 April 1909; Vol. IV, c. 388.]

In fairness, I ought to read out what was said recently by the hon. Member for Rochdale (Mr. Smith):

"I must tell the Government, as an employer, that I do not want the wages councils to be abolished, because they protect my business from unfair competition. They ensure that my competitors are required by law to pay the same minimum wage as I do."—[*Official Report*, 19 March 1985; Vol. 75, c. 817.]

Surely that point is germane to a debate on wages councils.

Further down column 388, Mr. Winston Churchill said:

"where those conditions prevail you have not a condition of progress, but a condition of progressive degeneration."

I repeat the earlier extract from Mr. Churchill's speech:

"It is a serious national evil that any class of His Majesty's subjects should receive less than a living wage in return for their utmost exertions."—[*Official Report, 28 April 1909; Vol. IV, c. 388.]*

That was the position in 1909. What is the position today? Twenty-six wages councils cover about 2·75 million workers. The wages paid to those workers are between £62 and £73, generally for a 43-hour week. I do not believe that even the most hard-hearted Conservative Member would suggest that between £62 and £73 is a king's ransom. The average statutory minimum wage paid to women in the industries covered by the wages councils is just over one half of national average earnings. The minimum wage for men is just over one third of national average earnings. In other words, the statutory minimum wage set by the wages councils is already less than the living wage which Winston Churchill described in 1909 as "a serious national evil."

It is the height of nauseating hypocrisy for well-heeled Tory Members of Parliament — barristers, lawyers, consultants and directors — to stand up and make speeches about wages councils fixing wage levels that are so high that they are ruining businesses. I suggest that those hon. Members ought to have the guts and the decency to tell the House and the country what are their average earnings in a year. I challenge every Tory Member of Parliament to disclose his earnings.

There has been no change since 1909. Mr. Churchill then said:

"where you have . . . no organisation, no parity of bargaining"—

he was obviously referring to the lack of organised trade unionism—

"the good employer is undercut by the bad, and the bad employer is undercut by the worst."

What has changed since then? The answer is virtually nothing. In the industries covered by the wages councils — predominantly the clothing and retail trades, hostelries and catering and such services as hairdressing and laundries—about two thirds of the work force are part-timers, while about four fifths of them are female. A substantial proportion are under 18 years of age, and a significant proportion of the total work force is made up of ethnic minorities. In other words, 11 or 12 per cent. of the nation's work force are not members of trade unions. Therefore, it is impossible for efficient collective bargaining to take place on their behalf.

To return to what was said by Mr. Churchill, where there is no organisation there is no parity of bargaining.

So will the good employer be undercut by the bad, and will the bad employer be undercut by the worst? The evidence clearly shows that that will almost certainly happen.

Paragraph 16 of the Government's Green Paper on wages councils refers to establishments visited and establishments underpaying. In 1981, 24,399 establishments were visited and 10,074 were underpaying. That represents 42 per cent. of the establishments visited. Similar figures are given for each year. The provisional figures for 1984 are 26,545 establishments visited and 9,461 underpaying — which is 35·6 per cent. of the establishments visited. More than one-third of the establishments visited have been underpaying their work forces.

Paragraph 17 lists the totals of workers underpaid and the assessed arrears. In 1981, 25,482 workers were underpaid and the arrears were £2,301,910. In 1984, 18,043 workers were underpaid and the arrears were £2,428,991. That is when wages councils are operating and when flouting statutory awards is a criminal offence. One can imagine what will happen if and when the wages councils are abolished and the sharks who criminally underpay their workers now are free to do as they wish —as some Government Members earnestly desire.

Mr. Michael Forsyth (Stirling): Is the hon. Gentleman seriously suggesting that a system that costs more than twice as much to administer as it recovers in wages should be continued? The scheme costs about £4 million and recovers about £2 million. Is this really a worthwhile use of taxpayers' money, and is it an efficient system?

Mr. Evans: The expenditure is worth while, as most taxpayers agree. The establishments visited comprise only a fraction of the establishments which could and should be visited. The Government have encouraged the serious shortage of wages councils inspectors.

Mr. Churchill's third major point in that splendid column 388 of 1909 was:

"where those conditions prevail you have not a condition of progress, but a condition of progressive degeneration."

Those words sum up precisely the state of our nation after six years of this awful Tory Government's wrecking of our economy. In excess of 4 million people in the United Kingdom are searching for employment. Our manufacturing industry is collapsing. A major engineering firm in my constituency has just announced further redundancies. Britain, once the world's workshop, is now in substantial deficit in manufactured goods. The NHS, our education system, the nation's heavily populated urban areas and the inner city areas are collapsing. The Labour party, the other Opposition parties, about one-third of the Tory party, and almost every economic commentator and serious newspaper in the land call for a major initiative to combat the evils of mass unemployment. The hierarchy of the Tory party is obsessed with wages councils and their paltry wage awards.

The debate has an international dimension. It is instructive to go back to the origins of wages councils legislation. In the debate on the Second Reading of the Trade Boards Bill, Mr. Churchill made it clear that similar legislation was being enacted in most, if not all, of the Western industrial democracies. That development, subsequently encouraged by all the Western democracies, moved on until we established the International Labour Organisation to regulate matters of this nature on an international basis. In other words, there has always been international co-operation on such industrial affairs.

Now, however, the Government are not only to set back the clock in Britain, but are seeking to set the clock back internationally by their commitment to deratify ILO convention No. 26. I am bound to ask: what will our EEC partners make of this step back into the dark ages, and what will the EEC commissioners make of this deratification in the light of the Community's competition policy? Will they allow future British sweatshops to compete unfairly against other more civilised European industries? Will not Britain be regarded as the Taiwan of Europe among our European partners and competitors? I am sure that Conservative Members wish that it was the Taiwan of Europe, with the same sort of wages and social conditions for the workers, but not for themselves. Conservative Members are something different, and the salaries that they earn are something different.

I deal next with what I understand is the Secretary of State for Employment's favoured option, that of retaining wages councils in some form or other, but removing young people from their protective cover, with the additional wheeze of altering the definition of young worker from meaning a person of the age of 18 to a person of the age of, say, 21 or even 22 — an outrageous proposition, which is hinted at in paragraph 18 of the Green Paper.

Before the Secretary of State goes down that avenue, let me remind him and his hon. Friends that most parents in the country already feel that their sons and daughters have been cruelly betrayed by the Government, and that any move further to wangle the statistics relating to employment, which is a particularly nasty feature of the Government, will meet with a mountain of protest from youngsters, their parents and his own Right wing, which will not be satisfied except by complete abolition of the wages councils. The chances are that if the Secretary of State pursues that favoured option he will find few friends.

As I understand it, the main excuse for introducing such a retrograde step as removing wages council protection from young workers is that they would then be pricing themselves back into a job, something which we constantly hear from Conservative Members. The hard, unpleasant facts are that young people's earnings, expressed as a percentage of the adult rate, have fallen by more than one fifth since the Government took office. At the same time, unemployment among young people has rocketed. The proposition about pricing youngsters back into a job is eyewash, or it certainly has been up to now. If wages council protection for young workers is withdrawn, and at the same time the Government go ahead with their other heinous proposition of abolishing young people's rights to social security benefits, they might very well price young people back into a job—an unskilled, dead-end job without any prospects, for a starvation rate of pay.

Let me spell out now that if that sort of job is created for young workers it will only be at the expense of adult workers, and probably male adult unskilled married workers at that. Far from bringing down unemployment, it will merely transfer it to an even more vulnerable section of the work force.

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): The hon. Gentleman made the point that if we were to denounce the ILO convention we would be out of line with

[Mr. Michael Brown]

our European partners, and he referred to the civilised approach which the rest of Europe would then have compared with what would prevail in this country. He went on to quote paragraph 18 of the Green Paper. Will he read the final sentence of paragraph 18, in which the Government say that in Holland the full adult minimum rate is not reached until the age of 23? How does he square that with what he said a few moments ago?

Mr. Evans: I was pointing out that the Government's latest squeeze might result in there being an increase in the age of those who come within the definition of "young worker." We cannot discuss the point that the hon. Gentleman raises without all the relevant statistics from all the European countries. I shall be happy, when we have a more wide-ranging debate, to discuss the issue in full, and on that occasion I shall have all the statistics to hand.

Apart from economic factors, moral issues must be considered when considering the future of wages councils. These councils have in the past protected the weak and the unorganised, have prevented the exploitation of some of the most vulnerable in society and have been an important bulwark against poverty wages.

The hon. Member for Itchen mentioned the statutory minimum wage and said that he did not agree with such a concept. Throughout the Labour movement, the question whether there should be a statutory minimum wage has always been a source of argument. I suspect, however, that many unions are now moving towards the acceptance of that concept. I admit, as a member of the AUEW, that I have disagreed with my union on the issue and have always believed that the measure of a civilised society is a statutory minimum wage.

Once wages councils are abolished and appalling sweatshop conditions return, as they undoubtedly will if the Conservatives continue in office, the horrors of privatisation will be visited on thousands of workers, not only in hospitals and Tory local authorities but in nationalised industries such as the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority at Risley, a mile and a half from where I live. Exclusive Cleaning and Maintenance has slashed the cleaners' earnings in that establishment by more than £20 a week. Workers in other sections of industry are becoming horrified as they realise what the Government are up to.

Certain good results could come from the abolition of wages councils, though they are not the sort of results that Conservative Members want. In the short term it will undoubtedly be dreadful for those who at present have some protection under the auspices of wages councils, but in the longer term more and more workers will appreciate the benefits of trade union membership and collective agreements, which can protect workers from the activities of some of the most appalling employers.

The opening sentence of the Green Paper on wages councils says:

> "The Government attaches the highest priority to removing unnecessary obstacles to the creation of more jobs."

The greatest single obstacle to the creation of more jobs in Britain is not the peripheral issue of wages councils, but the evil policies of this awful Government. My recommendation is not to sack the wages councils but to sack this incompetent Government.

4.9 am

Mrs. Angela Rumbold (Mitcham and Morden): I must confess that I listened to the speech of the hon. Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans) with mounting rage. It seemed that he was talking to a great extent about women workers. By implication he was outlining a situation where the women of this country are no better off, no better educated and no better able to fight for themselves than they were in 1909, a year in which, in spite of my not inconsiderable age, neither my mother nor my father was alive.

My interest in the subject arises unashamedly as a woman viewing an area which predominantly affects women's working conditions. It is generally accepted that some 2¾ million people are covered by wages councils; of those, 75 per cent. are women working in retailing, catering, clothing, hairdressing and related industries. The argument for retaining wages councils is plainly stated; they are seen as the only method whereby those covered by the councils are relieved of the problem that might arise from exploitation, as the hon. Member for St. Helens, North has so vividly outlined.

Since the opportunity is available under the International Labour Organisation agreement for a careful look at the situation, it would be irresponsible not to take advantage at least of the opportunity to examine what happens in this sector of the labour market and to study whether there is any truth in the allegation that the abolition of wages councils would result in a down turn in average wages from the minimum levels currently negotiated through wages councils.

I start from the point of being basically hostile to the idea of wages regulations. It has been said with demonstrable truth in another place that the foundation of all economic analyses is nothing more arcane than that prices affect quantities. If wages are increased, other things being equal, the demand for workers will be reduced at the margin.

Today what we seek is an increase in employment opportunities. My concern is all the greater since the evidence of research shows that when the costs of employment are raised artificially, the resulting unemployment affects females. I am not arguing against minimum incomes. No one could be more concerned than I am about overcoming the poverty trap, but I share with the Chancellor of the Exchequer the view that it would be much better to achieve that through the social security system than by the intervention of Government or Government-inspired bodies in price setting.

I believe that minimum wage levels are a disincentive to increasing employment opportunities. In the very areas where the wages councils operate, many of the industries which used to exist at the time of which the hon. Member for St. Helens, North spoke — the early part of the century — have disappeared, although it could well be demonstrated in a limited way that many of the skills required remain and are still marketable even today.

If we examine the female potential for job creation in small businesses, we can see immediately that the skills that many women have can, and could, be used to start new businesses. There are potential employment opportunities in all geographical areas, using the various skills currently covered by wages councils, which may well be stillborn simply because of the existence of the wages councils and the impossibility of meeting at the start

of a new business minimum wage levels together with the other restrictive practices that are imposed on potential new employers in regard to premises, facilities, time off and so on.

Many women today expect to return to work — if, indeed, they ever leave it — to supplement the family income. The experience of the present structure within wages councils is not good. Many women are not able to give continuity of service if they are married or caring for other members of their families. Because of this, employers see the costs of recruiting and training, together with other special provisions, such as the necessity to hold open a job following a pregnancy, as strong disincentives and counters to employment. This is particularly true of small business men.

In other words, wages councils, linked with some provisions—alas, within the Employment Protection Act 1975 — militate against women being offered jobs. I contend that, but for those constraints, it is the experience of employers that many women who face external family pressures would, nevertheless, be readily employed by small firms and would not be disadvantaged in such employment. This applies equally to the financial rewards that the women would gain and the individual arrangements that they would be able to make with those employers. Employers frequently make those arrangements to the mutual satisfaction of the women whom they employ and of their business, without discrimination of payment or of terms and conditions of work. Frequently, women employed under such flexible arrangements prove to be of excellent worth to employers, giving unstintingly and willingly of their time if they do not feel that there is some threat to them of a watchful eye to note whether they are to be judged on the legal constraints currently imposed by, for example, the wages councils. If the Opposition genuinely wish to improve job opportunities on an equal basis, it is crucial that this factor should be openly recognised.

Women are increasingly beginning to create small businesses — this is a more recent development — some of which might be termed cottage industries. Others, such as successful businesses launched by Anita Roddick, called the Body Shops—truthfully, such an initiative is not taken by a large number of women, but, nevertheless, that instance needs to be cited—prove that women have an initiative-taking facility which is beginning to be explored and to be shown to be highly successful in enterprises such as catering, hairdressing and clothes design and clothes and furniture making.

Women not only go in for those areas covered by the wages councils but now enter the high technology area, which, fortunately, is not numbered among the industries covered by the wages councils. Where such businesses can begin — often they begin at home — the conditions that would be imposed by the wages councils are sufficient to prevent them expanding and increasing employment levels.

It is not merely a question of minimum wages. Although all women expect and seek parity — they should get parity of payment for equal work — many——

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): It is a scandal that the hon. Lady should argue such a case. Is the hon. Lady aware of the life led by working class women in the sense that in many ways they are protected by wages councils and in many other ways they are incapable—for reasons that will not be known to the hon. Lady—of making inroads into small businesses or employment? The hon. Lady's approach clearly shows her complete inadequacy and her lack of knowledge of working class people who are trying to make their way through life in the difficult conditions presented by her Government.

Mrs. Rumbold: That is a disgraceful slur on women, whatever their origin.

Mr. Loyden: The hon. Lady is casting the slur on women.

Mrs. Rumbold: I certainly am not casting a slur on women. I certainly would not make such a sexist remark or choose to denigrate women, whatever their origin.

Mr. Loyden: The hon. Lady is denigrating women.

Mrs. Rumbold: I ask the hon. Gentleman to——

Mr. Loyden: The hon. Lady has no experience of working class women.

Mrs. Rumbold: It is very difficult to answer the kind of intervention that the hon. Gentleman is making, since it is quite clear that he is not willing to show the decency of allowing that women of any origin have the ability to move forward for themselves. We do not need to be supported indefinitely by the opinions or views of the male sex. This is the first time in my life that I have ever been moved to make such a feminist and pro-feminist speech. But I find that increasingly in this place the number of times men wish to tell women what they are capable of doing and what they should do with their bodies and their lives is becoming quite intolerable. I do not, nor do my women colleagues in this place, tell men how they should conduct their lives or what they should do with their bodies and I wish that the hon. Gentleman would wait while I finish making the point I had embarked upon.

I was trying to explain to the hon. Gentleman that the flexibility that women require in order to achieve success in both starting enterprises and continuing them is something that can be negotiated with both male and female employers, mercifully. I think that this is something that will increasingly appeal both to women who have not so many family ties and even more to women who today, fortunately, have the advantage of a better education and improved communications and of seeing how others can get a job which it is worthwhile to pursue through their contacts and can expand those contacts and those jobs if the terms that they work under are sufficiently flexible.

The arguments that led in the early 1900s and the early part of this century to the starting of wages councils—the exploitation of the low paid, the inability of home workers to negotiate proper rates of pay—simply do not apply today. I am amazed to hear that these arguments are levelled when in particular, the whole communications system in this country and throughout the world is so totally different that it makes the points about communication, low pay and negotiation quite irrelevant. It is as though the people who are employed through the wages councils or are looked after through the wages council were being judged incapable of managing without these bodies. This is simply not so. The wages councils today seem to me to be completely irrelevant since the communications media can provide adequate information to all who work about the right rates of pay and the right

[Mrs. Rumbold]

amount of work to be done. Sensible arrangements can be worked out through the much more exposed system that we now have. It therefore seems to me that the wages councils have lost their relevance, in particular to those sectors of the female working population to which I have referred.

4.23 am

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): The speech of the hon. Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans) would have carried a little more conviction if the Benches behind him had not been empty. I have often thought that Labour Members here have started to work a three-day week. They never seem to be here on Mondays or Fridays, and now it seems that they are not here in the middle of the week either.

The question that we have to consider is: are wages councils to be abolished, or, if they are not abolished, as everyone from the low-paid to the Institute of Directors is unhappy about how they operate at present, how should they be reformed?

There are three questions that need to be asked and answered about wages councils. First, do they in fact protect the weak, and would their abolition remove such protection? Secondly, do wages councils inhibit the creation of new jobs? Do they, as Professor Marsland argues

"provide a haven we cannot afford for incompetent managers, inefficient employees and people in industry with the least capacity for innovation and enterprise?"

Do wages councils seek to give job security but in fact just end up leading more people to social security? Thirdly, if wages councils protect the weak but also inhibit the creation of new jobs, what is the correct balance?

Conservatives favour the view that wages are a matter for employers and employees to negotiate according to the circumstances of the industry, with the minimum outside interference. Hence the repeal of schedule 2 to the Employment Protection Act 1975 by the Employment Act 1980 and the rescinding of the Fair Wages Resolution in 1983. However, until now, minimum outside interference has none the less presumed a duty on the state to seek to protect those who, for one reason or another, are in a weak bargaining position when offering their labour.

As Winston Churchill said:

"But where you have . . . no organisation, no parity of bargaining, the good employer is undercut by the bad, and the bad employer is undercut by the worst . . . where those conditions prevail you have not a condition of progress, but a condition of progressive degeneration."—[*Official Report*, 28 April 1909; Vol. IV, c. 388.]

Of course, there have been substantial changes since Winston Churchill was at the Board of Trade. The balance of bargaining power as between employers and employees was very different then, and there was no social security system as it is understood today. Many employees in the "sweated trades" then faced the alternative of either working at extremely low rates of pay or starving. Today, that situation has completely changed. The system of social security benefits ensures a floor below which no one need fall. Indeed, today often the two main problems affecting the low-paid are either the poverty trap, whereby a pay increase may, in certain circumstances, lead to a lower standard of living as a result either of having to pay more tax or of the loss of social security benefits, or the unemployment trap, where in certain circumstances people are better off unemployed than in work. The question today is whether a better safety net than social security benefit levels is still needed for low-paid workers.

Before attempting to answer those three questions I should like to refer to a substantial misconception, which has to be cleared out of the way. It is the suggestion that wages councils and minimum pay levels are necessary to tackle poverty. There is in fact little correlation between low pay and poverty. The Royal Commission on the distribution of income and wealth — the Diamond commission — initiated research by Richard Layard, described recently by *The Sunday Times* as a leading Government critic, who concluded:

"Of workers in the bottom 10 per cent. of income relative to supplementary benefit only one fifth were in the bottom 10 per cent. of hourly earnings. The reason is that the poorest workers are men with large families, many of whom earn a reasonably high wage, while most of those on the lowest pay are married women where earnings ensure that the family are not amongst the poorest . . . a substantial proportion of low paid employees are not in poor households, and a substantial proportion of the poor are not low paid."

The most recent available evidence, "Low Income Families", published by the Department of Health and Social Security, shows that, taking into account the effect of state benefits, only about 1·5 per cent. of families, the head of which was in full-time work, had a family income below the supplementary benefit level, whereas 14 per cent. of families, the head of which had been unemployed for three or more months, were below supplementary benefit level. In short, poverty is a problem not so much of low pay as of no pay. For example, pensioners and single-parent families with no pay are in the group with the highest incidence of poverty.

The misconception of the need for minimum pay legislation to combat poverty is further exaggerated by the insistence of the low-pay lobby to talk of low pay as a percentage of the average. The Trades Union Congress talks of a low-pay target of two-thirds of the average male earnings, and the Council of Europe seeks a minimum "decency threshold" of 68 per cent. of average adult pay.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Peter Bottomley): This Council of Europe problem keeps coming up, and I am sure that my hon. Friend does not need me to remind him that the Council of Europe has adopted no such thing.

Mr. Baldry: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that intervention.

The substantive point is that it is ridiculous to talk of low pay as a percentage of the average, because if everyone were, for example, 10 times better off, the problem would be as intractable as ever. To make low pay a percentage problem simply means that it is just a matter of trying to keep up with the Jones's and, as even the Low Pay Unit is forced to admit,

"a target based on the average represents an unobtainable goal".

It is also important to remember that since 1948 real pay has increased considerably. Average weekly earnings of the male manual worker have increased at about 2 per cent. per year faster than the rate of inflation, and have doubled in real terms.

Indeed, ever since the start of the recession in the first quarter of 1979 average earnings in Britain have risen faster than retail prices, and real earnings are still

increasing at just over 2 per cent. per annum. Therefore, it is not helpful to see low pay as a relative problem, and it is misconceived to link low pay and poverty.

As the National Board for Prices and Incomes commented when charged with identifying pay levels which were too low to maintain a reasonable standard of living:

"the fixing of the minimum standard of need cannot be exact. The only yardstick which we can appropriately use is that laid down by practice by Parliament, in that Parliament has approved scales of supplementary benefit and made other provision with the result that it has de facto expressed a view as to the level of income below which families are in need."

In short, the most efficient way of relieving poverty consists in targeting social security assistance where it is most needed. Minimum wage legislation will not help here.

In so far as there is any overlap between those who are poor and those on low wages, it is much more because of post-tax wages than pre-tax wages. In 1956, a married man with three children did not become liable for tax at the standard rate until he was earning nearly twice the average wage. Today, the basic rate liability of a man with three children starts at 40 per cent. of the average wage. Indeed, DHSS figures show that in almost every case means-tested benefits payable to employed people are necessary, not because of low pay, but because gross earnings have been whittled away by income tax, national insurance contributions and local authority rates. Therefore, wages councils and minimum pay levels are not necessary to tackle poverty.

Having dealt with that misconception, I return to my original three questions. First, do wages councils protect the weak? Successive Governments have abolished wages councils when it was felt that they were no longer necessary because sufficient potential existed to protect the interests of employees. Indeed, 17 have been abolished since 1960, many of them by a Labour Government.

After the abolition of the cutlery wages council in 1969, the Department of Employment commissioned research on the impact of its abolition. Research paper No. 18 of 1980, "Abolition and After — the Cutlery Wages Council", concluded:

"There was no significant improvement in wage determination in cutlery after abolition, no catching up with rates in voluntary collective bargaining agreements in similar industries and sufficient evidence of under-payment of female workers to suggest that the degree of protection has deteriorated."

A further report on the impact of six other wages councils which were abolished concluded:

"The overall picture to emerge from the survey of six ex-wages councils was that low pay and inadequate system of collective bargaining had persisted . . . thus the most important effect of abolition was to increase the size of the unregulated sector and therefore the potential for low pay."

It is also right to observe that those were all wages councils covering areas where, as a precondition of their abolition, it was thought that sufficient potential for fair collective bargaining existed to protect the interests of employees.

In dealing with wages councils one is dealing with the small firm, the average employing seven people. About half of the employees covered are part time and there is generally a low level of trade union activity. Undoubtedly, wages councils at present cover many of the lower paid in the community who can justifiably be described as weak — weak in the skills that they have to offer in the market place and weak in their bargaining power.

Wages councils can fairly be described as protecting the weak, but do they assist in the creation of new jobs? There can be no doubt that there is a clear link between pay levels and jobs. As the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) once said:

"the number of people who have a job will depend directly on the level of pay received by those in work."—*Official Report*, 6 April 1976; Vol. 909, c. 271.]

Wages that are not earned by productivity can only cause greater inflation and result in the loss of jobs and fewer jobs.

There are those who argue cogently that any minimum pay legislation costs jobs. While giving full weight to such arguments, which of their nature are theoretical, and appreciating that often the marginal product of workers in industries covered at present by wages councils is low so that little added value may necessarily be created by their work, one none the less has to have full regard to the facts of how wages councils actually do impact in practice before making a judgment on whether they inhibit the creation of new jobs or help accelerate the destruction of present jobs.

Minimum rates of pay for full-time adult workers covered by wages councils range from about £45 a week for a hairdresser and shampooist to about £67 for shop assistants. Most wages councils set a minimum basic rate between £55 and £65. Is further depressing the pay of such low-paid workers a valid way to create jobs? Let there be no illusions. Even if all wages councils were abolished tomorrow, many would still be out of work. There might just be some more people in work, but they would receive very low rates of pay.

It does not appear that the activities of wages councils have led to higher earnings or rates of increases in earnings than in other sectors of the economy, or that wages council industries pay higher than average earnings. However, some organisations, such as the Association of Small Firms, argue that during the 1970s wages councils increased wages faster than inflation. It should be remembered that during the 1970s all wages rose faster than inflation. ACAS concluded in its annual report of 1981 by saying that

"minimum rates set by wages councils have been relatively very low and have often increased at a slower rate than pay rates in industry generally."

Wages paid to male manual workers in the wages council sector are consequently lower than those paid to the same group in the economy as a whole. They were 77 per cent. of all-economy average earnings in 1982, a lower percentage than in the mid-1970s. However, it has to be recognised that generally speaking the skill content of the great majority of jobs in the wages council sector is low and that the composition of the sector has changed with the exclusion of certain high-paying industries, such as road haulage.

Further, the minimum rates of pay set by wages councils are consistently lower than those set in national agreements. The unweighted average of wages councils minima was equivalent to 43 per cent. of average earnings of all workers aged 18 years and over in April 1980, and it was 42 per cent. in April 1983.

One group for whom wages council rates have almost certainly created barriers to employment by setting too high pay rates is that of 16 and 17-year-olds. The figures show that the average minimum rate for young people under wages council cover is significantly higher relative to adult rates than the relative minimum rates under

[Mr. Baldry]

national collective agreements. Indeed, no fewer than 22 of the 26 councils pay 16-year-olds a higher proportion of the adult rate than the average proportion paid to this age group under national agreements. In some instances the youth minimum set by the councils is exceptionally high. Furthermore, this has to be set against the background that starting pay for school leavers in Britain is now averaging about 60 per cent. of adult rates, while in the rest of Europe it is averaging below 20 per cent.

Youth wages as a proportion of adult wages are higher in the United Kingdom than in any other Western country. Given the higher proportional minimum rate and the higher level of earnings relative to adults, it is reasonable to conclude that wages councils have reduced, and continue to reduce, the employment opportunities of young people. There is, therefore, a clear case for removing young people from the provisions of the councils. Such a move would certainly help price young people back into employment.

There is insufficient evidence to suggest that the abolition of wages councils would lead to the creation of a sufficiently larger number of new jobs so as to make acceptable the loss of the protection that they offer to those who are in a weak bargaining position with low pay——

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Baldry: I am aware that a number of my hon. Friends wish to participate in the debate, including my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon), so I shall not give way.

The Select Committee on Employment has received direct evidence from two bodies urging the complete abolition of wages councils. The Institute of Directors had 120 replies to a survey on wages councils that was sent out to its members. All the replies came from those who had had direct experience of wages councils, of whom 54 per cent. said that they would employ more people if they did not have to follow wages council directions. As the institute fairly observes.

"it is not possible to draw detailed conclusions from a limited survey of this type."

It is interesting to note, however, that the principal concern of those members of the institute who responded to the survey was not wages rates but the plethora of other terms and conditions which wages councils are presently able to set.

The Association of Small Firms had 206 replies to a similar survey, 66 per cent. saying that minimum wage legislation encouraged them to reduce the number of employees. Again, however, it was not a large survey and there was no evidence of how many of the respondents actually had reduced the number of employees because of wages councils or would actually employ more people if they were abolished, and at what rates of pay.

In short, even from those bodies calling directly for all wages councils to be abolished there is little hard statistical evidence to support the suggestion that, with the exception of young people, the rates of pay set by wages councils have of themselves resulted in the loss of jobs or that there abolition would of itself result in many more adults being in employment.

Mr. Fallon: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Baldry: No, I have already been told that I am taking too long and I am conscious that there are some strong abolitionists around me waiting to speak.

Against such evidence as there is, we have to balance the fact that wages councils have had a role in preventing the competitive undercutting of labour and that a number of companies, particularly smaller ones, have benefited from multi-employer bargaining.

Furthermore, industrial relations have generally been good in those areas of employment covered by wages councils. To abolish wages councils completely would inevitably mean a considerable growth of trade union activity and a possible consequent deterioration in industrial relations. Moreover, if total abolition of wages councils led to continuous allegations of low-paid workers apparently suffering because of the absence of any minimum pay legislation it might be an excuse for a future Labour Government to introduce a national minimum wage. That would be economically disastrous, as such a move would be bound to inflate wage costs even further throughout the economy, leading to bankruptcy of businesses and loss of jobs.

It should also not be ignored that the overwhelming consensus of both the CBI and the Association of British Chambers of Commerce, who between them represent a substantial proportion of British employers — not just large firms but many smaller businesses as well—is for radical reform rather than outright abolition.

Mr. Fallon: Did the CBI not testify in evidence to the Select Committee that if it could not achieve radical reform of the wages councils it would prefer complete abolition?

Mr. Baldry: If my hon. Friend were less keen to intervene and actually listened to what I was saying, he would realise that my argument was directed entirely to radical reform of the present position.

In the absence of any substantive evidence that the abolition of wages councils would lead, in practice, to the creation of a significant number of new adult jobs, one has to ask what real benefit can be obtained by abolition which cannot equally be achieved by reform of wages councils. Wages councils should be reformed, not abolished, so that they can set only a single adult rate and a related rate for those aged 18 to 21 and not any other terms or conditions such as those at present covering hours of work, holidays, overtime rates, and so on.

The Department of Employment consultative paper correctly sets out a number of problems faced by employers in coping with the wages council orders and my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington has illustrated the situation graphically by reference to the fur trade. The consultative paper states:

"All these burdens can inhibit the growth of small businesses in the wages council trades and thus damage employment."

Substantially simplifying the wages councils system by removing the council's ability to set detailed statutory terms and conditions would also greatly assist compliance with wages council orders. The director of personnel for John Lewis has commented:

"In their present form wages council orders are self defeating."

Such overall reform should also be accompanied by a full review of each and every wages council, with a view to seeing whether some councils might be merged— and, indeed, where appropriate, whether individual

councils should be abolished, using the criteria adopted by successive Governments, Labour as well as Conservative, in recent years.

The question that I put to my hon. Friends is simply this. Is there any real benefit to be derived from abolition which cannot be obtained by reforms such as these? I submit that wages councils should be reformed and not abolished. Young people should be taken out of the control of wages councils. Wages councils should be able to set only a single minimum adult rate and a related rate for those aged between 18 and 21, and such reforms should be accompanied by a full review of each and every wages council.

4.44 am

Mr. Robert B. Jones (Hertfordshire, West): We all ought to be grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Chope) for raising this subject because of its happy timing in view of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor's Budget and because it marks an achievement of the National Federation of Self-Employed and Small Businesses. It started campaigning on this issue in 1981 with its admirable publication "Priced Out", which has been updated in "Still Priced Out". The title is appropriate as, from 1981 to 1985, yet more youngsters have been deprived of jobs because of the existence of wages councils.

We are in a climate of high unemployment, especially among young people, but that fact should not distract our attention from the plight of other groups whose employment is also affected by wages councils. I refer to the disabled, ethnic minorities and the educationally subnormal, all of whom suffer greater than average unemployment because, when wages councils set a minimum rate, it is all too easy for an employer to get someone who suits him, reflects his prejudices or has the highest possible educational qualifications. He might well take on a different type of person if the pay rates were lower.

There is also a growing awareness that the balance between capital and labour has been out of kilter for some time. That led to a change in the basis of capital allowances in the Budget before last. It was recognised that they often led to the unloading of labour precisely where unemployment was highest. With wages councils, there is too much encouragement to employers to bring in automation rather than to employ youngsters or the groups I have mentioned.

The wages bill as a whole affects unemployment. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor said that every 1 per cent. extra in wage settlements costs approximately 200,000 jobs. I need only to compare the United States, where unit labour costs have risen by about 36 per cent. in the past five years, Japan, where they have risen by 31 per cent. and West Germany, where they have risen by 64 per cent., with the United Kingdom's whacking 104 per cent. for people to realise the close link between our unemployment and the pattern of wage increases.

In his extremely long and detailed speech, my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) referred to pay rises and said that the pattern of the past decade is that they have increased faster than prices. He was right to observe that that was true of the economy as a whole, but the creation of large-scale unemployment is merely an example of wages councils writ large. The increase in wages in the wages council sector has been especially large among young employees. That has led me to the conclusion that they should not be covered by wages councils. The hon. Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans) referred to the lack of evidence in the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Itchen. I hope to rectify that. In 1984, H. Neuberger, in a publication of the Low Pay Unit, related the abolition of wages councils to the creation of 8,000 jobs. Therefore, even someone from that sector was prepared to admit that there was a relationship between the number of employees and the level of wages imposed by councils.

To be fair to Mr. or perhaps Mrs. Neuburger——

Mr. Evans: Mr. Neuburger.

Mr. Jones: Mr. Neuburger would have argued that wages councils were worth it for the standard of living enjoyed by workers covered by them, but he nevertheless accepted that 8,000 more jobs would exist if wages councils did not. Robert Meyer and David Wise, in a learned article in *Econometrica*, showed that 7 per cent. more people would be employed if wages councils did not exist in the sectors covered.

Mr. Evans: The hon. Gentleman will accept that Henry Neuburger said:

"According to our simulation of the Treasury model, the abolition of Wages Councils would result after five years in the creation of just 8,000 jobs—the rise in unemployment in June —one of the best months this year."

Mr. Jones: I am not disputing whether the figure should be small or large. I am pointing out that even on all of Mr. Neuburger's assumptions, which would not be mine, he recognised that extra jobs would be created. We can go on to talk about whether his assumptions are right and whether more jobs would be created, but he accepts that 8,000 more jobs would be created over that period.

Lasyard, in his "Youth Labour Market Problem", published in Chicago, said that a 1 per cent. increase in wages would have destroyed 15,000 jobs. Although the hon. Member for St. Helens, North does not like anecdotal evidence, I shall cite an example from my constituency of the relationship between youth unemployment and the existence of wages councils. A mother told me that she had approached a local hairdresser to ask whether he would train her daughter, and offered to pay him to look after the daughter while she was not contributing economically to the well-being of the business.

Mr. Evans: That would be a novel solution to unemployment. People will pay to work.

Mr. Jones: If the mother was willing, I see no objection to her offer being accepted, but sadly, because of the existence of wages councils it is against the law.

My final comments relate to a more technical matter —the existence of the independent members on wages councils. That has led to a general impression that wages councils are biased against employers. I would not necessarily go so far as to say that, but independent members are far from familiar with the workings of the industries that they hope to influence. They serve on a wide range of wages councils, for example, Sir John Wardie, who is a barrister—I mean no disrespect to my hon. Friend the Member for Itchen in saying that— serves on councils which deal with everything from hairdressing to cafes. No doubt he has built up expertise in those subjects, but I wonder whether he is familiar with the detailed workings of those varied industries.

[Mr. Jones]

Mrs. P. Fea, who is a former teacher—an excellent qualification for something like this — is on wages councils for button manufacturing and unlicensed places of refreshment. The notorious Sir John Wood, who still serves on many councils, including licensed residential establishments and licensed restaurants, and the boot and shoe wages councils, — I hope that the Minister will notice that broad range — chaired the road haulage wages council and, by some coincidence, chaired the commission of inquiry into the future of the road haulage wages council. That fact did not come to light until my hon. Friend the Member for Gedling (Sir P. Holland) pointed it out in his excellent work together with my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon) on quangoes. Curiously, that issue was resolved, and Sir John departed. There are far too many academics. Of the 70 independent members of wages counsil in December, no fewer than 38 were academics — lecturers, professors, university administrators, or people who had retired from those professions. The Government must reconsider the existence of independent members.

Wages councils are extremely rigid. They do not differentiate between the prevailing economic costs and wage rates in different parts of the country. How can it be right to pay people the same wage in the same industry in an area with low costs, such as the east midlands and Yorkshire, and in an area such as mine, which has extremely high costs? That is a weakness of the wages councils system, and of national wage bargaining generally.

My hon. Friend the Member for Banbury mentioned the working conditions that are set by the councils. They can set holiday requirements, the number of hours that people may work, and sick leave. It is possible that a wages council could set a low minimum wage per hour and an employer could pay three or four times that wage; but if he asks an employee to work more than the set hours, he could be in breach of the law. That becomes especially stupid when, at the request of the employee concerned, the employer has allowed him to work on a Saturday or Sunday, when he is entitled to considerably enhanced wages. That may not be the wish of the employer; he may do it out of courtesy and kindness to the employee.

In conclusion, either wages councils increase wages to above the rate at which we would start to reduce unemployment — whatever that level may be — or they have no effect on wages at all, in which case they are useless and we should not spend £4 million a year on the edifice that creates them. In either case, the time has come for them to be abolished. I hope that sufficient attention has been paid during the debate to the unemployment that wages councils create to persuade my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State to recommend their abolition to the Government.

4.57 am

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): I am not surprised by the contributions that we have heard tonight from Conservative Members, because it is the Government's clear intention to deregulate almost everything in sight. As a long-standing trade unionist, I must say that trade unions have had differing opinions about wages councils. At the time of full employment, many of us argued about the restrictions placed on some sections of workers by the wages councils. But now the Government are intent on deregulation, which is aimed at the most vulnerable sections of society — at the categories of workers who are protected by the wages councils. There is some difference of opinion about the direction in which the Government are moving. My view is that the Government do not intend to abolish the wages councils but that they will so draw their teeth that they will become ineffective.

There may be a valid criticism of the trade union movement for not drawing those areas which are now covered by wages councils into collective bargaining. That is a historical fact. Certain industries were difficult to organise because of their nature and have a history of low wages, poor conditions and part-time work.

I was somewhat amazed by the contribution of the hon. Member for Mitcham and Morden (Mrs. Rumbold), who raised the issue of women in employment. What she said was contrary to the reality of women in factory work, many of whom are under the protection of the Wages Councils. As the hon. Lady will know, many of the people employed in such work are female and on part-time employment. The exploitation of those people is greater than in industries where women are organised and capable of asserting their position as women in the industry, and can argue for parity with their male counterparts.

The Government's intention has been shown by Tory Back Benchers. It is about the philosophy of cutting the living standards of ordinary working people to maximise the profits of those who employ them. We should not lose sight of the fact that that is the Government's intention. Facts and figures about the value of the Wages Councils can be argued, but below the surface the argument comes through from the Tory party that it is in the process of whipping back all the rights that have been established by workers.

My hon. Friend the Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans) made a good case showing that the Conservative party's greatest leader was of the opinion that there should be protection for those who worked in industry but, for whatever reason, had not joined trade unions and therefore had not become part of the collective wages bargaining system, but should still be protected.

The Tory party is saying that that protection, little and inadequate though it be, should be removed. It is arguing that that will create more jobs, but in reality that argument is nonsense. Today, 45 young people from Merseyside came down to the House of Commons to meet the Prime Minister. Anybody who heard what they said after that meeting would have no illusions about the attitude of the Government to the job seeking generation, and the chance of the young ever having jobs.

Since 1979, the Government have set their course clearly in one direction. In the economic crisis which we, and the rest of the world, have been in, they argue that it has been necessary for the Government to take a radical Right-wing line to attempt — I underline that word attempt — to stabilise our economy. Their line is that they should challenge all the things that have been achieved by negotiation and trade union activity, and, in particular what has happened since the war, when the working class has been able to gain some more of the wealth that they create and increase their living standard.

This Government have adopted a radical, Right-wing line. They are prepared to reduce the negotiating powers of the trade unions and to abolish regulations that have

provided some measure of protection for the real creators of wealth. I was surprised to hear the Prime Minister refer during the weekend to the wealth creators. Those who create wealth do not sit in City boardrooms. They are to be found in the coalfields, docks, factories and commerce. By hand or by brain they are the creators of wealth and it is right that their living standards should be protected by means of wages councils. They were established to protect the weakest workers in industry and commerce and prevent their exploitation.

I am surprised that Conservative Members do not recognise that the wages councils have been able to stabilise the very low demands regarding pay and conditions of this part of the industrial sector. Instead, the Government are seeking to abolish the wages councils and are attempting to remove all protection relating to pay and conditions. Therefore, the Labour party is quite right to stand up and object strongly to the attempts that are being made by the most reactionary section of the Conservative party. They say that now that the trade union movement has been weakened the process ought to be taken one stage further by attacking the very inadequate provision that is made for such workers by the wages councils.

Conservative Members have made it clear in this debate that they believe that the only way to achieve the maximisation of profits, which they say is the essential ingredient for creating a prosperous economy and full employment, is to adopt this course. Nothing that the wages councils abolition can offer will increase the employment opportunities of those who live in the north-west and other industrial areas. The Government completely fail to recognise that those who are seeking work today are completely different from those who sought work in the 1920s and 1930s. They have a higher level of aspiration and objectiveness. Our society is not providing the right kind of work for them. They are becoming increasingly alienated against society. Society cannot now offer young people work when they want and need it. Many young people in my area leave school at 18 or 19, marry and start a family without ever having had a job. That is a condemnation of our society and it will cause major problems.

Government Members look for ways to maximise profit and say that the revival of British industry depends upon small businesses which employ only a few people. They are trying to recycle the capitalist system.

I have no doubt that if we rely on small businesses we shall have to wait for at least three decades before we begin to solve the unemployment problem. I do not think that Government Members really believe that the abolition of wages councils will create employment. However, abolition will allow the hyperexploitation of young people who are already working and of female employees. The maximisation of profit can be gained only at the expense of cutting the already abysmal wages offered under the wages councils' protection.

I am not surprised at the Government's approach. In some senses we should welcome it. Some workers who have not so far been organised by trade unions have had to seek help elsewhere. Because of changes in the pattern of industry, unemployment, and changes in technology, people have had to turn elsewhere. If the wages councils were abolished, we might welcome the opportunity to move into other areas. The trade union movement is already aware of the opportunities.

If the limited protection of the wages councils is removed, workers will seek protection from the trade union movement. We would welcome that. That will be an inevitable consequence of the abolition of the wages councils. The argument might seem contradictory, but I have never had a full regard for wages councils. However, they protect workers in some industries who are not able, or who do not want, to belong to a trade union. Wages councils have provided some minimum protection so that workers are able to achieve a certain standard of living.

The Government might decide to draw the teeth of the wages councils rather than to abolish them. They might retain the structure but remove the effectiveness. That might be of benefit to the multitude of people who at present rely upon the protection of the wages councils. It will be a new recruitment field for the trade union movement which I would welcome. In those circumstances, in spite of the fact that the Government are in the process of attempting to weaken the basis of trade union collective bargaining, there will be a short-term advantage for the Government, and in the longer term the trade unions will be able to establish new areas of recruitment which will bring people who hitherto have not been organised under the protection of the trade union movement so that they can advance their living standards and wages and conditions.

The Labour party, in my view, is right to argue that there is no logical reason why those people who are at least minimally protected by the wages councils should be deprived of that protection. The proposed removal of wages councils can be seen only as a blatant political attempt by the Government to weaken the power of working people by denying them this protection.

The retention of wages councils should be viewed in two ways. First, we see a need for the retention of wages councils to protect those who are most vulnerable from exploitation by certain categories of employer. Secondly, they open up the possibility of a wider recruitment of people into the trade union movement, and will reassert the position of working people.

I believe that in abolishing the wages councils the Government are going in the wrong direction. I hope that at the end of the day sense will prevail and that there will be no drawing of the teeth, particularly with regard to the inspectors. As has been said by my hon. Friend the Member for St. Helens, North, the number of cases in which inspectors have found employers paying below the level demanded by statute is an indication of their value.

A Government who go in the direction of abolishing wages councils will be exposed outside the House as a Government who do not care for those who work in industry because working people would be deprived of the protection that trade union organised industries have. They will be seen as a Government who are not concerned about people or about employment.

5.20 am

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): The hon. Member for Liverpool, Garston (Mr. Loyden) spoke at considerable length, hoping, no doubt, to make up for the lack of troops on the Labour Benches. This debate is important and, in essence, has been conducted by Conservative Members. Opposition Members, who made such a fuss about the issue when the Chancellor presented the Budget, have opted out of the debate, both in the Chamber and in the nation.

[Mr. Michael Brown]

It is clear that the main debate on the subject will be conducted by my hon. Friends. My hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) dealt with the issue in a restrained and considered way, as did my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones), who called for total abolition. The Green Paper reflects the Government's misgivings about the way in which wages councils have contributed to unemployment in recent years. It is an excellent document which contains a number of alternatives. Indeed, the Green Paper provides the answers to those who argue for abolition or reform, for it contains two paragraphs devoted to abolition and four devoted to the need for radical reform.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: My hon. Friend will appreciate that it was possible to put the abolition proposal in one paragraph — indeed, it could have been put in one sentence—whereas with reform it takes more words to describe some of the problems.

Mr. Brown: My hon. Friend makes a valid point, and I was about to congratulate him and his colleagues who prepared the Green Paper, because, as I say, it answers the questions that hon. Members have asked. For example, my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury wondered whether it should be abolition or radical reform. Paragraph 20 says:

"Reforms of the kind outlined in paragraph 16-19 would remove many of the detailed inflexibilities of the system and greatly reduce the bureaucratic burdens on employers, and above all help to promote job opportunities particularly for young people."

That proposition was supported by my hon. Friend. The paragraph goes on:

"But compared with the abolition option they are unlikely to have as much effect on the overall level of employment and risk maintaining artifically high rates of pay for adults, damaging to employment."

Thus, the Green Paper answers the debate. If the option of radical reform is chosen by the Minister, then, according to that document, it would be

"unlikely to have as much effect on the overall level of employment and risk maintaining artifically high rates of pay for adults, damaging to employment."

That is the importance of what we are seeking to do. The Government are seeking to address themselves seriously to the problem of unemployment. They have recognised the contribution which wages councils have made to unemployment.

Mr. Loyden *rose*——

Mr. Brown: The hon. Gentleman had a long innings. If he had not spoken for so long I might have given way, but I will not give way because I know that other hon. Members wish to speak.

The main purpose of the debate is to consider the two alternatives put forward in the Green Paper. The answer is in the Green Paper itself. If we are determined to do something about the level of unemployment and if we recognise that wages councils have contributed to unemployment, then by going down the route of radical reform we will not address the central question in the Green Paper.

I want to draw the attention of the House to what was said last year by my hon. Friend the Paymaster General, who was then the Minister of State at the Department of Employment. I seem to have an incredible ability to quote things said by my hon. Friend. Last time he was not happy about something he had said which I placed on the record. I think he will be more relaxed when I draw to public attention something which he put on the record last year in his capacity as Minister of State. In reply to the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), he said in regard to wages councils:

"if the operation of such councils leads . . . to fewer jobs and less opportunities, it would be quite wrong for any Government concerned about unemployment not to consider carefully the way in which those wages councils work."—[*Official Report*, 15 February 1984; Vol. 54, c. 285.]

He and his successors have honoured that commitment. The Government have recognised that wages councils lead to fewer jobs and opportunities. Even on the bleakest analysis by the Low Pay Unit, it acknowledges that more jobs will result from the abolition of wages councils. I take the point of the Low Pay Unit that over a five-year period it will be only 8,000 jobs and that the number of unemployed is 3½ million. The Low Pay Unit recognised that against a backcloth of 3½ million unemployed the likely effect of abolishing wages councils would be more and not fewer jobs. Even if it was only one single job that would be created as a result of the abolition of wages councils I would say that it was worth doing.

Mr. Evans *rose*——

Mr. Brown: I am quoting the Low Pay Unit. The hon. Gentleman has got from the Library the research brief which he quoted. I have it here too. I will give way briefly.

Mr. Evans: Will the hon. Gentleman give the rest of the quote from Mr. Neuburger? After his reference to 8,000 jobs he said:

"Moreover, because the Treasury model tends to overstate the effects of changes in wages on employment levels, the number of extra jobs likely to be created by abolishing the wages councils is probably less than half the number estimated by the market."

That was over five years. Now we have over 4 million unemployed.

Mr. Brown: I am not in any way seeking to suggest that the Low Pay Unit wants the wages councils to be abolished. The Low Pay Unit is defending the status quo and, in doing so, it must acknowledge in the final sentence that more jobs—the hon. Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans) has suggested 4,000 more—will be created because of the abolition of the wages councils.

Let us leave on one side that rather biased and prejudiced analysis, which still acknowledges that there will be more rather than fewer jobs without the abolition of the wages councils, and discuss the analysis by the research institute of the university of Chicago. The analysis suggested that a 1 per cent. wage increase levied by wages councils in this country would adversely affect the employment of 15,000 young people.

Although the hon. Member for St. Helens, North may not suggest that the abolition of wages councils will create jobs, their existence certainly loses jobs. That fact cannot be denied. Even if we examine the terms of reference of the hon. Gentleman's argument—looking at the impact of the wages councils on the negative side, rather than considering, as Conservative Members are doing, the positive side of their abolition — we find that wages councils have a negative impact on jobs and, indeed, lose jobs. No hon. Member would deny the impact of job losses that have occurred because of wages councils' wage increases.

Mr. Evans: Nonsense.

Mr. Brown: It is not nonsense. The former Secretary of State for Employment, Mr. Albert Booth, who had responsibility for defending the expansion of the wages councils following the Employment Protection Act 1975, had some embarrassing moments during the late 1970s as a result of the existence of the wages councils. A number of Opposition Members will recall those days.

Mr. Evans: Put the evidence.

Mr. Brown: There is no doubt that the abolition of the wages councils will create more jobs. By whatever test one cares to apply and however bleak the analysis, the fact is that more jobs will be created.

The Green Paper acknowledges that radical reform will not lead to as many jobs being created as would be created with total abolition. I hope my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State will have regard to the paragraph in the Green Paper to which I referred when the Government make their final decision.

5.32 am

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Chope) on gaining this debate. If we are to have wages councils, I wish that my hon. Friend could get them to fix more sensible hours for beginning and finishing the debate.

When I look at the attendance in the Chamber, it is obvious who is concerned about unemployment. The Opposition are concerned only with their union membership and protecting their union rates. Government Members are concerned with unemployment. The hon. Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans) wanted to see the evidence. I should have said that the evidence of 3 million unemployed after 75 years of wages councils was sufficient evidence for anyone.

We are debating more than the economics of workers pricing themselves out of jobs. We are debating something greater—our compassion for those on the lowest wages on the ladder of earnings and for those who are not yet on the ladder, who are without a job. We have compassion for the dignity of man.

I originally felt that wages councils were no more and no less than a great restrictive practice, a giant conspiracy between employers and the employed against the unemployed. That is the evidence for the hon. Member for St. Helens, North.

Our concern is greater than that. It is for all those whose lot is the lowest. How do we improve their lot? Is the best way to increase their low earnings by taking away the bottom rung of the ladder, or is it better for them to earn more by learning how to climb the ladder of earnings from the bottom rung?

Conditions were very different when Charles Kingsley wrote "Cheap Clothes and Nasty" and when the House first started deliberating legislation for minimum wages. Today's world is one in which average earnings are far greater than they ever were in the past, in which job mobility carries people up the ladder of earnings and in which the welfare state has taken over the social need for a minimum income; a world in which this country is no longer the richest, with a dominant share of world trade, in which industry could be given the task of carrying the social can. Today we have lost our premier position. We no longer have the largest financial reserves in the world. Our share of world trade has dwindled. We have squeezed the lemon and there is no juice left.

If Charles Kingsley were alive today he would not be worrying about the return of Victorian sweatshops; he would not want to be writing "Cheap Clothes and Nasty" today; he would be worrying about why the bottom rung of the ladder has been taken away, so that those who want to work cannot find jobs. Today he would be writing about "Closed Shops and the Nash"—as national assistance is known to those who have to live on it, people who cannot get a job because the bottom rung has been taken away, in a world in which unions thought that they could dictate the terms.

I believe that the dignity of man requires that every man has a rung on the ladder of opportunity so that however low he starts—and I started work at £4 5s. a week—he can look up to the next step and the step above that.

By setting minimum wage levels, wages councils have taken away the bottom rung. By artificially lifting some people up they have taken away the incentive for them to climb by their own efforts. They have taken away the first rung for those without a job.

By doing away with wages councils we are not going back to the sweatshops of Charles Kingsley's days but are going to the wealthshops of our competitors today. Germany and Japan recovered after the war by running their countries like one big sweatshop, and now they have a higher standard of living than we do. The most telling example of all is Hong Kong—the world's archetypal sweatshop; the place where, if someone does not work, he starves. Hong Kong now has a higher average income per head than we do.

If we want to increase our standard of living faster than our competitors, we are going to have to work, not in Government-created jobs, not in infrastructure schemes, but in jobs which will win back our share of world markets. There is plenty of demand in world markets; the problem is our ability to compete.

If sweatshops are synonymous with wealthshops, I am all in favour of this country becoming a wealthshop where by the sweat of our brow we can once again become the workshop of the world; where our compassion for the dignity of man allows every one of our fellow citizens to climb the ladder of earnings and where no one in government wants to take away the most vital of all rungs of the ladder, the first rung.

5.38 am

Mr. Michael Forsyth (Stirling): I am grateful for the opportunity to participate in this debate, and I join in congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Chope) on the timeliness of the subject he has chosen.

It seems to me that the arguments are absolutely clear. The wages councils are an anachronism. They have failed in their purpose. They have been defended with fairly colourful rhetoric by the hon. Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans) and the hon. Member for Liverpool, Garston (Mr. Loyden), who seem to be the entire representation that the Labour party has been able to muster on this important matter. It has been the rhetoric of sweated labour and exploitation that we have heard, and precious little else. But the reality is that of protecting the interests of Britain's poorest paid. The reality is that these wages councils have destroyed jobs for young people and

[Mr. Michael Forsyth]

have rewarded the semi-skilled at the expense of the unskilled, the ethnic minorities and the most vulnerable section of the work force.

I do not want to go into all the absurdities in the make-up of the wages councils; there is not time for that. But progress has been made and I am delighted to see that we have got rid of the hair, bass and fibre trade wages council and that the wholesale mantle and costume manufacturers wages council has gone. I see that we still have the ostrich, fancy feather and artificial flower wages council and apparently it is necessary to have a wages council for the 200 people who are employed in making coffins.

However, despite the fact that the members of those wages councils are appointed by Government and that they and the inspectorate to enforce them are financed by the taxpayers, they are apparently independent. They can and do impose wage levels that they think right, and the efforts of the present Government and of their predecessors to restrain pay levels have at times been freely ignored. Ignored, too, have been the interests of the small business man and smaller employers. Wages awards are written in complicated and quite incomprehensible language, leading to frequent mistakes.

While Opposition Members have tried to argue that the success of wages councils lies in the inspectors having identified cases of underpayment, all too often the fault lies in the misreading of difficult and detailed documents by overworked bosses rather than any deliberate or malicious attempt to hold down wages. Indeed, in some cases, inspectors have treated as underpayment private arrangements made to suit an employee's special needs. If the hon. Member for St. Helens, North says that there is no evidence, I can only imagine that he has not bothered to read the welter of particular cases produced by the National Federation of Self-Employed and Small Businesses, and other bodies.

One case that struck a chord with me was that of a small business—a restaurant owner who had decided to close his restaurant. The manageress said that she would take a pay cut if he would keep it going for another year, which he agreed to do. Shortly afterwards, the inspector arrived, and subsequently fined him for failing to pay the laid-down rate. The low-paid were protected and looked after because the restaurant closed down and the manageress lost her job.

Mr. Evans: Name the restaurant.

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman proves my point. He has not bothered to read the material from the National Federation of Self-Employed and Small Businesses. If he would like to borrow mine, he can read it for what remains of the debate. He makes a cheap point by trying to get me to name the individuals concerned, and he can find the case for himself.

It is significant that the arrears that are paid following visits by inspectors are generally small, covering relatively few workers, and lead to only a handful of prosecutions. At £4 million a year, it costs substantially more to operate the system than the £2 million or so that it recovers for underpaid workers.

Further criticisms that need to be made concern the attitudes — my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) made this point vividly —of the so-called independent members of the councils. They are usually academics, they seem to have little understanding of the real world in which businesses have to operate, and they have insufficient sympathy with the problems of making an enterprise pay. There is a tendency to appoint the same people to the councils, as with all quangos, and the number of individuals sitting on more than one is staggering.

However, it is the effect of wages councils on pay and employment that is the fundamental criticism. Research carried out in 1979-80 for the Department of Employment suggests that the wages councils have had little effect on levels of pay, employment or trade union membership. Other evidence suggests that in some areas, particularly in the employment of young people, wages have been raised above market levels, leading to a loss of jobs.

I do not understand the argument of my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry). If it is true that raising wage costs in a business will result in fewer young people being employed, why is it not also true of older people? Why is it not true of people who represent particular groups in society who find it difficult to find employment? The logic of his position seems unsustainable. I cannot help thinking that in trying to justify a pragmatic solution, he has got himself into difficulties.

In 1945 wages councils set youth pay at 30 per cent. of adult levels. Today it is 62 per cent., despite several studies that have concluded that that increase in young people's pay leads to disproportionate increases in youth unemployment. In April 1970 only 12 per cent. of those aged 18 were receiving adult rates of pay, but by April 1980 the figure had risen to 53 per cent.

Low pay is not something that should be denigrated in itself—it is often a road to high pay. The patronising attitude of the Opposition to those with low pay must be heard to be believed. They want to see a pool of people who are permanently low paid being looked after by some regulatory body, whereas we want an opportunity for people to be brought into employment, to be given the opportunity to learn new skills and to be able to advance their role within the labour market — a constantly changing group of people who are taking jobs at low levels of pay rather than a permanent group who remain at that level and are looked after by some apparatus of the state.

Even the TUC has admitted that there must be some truth in the proposition that, all other things being equal, an individual employer will tend to employ more people if wages are lower and fewer people if wages are higher. In addition, every extra complication that is imposed on small businesses reduces their willingness to take on permanent employees. Not only are the regulations complicated and the attention of the inspectors a further time-consuming nuisance, but the awards themselves are often backdated, which makes financial control and discipline extremely difficult.

In fairness, it was suggested that wages councils had a role to play in preventing unfair competition. It is competition that actually creates jobs and wealth. Unfair competition and the role that wages councils play in that means keeping inefficient managers in their jobs; keeping down the flexibility and the innovation in firms and preventing businesses from being able to win new markets and create further employment.

I believe that wages councils have survived because of what people believe they do rather than because of any objective assessment of their benefits. They may have been an understandable response to the sweat workshops

of the 19th century; they may have made some sense in a society with poor communications which left workers unaware of wage levels elsewhere, let alone able to move to better locations; but in today's world they are an unnecessary nuisance. At best they do little more than reflect the market and at worst they distort it to the detriment of the weakest members of society, creating unemployment where none need exist.

One thing is certain: wages councils have failed utterly in their task of eliminating low pay. The Low Pay Unit recently produced figures that show that 100 years ago 10 per cent. of the British work force earned only 68·6 per cent. of the then average wage—today the bottom tenth earn only 68·3 per cent.

If we are to rid ourselves of these relics of an Edwardian era, we must give the International Labour Organisation a year's notice of our intentions. The case for abolishing wages councils is clear and has been repeated over the years. This Government have in the past prided themselves on taking decisions that were unpopular because they believed that they were right. The time is fast approaching —I hope that tonight's debate will have helped—when the same courageous stand will need to be taken over wages councils.

5.50 am

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): It is all too often that debates take place in which all the arguments are deployed by Conservative Members and we hear nothing from Opposition Members. The hon. Member for Liverpool, Garston (Mr. Loyden), realising the inadequacy of his argument, took refuge in incoherence. It was an occasion when one had the greatest sympathy for those who compile the *Official Report*. They have the unenviable task of trying to make head or tail of such speeches.

There can be no greater contrast between the speeches in this debate than that of the hon. Member for Garston and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry). We look forward to reading the latter in *Hansard* the day after tomorrow. I am sure that we shall find the contents of my hon. Friend's speech rather more digestible in print than it is possible to find them in a debate of this sort.

I share the astonishment of my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) about one part of the argument of my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury, which I believe I understand correctly. If the fixing of a minimum wage creates youth unemployment, why does that not have the same result for adults? I suppose that part of the reason for this is that youth wages are fixed at a higher than market clearing level than the level for adults. There is a differential between the two, but in principle there is the same fixing of minimum wages. Unemployment, albeit to a greater or lesser proportion or extent, is nevertheless created. If we are against unemployment, as all my right hon. and hon. Friends are, the logic of my hon. Friend's argument is that wages councils should be abolished and not merely radically reformed.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Hamilton: Yes, but there is not much time remaining to us.

Mr. Bottomley: I shall take the duration of my intervention from my time to reply to the debate. It seems that my hon. Friends the Members for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton) and for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) have confused themselves over proportionality. If the relationship of youth pay to adult pay has moved from 30 per cent. to 60 per cent., it might be halved. My hon. Friends have not suggested that the adult minimum rate should be halved.

Mr. Hamilton: These relationships are not necessarily absolutely proportional. I have no idea of the elasticities that are involved. Surely the principle is the same if wages are fixed above market clearing levels, whether for youth employment or adult employment. Logic suggests abolition and not merely reform.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State seemed to be asking my hon. Friend the Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton) to quantify the relationship between youth wages and adult wages in the wages council area and outside. In wages council industries, youngsters earn 66 per cent. of the adult wage whereas in the non-wages council sector they earn only 53 per cent. That is the gap that we are discussing.

Mr. Hamilton: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that information. The labour market is like any other market and it responds to the price mechanism. If the price of labour is fixed at an artificially high level, the demand for it will fall. That is something that Keynes well understood. In the "General Theory of Employment Interest and Money" he stated:

> "With a given organisation, equipment and technique, real wages and the volume of output (and hence of employment) are uniquely correlated so that, in general, any increase in employment can only occur to the accompaniment of a decline in the rate of real wages. Thus I am not disputing this vital fact which the classical economists have (rightly) asserted as indefeasible."

All the so-called Keynesian guff that we hear about expanding the economy and investing in infrastructure as a means of reducing unemployment seems to miss the fundamental reality that the main cause of unemployment is micro-economic and nothing to do with the failure of demand. The situation is different from that which prevailed in the 1930s when unemployment was a monetary phenomenon. If we are to make inroads into unemployment, we must concentrate on the micro-economic causes, one of which is the existence of wages councils.

The effect of the activities of the wages councils has been to discriminate against those who are the least skilled and the least productive in society. Their effect has been to institutionalise the benefits to those who are employed at the expense of those who are unemployed. That is fundamentally unacceptable and, indeed, immoral. That is why we should opt for the abolition of the wages councils and not for fundamental reform.

Wages councils have effects upon employment because they affect wages and influence a host of other matters as well. In particular, they have substantially increased youth unemployment because the qualifying age for the adult rate has been reduced as a result of wages council activity over the years. The evidence for that is clearly set out in the booklet from the National Federation of Self-Employed and Small Businesses, to which reference has been made several times in the debate.

Wages councils have also affected entitlement to holidays. That, too, affects the costs of a business and thus the number of jobs that it can provide. It also greatly adds to the complexities facing small business men. I could cite

[Mr. Hamilton]

many examples. The hon. Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans) would no doubt describe them as anecdotal, but they are none the less real and substantiated. For example, a stationer in Liverpool, says:

"After a visit by the wages inspector I have discovered that, due to my incomprehension of the Retail Wages Council publications, I have underpaid two employees. They have contracts for 37½ hours per week and have been paid for that time. But in the 'definition' section, a 'full-time worker' is one employed for at least 36 hours a week. Under the 'guaranteed weekly remuneration' provisions, however, the weekly remuneration is based on workers' entitlement for 40 hours. Consequently, they have been 'underpaid' for 2½ hours per week which they did not work."

That is absurd and cannot possibly be justified. No fundamental reform of the wages councils will get rid of those anomalies. The only way to get rid of them is to abolish the whole institution.

There are other equally absurd anomalies. For example, it almost beggars belief that a part-time employee in a hotel working Monday, Wednesday and Friday is entitled to pay on most bank holidays whereas one who works Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday is not. What on earth is the justification for that ridiculous state of affairs?

The only way to do away with that catalogue of absurdities is to do away with the institution itself. In so doing, we shall be recognising that the whole institution is based on an unreality which has very damaging effects on those in society least able to look after themselves. That is the paradox of the institution. The intention behind the setting up of wages councils was, of course, benign—to try to increase artificially the income levels of employees in certain industries and trades. In so far as they have achieved that—and it is doubtful whether there has been any substantial effect in that respect—it has been at the expense of those who are even worse off. That being so, I find it difficult to understand how Socialists can support such an institution.

The hon. Member for St. Helens, North said that there was no empirical evidence to prove the case against wages councils. In fact, there is a wealth of evidence, much of it in a document on "The Case for Abolition" published by the Institute of Directors. I commend that document to the hon. Gentleman, as it considers the academic evidence published in learned journals throughout the world. There is no time to go into the details, as we are all anxious to here my hon. Friend the Minister reply to the debate, but there is a considerable body of evidence from the United States and from other countries with minimum wage legislation showing the damaging effects of wages councils and that minimum wage regulations actually institutionalise unemployment.

If we are, as a party, to recover our respect, which in many parts of society has been damaged by unacceptably high unemployment which, alas, has grown upon us in the past 20 years, we must accept that we can begin to reduce unemployment only if we look to the root causes. The root causes are labour market regulations and institutions which prevent people from putting into effect their desire to employ other people. That is why the Government's opportunity to denonouce the ILO convention is important for us as a party, no less than as a country. I counsel my hon. Friend the Minister and his colleagues to take the radical course, which is right for a Conservative Government in this difficult economic climate, to abolish wages councils and not to mess around with any unacceptable compromise which would only reduce the beneficial effects that the Government wish to achieve.

6 am

Mr. Michael Fallon (Darlington): I am a little surprised at your sums, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That is probably because I have sat here longer than any Back Bencher and applied for this debate. I have been in the Chamber since the middle of the previous debate and have still not been called. I wonder——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I hope that the hon. Gentleman is not reflecting on the Chair. If he is, I must ask him to withdraw such a reflection.

Mr. Fallon: It is the Chair which selects the order of hon. Members who speak. I wonder whether you——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The matter is entirely at the discretion of the Chair. There are many factors that the Chair has to take into account. The hon. Gentleman must not reflect on whom the Chair calls to speak.

Mr. Fallon: I am simply emphasising that it is a matter for the Chair. That is no reflection on the occupant of the Chair. It is obviously a matter for the discretion of Mr. Deputy Speaker. I wonder whether you were surprised that the Opposition could not draw more than 0·5 per cent. of their parliamentary strength for this debate or that we could muster only my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) to question abolition.

I am not ashamed to speak in favour of the abolition of wages councils, partly as a matter of principle but certainly not in opposition to trade unionism. I often wonder why the Labour party does not see the potential for some unionisation after abolition. I favour abolition only because I want more people to be in work especially young people in depressed areas of the country. The whole and sole effect of wages councils is to price people out of work.

Wages councils fail to give workers more money, and jobs that we might have expected have not been created. It is no part of the abolitionist's duty to prove that a given number of jobs might have ceased to exist because of wages councils. The numbers out of work should prove the case, as should the ratio of young people out of work. In the late 1960's it was similar to the national average, but it is now almost double the national average.

Others have emphasised the irrelevance of the low pay argument in this debate. Those who argue that the abolition of wages councils is linked to low pay ignore the fact that what matters to the average family is not low pay but low income. The draft Council of Europe definition is a definition of low income. It is vulnerable because it is a definition of an average. There will always be low pay —under 66 per cent. of the average—so that definition should not affect what we say.

If we want to tackle poverty, low pay or whatever the Opposition want to call it, we should improve job prospects rather than raise pay levels. Where jobs are not relevant, other things can be done, such as providing proper benefit for those who are retired, for single parent families, and so on.

My major objection to wages councils is that they are discriminatory. It is not that they price people generally out of work, but that they particularly exclude from work the most disadvantaged people — the youngest, the

unskilled and the poorest. Retail trades would most easily take on young people in the north of England. The unskilled do not normally enrol on Government training schemes, they need work experience and they are being denied the chance to acquire disciplines and skills by the wages council system. The poorest are effectively thrown out of work each time that the councils' minimum wage is raised.

Of those three categories, I am most worried about the youngsters. It is said that youngsters will not work for a particular wage. That is not true when one considers the number of youngsters who enrol willingly on the young workers scheme, and who are prepared to accept a wage of £26 a week on the youth training scheme. It is nonsense for hon. Members to say what youngsters will or will not work for.

The youngsters have not been free to say what they will do. Whatever system we believe in, our one duty to them is to give them the chance to decide for themselves. If they are not willing to work for £40 a week and prefer to stay on the dole for £26 a week, they have nothing to lose, but if they are, they can price themselves into work.

Secondly, by ending the wages council system, we would end a limit on growth. About 86 per cent. of employees covered by wages councils are in the services sector. Those are the services that are expanding and creating new jobs—catering, retailing, hairdressing and so on. In ending that limit on growth, we would be freeing business. Just as important as the nearly 3 million workers covered by the councils are the 400,000 establishments and the 260,000 employers who would by abolition be freed from interference, such as the regulation of overtime, rest days, holiday entitlement and hours of work. It is enormously important to sweep that away.

The consultative paper has a further importance. Although it is flimsy—a mere 24 paragraphs covering five pages of typescript—it represents a change in the approach of the Department of Employment, away from the head counting and macro-economic approach to industrial relations. I hope to see a change in attitude and approach towards a framework of labour market policies, which genuinely free employment in the labour markets and which will lead us on to tackle the restrictive practices in the labour markets, to relax rent controls, to recapture the jobs in the black economy and to make a reality of the right to work in our society. I hope that it would go some small way towards tackling the paradox that there is plenty of work, but remarkably few jobs.

6.9 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Peter Bottomley) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Does the Minister have the leave of the House to speak again?

Hon. Members: Yes.

Mr. Bottomley: What a pity!

One of the advantages that I share with my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon) and with the hon. Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans) is that discussing the statutory minimum wage rates set by wages councils of about £60 or £70 a week makes a fair contrast with what we discussed earlier in relation to the printing industry, when we were told that some people earned £700 a week for half a week's attendance. But I do not wish to use my time discussing that. Although we shall no doubt return to the subject of wages councils, low pay, low incomes, and the overlap between the two, I wish to try to deal with some issues today.

Without the interventions of the hon. Members for St. Helens, North and for Liverpool, Garston (Mr. Loyden), at one stage in the debate it may have been thought that Conservative Members were a pale imitation of the Labour party in one of its friendlier moods. That would be an error. It is important to recognise, as most hon. Members who have spoken do, that there are serious issues underlying the Government's determination to create job opportunities and to ensure that unmet needs and resources are put together by voluntary association — between customer and supplier or between employer and employee.

Any of my hon. Friends who believe that their eloquence or oratory will persuade me to announce tonight that the Government have taken a decision on the consultative paper will be disappointed. We expect to receive comments on the paper by 31 May, and after we have gone through the consultation process, we shall announce decisions. But for those who may have been misled by some newspaper reports about possible differences within the Government, perhaps I could refer the House to column 107 of the *Official Report* for 25 March, where my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer talks about,

"the proposal radically to reform the wages councils." — [*Official Report*, 25 March 1985; Vol. 76, c. 107.]

I should tell the House that, had he had more time to reply to the debate, he would have said that another option is to abolish them. The Government stand four-square behind what we see as the two proper options facing the House and the country.

Last year or the year before, I spoke in a debate about low pay. When I re-read my speech after I took responsibility for answering questions on low pay, I discovered that I was not embarrassed by what I said before I became a Minister.

Mr. Evans: The hon. Gentleman must be unique in the Tory party.

Mr. Bottomley: There are those who say that I got this position as a reward for bad behaviour and consistency.

Mr. Michael Brown: What did my hon. Friend say about fluoride?

Mr. Bottomley: I am sure that my hon. Friend would have quoted anything that I had said on fluoride. But having listened to him at this hour of the morning on the subject of fluoride, I am tempted to pay less attention to some of his remarks, knowing that he can speak at great length about matters in which I am sure he does not really believe. Most Members of Parliament have been shown to have said one thing on one occasion and another thing on another occasion, as my hon. Friend has demonstrated.

My hon. Friend the Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton) said that he did not believe it was possible to get rid of the anomalies without wholesale abolition. If we chose the option of keeping an adult minimum hourly rate, all anomalies would disappear. All that would be left would be possibly a market distorting or matching adult rate. My hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) put forward a rather more balanced description of the issues facing the Government. Although there were accusations of "planting" to him and to those of my hon. Friends who

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advocate wholesale abolition, anyone who reads this debate in the context of the Budget debates, especially Monday's debate when some of my hon. Friends gave their views on the options, will discover that they came down not especially in favour of wholesale abolition.

There is an area to be debated, but it must be debated not just in one party or only in Parliament, because nearly 3 million people are, or might be, directly affected by wages councils as they work full or part-time in wages council industries. But there are also more opportunities for more people to get jobs, if we make the right decision and if the right consequences follow. The latter are not just market forces, because effective market operation requires information and something that could be called enterprise, confidence or risk-taking. People need to believe that if there is a change in the law, it is likely to stick, which means trying to avoid some of the issues in rent control, to which hon. Members have referred. Measures in that sector have not had the impact that they should have had because people have not had the confidence that they would stick.

The hon. Member for Garston said that he almost relished the idea of the abolition of the wages councils. If he is right, perhaps there will not be too much opposition from the Labour party. We are in the slightly paradoxical situation in which the trade unions and the Labour party believe that the Government want to abolish the wages councils wholesale, and many of my hon. Friends believe that we do not. Perhaps both sides are right, and what I say about us making up our mind after we have had the responses is what matter.

A good deal of attention has been concentrated on the wages councils issues. I recommend to those who will read our debates various documents that they should also read. One is the consultative paper itself, which, although it is brief, could not be described, except in the physical sense, as flimsy. It is one of the best papers that the Government have produced, and I recommend it to anyone who is interested in the subject.

I also recommend the research note from the House of Commons Library, which is up to the Library's usual standard, and covers the ground well. For those who want to go a little further, there is a book by F. J. Bayliss, called "British Wages Councils", which is unfortunately out of print and was produced in 1962. It is interesting to see that at that time the country was facing the problem of over employment. If we managed to go from 1962 to 1985 and change the situation in a dramatically harmful way for many people who want to go to work but cannot, we should, within the same period of time or less, be able to reverse the process. I know that the House will expect the Government to show a little more of their thinking, during the next few days and weeks.

A good booklet, which has been mentioned once or twice is called "Still Priced Out! Wages councils versus economic recovery", which is by the National Federation of Self-Employed and Small Businesses. I caution some of its readers and my hon. Friends that the underlying issue, in terms of dividing up nominal demand into growth and inflation, depends not just on what happens in wages council sectors but, more crucially, on the majority of people who are paid more than most of those in wages council sectors.

Three other articles are relevant. One is an article in *The Observer* on 24 March by Peter Kellner, talking about how my right hon. Friend the Chancellor's proposals on national insurance contributions can add to the expectations for extra jobs and lower unemployment, especially with the impact on younger people in full-time work. He singles out retail business, hotel and catering, textiles, clothing and footwear among others. All these industries are in wages council sectors, and if one can give a double boost to employment opportunities in the sectors covered by wages councils, the insurance contribution changes, both for the employer and the employee, and the possible changes in the wages councils will make a good deal of difference.

For those who still doubt the impact of pay and jobs, especially among young people, there is an article in *The Financial Times* of 26 March, by Philip Bassett, describing what has happened in the electrical contracting industry.

I am sure that my hon. Friends will not mind if I do not pick up every point that they have made. Some of my hon. Friends as total abolitioners have put their case across in a way that is likely to attract the support of unemployed people looking for the bottom rung of the ladder. My hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) made that good point. Some have put a case that would convince the Conservative activists at a party conference, but that may be going down the line already set out by the Labour party, which is how it gets its approach to the country wrong, not to mention its approach to economic problems wrong. If the wages councils were to be totally abolished, I have no doubt that some people would find themselves, at least temporarily, in circumstances which it would be difficult to defend.

One needs to consider the conditions when the trade boards were originally set up. Towards the end of the last century, a House of Lords Select Committee characterised the "sweat" industries as those with unhygienic and unsafe conditions, very long hours and extremely low pay. Two-thirds of those who are covered by wages council orders now are part-time workers. The conditions in which people work are covered not by wages councils legislation but by other legislation. Those protections would remain, even if the Government were to propose the total abolition of the wages councils.

May I go on to point out that it is incredible that businesses are still covered by every single detail of wages council orders which can amount to 30 pages. The point was made very well by my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington that, although three times a wages council statutory minimum rate may be paid, if any single condition is worse than that laid down under a wages council order, that employee would appear in the information which has been made available to the House as under-paid, and his employer would appear as one who under-paid.

There is clearly common ground about trying to improve the job prospects of young people. It is also quite clear that there are anomalies, confusions and complications that need to be tackled. Furthermore, there is the underlying problem of whether to implement radical reforms or total abolition. I hope that the debate will go wider than the one that has taken place during the last two hours and 59 minutes, but I should be grateful if my hon. Friends could arrange for future debates on this subject to take place at a rather better time of the night.

Whatever decision we eventually take, I should like to pay a big tribute to those who serve on the wages councils, especially the independent members, and to the wages inspectorate which does a very difficult job in a sensitive way. Both have served the country well. It is up to the House to decide what their future roles should be, but for the work that they do I thank them.

Voluntary Sector

6.23 am

Mr. Tim Yeo (Suffolk, South): I am glad to have the opportunity to introduce a debate on the voluntary sector. The paucity of attendance in the House this morning and the fact that the few hon. Members who are in the Chamber seem to be leaving does not, I am sure, reflect any anxiety about the quality of the speeches in the forthcoming debate, which no doubt will be of the highest order. Nor, I hope, does it reflect the view that the subject which we are about to debate is other than of great importance.

The voluntary sector is not only a very important subject for debate; it is also a very large one. Very few people, if any, complete their journey through life without contact with the voluntary sector at some stage. It may be through active contact as a volunteer, or financial support as a donor, or as the user of services provided by a voluntary organisation. As it is for individuals, so it is for the state. Very few Government Departments can conduct their business from the beginning of one year to its end without coming into contact with the voluntary sector.

The Home Office is this morning represented on the Front Bench by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Waddington), who, I understand, has responsibility within the Home Office for the voluntary services unit, a unit that is very much involved with the development of the voluntary sector. The Home Office has legal responsibilities for charities. Through its responsibility for prisons, immigration and race relations, the Home Office also deals with a range of voluntary organisations.

Other Government Departments are also involved with the voluntary sector. The Treasury has an interest in charities and tax concessions. The Department of Education and Science has an extensive interest, not only in special and higher education, but in research. That Department gives direct financial support to many voluntary organisations for young people.

The Department of Employment is involved in community programmes, many of which impinge upon the voluntary sector. The Department of the Environment has a wide involvement through its work on inner city projects and with housing associations, local authorities, sport and historic buildings organisations. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office deals with overseas aid, in which voluntary agencies have a major role. Such agencies are free from political constraints and can do things which Governments cannot do.

The voluntary sector is also heavily connected with the DHSS. Organisations interested in health, disability, retired people and so on work with the DHSS. Even the Department of Trade and Industry — a less likely candidate—has a relationship with the voluntary sector through the Citizens Advice Bureaux and various consumer bodies. The Department of Transport deals with transport for disabled people. Even the Ministry of Defence has a relationship with the voluntary sector through its dealings with organisations helping former service personnel, such as the Royal British Legion.

That is not a comprehensive list. The Scottish Office, the Welsh Office and other Departments are also involved. When I came sixth in the ballot for today's debates, a Minister from another Department told me that he might

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be responsible for answering the debate because of the extent of his Department's involvement with the voluntary sector.

It can faithfully and truthfully be said that the voluntary sector enriches our national life through its diversity, its innovative nature, and its capacity to attract and harness the talents and enthusiasm of many individuals. We should not shrink from acknowledging that the existence of the voluntary sector removes a burden from the state and saves money for the taxpayer by reducing the cost of providing services.

Celebrating that happy circumstance does not mean abandoning the Government's absolute responsibility to provide and finance a basic framework for education, health and social services, nor does it involve any weakening of the Conservatives' commitment to continue that provision. If using the voluntary sector cuts the cost to the taxpayer and releases resources which can be redirected to the most needy, the Government would be derelict in their duty if they failed to seize the opportunity.

The voluntary sector enriches the nation's life and brings greater fulfilment to many individuals. Participation in voluntary work is a source of inspiration and satisfaction to many. When I was still working in the City, I was a volunteer with the North Islington nursery School Trust. I was a trustee, and we set up a project to enable children of nursery school age from one-parent families to use a nursery school's facilities during the long summer holiday. My enthusiasm for that project communicated itself so much to my wife that she suggested that I should take a full-time job which would give me the opportunity to do that type of work more frequently. It was that which about a year later led to my applying for and being appointed as director of the Spastics Society.

Three characteristics strike me most forcefully about the voluntary sector. First, it is very large. Estimates of the annual expenditure range up to 3 per cent. of gross national product. These figures are difficult to be precise about, but there are thought to be over 100,000 people employed in the voluntary sector, besides the millions of volunteers. The second characteristic is the diversity of the voluntary sector. As the range of departmental responsibilities shows, nearly every aspect of life is covered. All age groups are involved. The voluntary sector is active at home and abroad.

The third characteristic is the innovative nature of the voluntary sector. From the time when the Churches were the first organisations to carry the message of European civilisation into other continents, through the post-war period when organisations such as the Spastics Society pioneered the new attempts to educate children who had previously been written off as ineducable because of their handicap, right up to the present day when a small charitable organisation called Comet is now harnessing microtechnology for the benefit of physically handicapped youngsters—at each stage the voluntary sector has had a fine record of innovation and initiative. It has often blazed a trail which the state has then followed. It has gone down routes which properly the state would not have pioneered on its own.

The voluntary sector also performs many functions which could not otherwise be undertaken. I give the example of the huge sums which are raised and spent on medical research, cancer research and so on. The relationship between the voluntary sector and the Government—this is where we come to the nub of the debate—generally speaking has been a constructive one. Broadly speaking, there is, happily, a bipartisan approach politically. There is an attitude of co-operation on the part of all Governments. But in my view there is considerable scope for improvement in that relationship.

A number of questions are asked with increasing frequency. For example, where the voluntary sector receives finance direct from the Government, does it reflect the Government's own priorities and policy objectives? Is the Government's policy towards the voluntary sector clearly defined and co-ordinated? Is the voluntary sector sufficiently accountable for what it does? How could the voluntary sector obtain more support from business, and so on?

To understand those questions and to explore the answers, it is necessary to look at the relationship, particularly the financial relationship, between the state and the voluntary sector. There are three aspects to this relationship. First, there are the considerable tax concessions enjoyed by those voluntary organisations which are charities — and, of course, that is not all voluntary organisations, because some are not charities —embracing freedom from pretty well every kind of tax except VAT, on which I will touch later. Those concessions allow voluntary organisations a far greater use of their own financial resources and a greater facility to raise funds than they would have if they were not enjoying that status.

Those concessions are a way in which Government promote the voluntary sector generally. They do not discriminate, except, of course, where organisations fail to achieve charitable status. The precise value of these concessions is difficult to quantify, but I have seen estimates that they are worth perhaps £400 million a year —money that is lost to the revenue.

The second aspect of the financial relationship is the direct Government aid, grants which go from Government Departments into the voluntary sector. It is not easy to track down precisely how much those grants amount to. Various Members have asked a series of parliamentary questions, but we can only build up a picture in a piecemeal way, partly again because of the number of Government Departments involved. It could be estimated that the value of these grants is about £200 million per annum, although a certain amount depends on definition.

The third aspect of the financial relationship are those payments which are made by Government for services which they are legally obliged to provide; in other words, services that the Government must themselves provide but which they buy in from voluntary organisations on an agency basis. Most of those payments go from local authorities—such as fees for old people in residential homes or fees for handicapped children who attend special schools run by voluntary organisations — and those payments are a way of implementing Government policy.

What are the benefits to the Government of using the voluntary sector in this way? First, the general tax concessions promote voluntary giving. They attract resources into the voluntary sector for, say, medical research which otherwise would not be attracted or would have to be funded 100 per cent. by the state. Secondly,

specific grants made to voluntary organisations, and the payments made for services, should be a way of enabling the Government to get value for money.

Voluntary organisations are often cheaper in the provision of such services because they have attracted voluntary funds by way of donations and because they enjoy the help of many voluntary workers. I say that there should be a way of getting value for money, but that is not always the case, and I shall return to that subject later.

The third benefit for the Government is that the existence of the voluntary sector alongside the state provides an element of competition. Sometimes the voluntary sector can show that it does things better than the state. For example, the Tadworth Court children's hospital for the last year has been managed by a new charitable trust with backing in the form of a Government grant from the DHSS, and that hospital is now operating about 20 per cent. more cheaply than when it was part of the National Health Service. It is also attracting more children; more of the beds in the hospital have been used in the last year compared with the previous year, which was its last year as part of the NHS.

Given that there are these advantages and that they are widely acknowledged, I have four suggestions to improve the relationship between the state and the voluntary sector. These suggestions, if adopted, would, I believe, lead to a successful and substantial expansion of the voluntary sector, to the advantage of everybody.

My first suggestion concerns the support which business gives to the voluntary sector. This is an area of huge potential. Estimates provided by Business in the Community suggest that at present 0·1 per cent. of the pre-tax profits of companies in the United Kingdom are devoted to helping the voluntary sector. The comparative figure in the United States, again estimated by Business in the Community, is between 2 and 5 per cent. of pre-tax profits. As the *Financial Times* commented in August of last year, by comparison with the US the sums here are miserly. Even if we take the bottom end of that range, it looks as though about 20 times more support goes from business in America than it does in this country.

In drawing attention to that, I do not want to appear critical of business, because many splendid projects are under way. Project "Full Employ", which was started as long ago as 1973 by a group of City institutions and banks, can train up to 1,000 people a year, a large number of them from ethnic minority backgrounds, and it claims a success rate of 75 per cent. in achieving permanent placements.

Another example is the strong support that we have seen recently for enterprise agencies. The business community supplies these agencies with cash and management, through secondments. An example of that is the joint initiative taken by Legal and General Assurance, Citibank and the Abbey National in their backing of Lenta housing, which is the non-profit making subsidiary of the London Enterprise Agency, which is investing in residential housing in Brixton. Those are a couple of excellent examples, and there are many others.

I am still left with the strong impression that more could be done. To facilitate the expansion of business involvement, and to promote what might be called corporate social responsibility, three actions should be taken. First, we need to improve the tax incentives for corporate giving. All charitable donations made by a company up to a limit of, say, 10 per cent. of its pre-tax profits should be made tax-deductible. The cost of granting such a concession would reduce as corporation tax rates come down to 35 per cent., as announced in the Budget last year.

At the moment the difficulty for business is that if it wishes to make its donation tax-deductible it has to make the donation under a four-year covenant. Covenants, although a suitable and desirable way for individuals to give money to charity, are less suitable for businesses because the nature of corporate income is that it tends to be less reliable and to fluctuate more than an individual's salary.

Secondly, we should clarify those activities which are eligible for business help on a tax-deductible basis. That help could be in the form of cash and of management who are seconded. The charitable definition is somewhat restrictive. We have seen this recently. Only at the end of 1983 were organisations promoting harmonious race relations able to achieve charitable status. Even today, an organisation whose sole objective is the reduction of unemployment may encounter difficulty in securing charitable status. So we should either reform or re-interpret charity law to allow a quicker and clearer definition of what constitutes charitable activity.

Perhaps a faster and simpler solution to the problem would be to identify those areas where corporate expenditure could be made tax-deductible, as it is now for enterprise agencies. After appropriate consultation, the Government could define those areas in which they believed expenditure could be made tax-deductible. It might involve expenditure in inner cities. After all, the business community responded positively to the problems in Liverpool. It might be expenditure designed to reduce unemployment or expenditure on the arts. Some areas could be designated on a permanent basis and others perhaps on a temporary basis, if there were particular problems in a geographical locality as a result of a business withdrawing as a large employer.

The third change I should like to see to promote business interest in the voluntary sector follows on from the second. If we were to prevent abuses from extending the area to which businesses could contribute on a tax-deductible basis, we should require greater disclosure in the annual reports of those companies that took advantage of the tax concessions. The annual report and accounts would be subject to audit. This could replace the very limited and narrow disclosure which confines itself to a statement on charitable donations.

If the incentives were improved, I am confident that the business community would respond positively. In my constituency and elsewhere, one consequence of the high level of unemployment is a much greater feeling of responsibility on the part of employed and privileged people, particularly in the business community, towards the problems of the unemployed and the under-privileged. The existence of what we might call a 1 per cent. club of major companies which would pledge themselves to give, say, 1 per cent. of their profits before tax, would, if widely adopted, increase tenfold the level of corporate support.

I am not advocating here any extra Government funding. It is important to get that clear. To the extent that corporation tax revenue was lost to the Government because of businesses taking advantage of the scheme, since the areas into which the extra payments were made would be identified in the companies' accounts, it would be possible for the Government, if they were providing direct funding in those areas, to reduce their contribution

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correspondingly. In the arts, for example, there might be substantial scope for Government savings if their expenditure was offset by additional business support.

This would be advantageous because, for every £100 spent by business, the Government would lose only £35 in corporation tax. Therefore, even if they decided to cut their support for that area by the full £35, almost three times as much money would go into the area, because of the contribution made by business. There is a sort of beneficial multiplier effect. The effect would be to reduce total public expenditure, although not to reduce the PSBR, because there would be a matching fall in revenue and expenditure.

More importantly, this process would transfer decision making to the private sector. I believe that the private sector is generally likely to be more responsive and less bureaucratic than the public sector. Local private sector decisions, with the benefit of some management expertise provided by the business community and injected into the voluntary sector, are likely to produce more cost-effective results than a Government Department sitting in London trying to supervise and monitor the performance of the voluntary organisations to which it gives money. One worthwhile spin-off could be the development of local voluntary trusts of the sort advocated by Mrs. Felicity Craven.

I may come into slightly more conflict with Government thinking with my next suggestion—that we should remove the remaining tax burden from the voluntary sector. I do not wish to make that a major part of my speech, because my views are already well known. VAT is a real burden on charities. In the 1983 Budget, the inclusion of building alterations for VAT purposes had a major effect on charities. Many charities are unable to acquire new buildings or build from scratch. They are frequently involved in the adaptation of old buildings which may have been received as part of a legacy. A considerable extra tax bill was imposed on charities in the 1983 Budget.

I have to admit that I overlooked the fact that in the latest Budget the extension of VAT to press advertising represents a further major financial blow to charities which rely heavily on the use of press advertisements for their fund-raising programmes. New organisations and charities that had not previously been worried about VAT, because their activities had mostly taken place abroad, are now concerned with this problem

VAT is an anomaly for charities, because it is one respect in which they are treated less favourably for tax purposes than commercial companies, which can usually offset their inputs and outputs, and local authorities, for which there is a mechanism for recovery of VAT. It would not be administratively complex to grant relief from VAT, as has sometimes been claimed

Even if it is impossible for the Government to grant blanket relief from VAT, I urge my hon. Friend the Minister of State to ask Treasury Ministers to look again at the specific shopping list which the Charities VAT Reform Group submitted before the Budget at the Treasury's request. The group suggested that, where VAT is paid on building alterations that are required because of new fire regulations, VAT should be recoverable by charities. VAT remains a real problem and a substantial cash drain.

My next suggestion for improving the voluntary sector is aimed at the voluntary sector itself, but it has a dimension where Government action could help. It concerns the accountability of voluntary organisations. My hon. Friend the Minister will already be aware of my concern about the lack of accountability of charities and voluntary organisations. Last summer, I introduced a ten-minute Bill which dealt with certain aspects, such as the need for charities to file regular, up-to-date accounts.

It is astonishing that the public have normally no opportunity to inspect the accounts of charities. Charities over a certain size should be required to have an independent audit of their accounts. Larger charities should have independent qualified audits. There is a need for a compulsory and universal register of all charities, instead of the somewhat incomplete system, which is at present confined to England and Wales. I have previously stressed the desirability of giving financial supporters of charities the right to attend annual general meetings.

I welcome those aspects of the Charities Bill, which has passed through all its stages in the House of Lords and has received a Second Reading in the House of Commons, that strengthen the accountability of small charities. Last year's report of the evidence received by a House of Lords, Select Committee clearly bore out my previously stated views about the need for greater accountability within the voluntary sector.

All the issues that I have mentioned in this section could be dealt with by simple legislation and I continue to urge my hon. and learned Friend and his right hon. and hon. Friends at the Home Office to consider introducing such legislation during the lifetime of this Parliament.

I have one other suggestion on the subject of accountability and I am sure that my hon. and learned Friend will be glad to know that it does not involve any legislation or Government expenditure. It is an initiative which the voluntary sector itself could undertake off its own bat, and it is modelled on existing practice in the United States.

In the United States there is an organisation called the National Information Bureau which has for many years been providing an advisory service to prospective donors with the aim of, first, maintaining high standards in the voluntary sector and, secondly, aiding wise and well-informed giving. The bureau issues advisory reports on voluntary organisations, evaluating their performance against eight basic standards, which one listed in the leaflet which I have here.

These relate to the membership of the board of the organisation; the clarity with which the aims of the organisation are stated, whether its programme of activities is relevant to those aims; whether its administrative and management expenses are reasonable; whether its promotional and publicity material is ethically based; whether its fund-raising is conducted in an efficient and proper manner; whether is is adequately accountable —the statements made in its annual report, and so on, are scrutinised; and, finally, whether it draws up an annual budget in a form which is consistent with the other criteria.

The results of that scrutiny are reports which are of great value to people and companies thinking of making donations — and indeed can be of great value to the organisations themselves—and I believe that we could well follow that model. If in this country large donors were able to link up with a few large charities initially and with appropriate professional help, a suitable list of criteria

could be compiled for application to voluntary organisations in Britain. Then such organisations could submit themselves on a voluntary basis for scrutiny.

No legislation or Government funding would be needed for this, although perhaps an advisory input from the VSU or the Charity Commission would be helpful. Provided that the large donors were willing to fund this exercise —it would be in their interests to do so, because they would then be able to make their donations on a more informed basis—the cost, which would anyway be fairly small, would not fall on the charities themselves.

My fourth, and final suggestion concerns Government rather more directly. It is a plea for a more clearly co-ordinated approach by the Government towards the voluntary sector. Of course, I am not suggesting that there is no co-ordination at the present time. I am well aware of the role of the Voluntary Services Unit and I understand that ministerial meetings do take place from time to time between Departments. Also, I do not want to give the impression that I am seeking some sort of Government-imposed uniformity for the voluntary sector, whose strength lies in its diversity, its plurality and perhaps even its untidiness. But I am concerned that the Government are not necessarily getting the best out of the voluntary sector.

It appears, for example, that different Departments have a very different approach to the question of how their direct grants should be made. The Department of the Environment appears to have a straightforward approach. I see from a written answer of 10 December 1984 that the Under-Secretary of State said that his Department's grants were intended to assist national and regional voluntary organisations carrying out activities which furthered the Department's policy objectives. There is nothing very surprising or exceptional in that.

Other Departments have a different, sometimes rather more stringent and narrow, approach. On the face of it, for example, to secure a DHSS grant under section 64 of the Health Services and Public Health Act 1968, one has to do more than just carry out activities which further the Department's policy objectives. I know that from experience, having tried to apply for such grants on behalf of the Spastics Society.

Within the criteria laid down by particular Government Departments, it is not always clear to the outside world why one organisation is selected in preference to another. My own view is that Government support should be concentrated, where possible, on organisations whose work is not particularly eye-catching or emotive, because organisations that have such activities ought to be able to fund them elsewhere.

In general, smaller organisations should be preferred to larger organisations. I understand that the criteria applied by the VSU are that either it must be a national organisation whose work spans the interests of several Government Departments, or falls outside the interests of one specific Department. Alternatively, it could be a local body engaged in a local project that is innovatory and likely to have national significance, or an organisation working in an area of social priority for which alternative funds are expected to be available in due course. I would be interested if my hon. and learned Friend the Minister elucidated to the House what leads his Department to choose one individual organisation as opposed to another, given that those criteria are satisfied

I should also be interested to know what comparative measure, if any, is made of the relative efficiency of different voluntary organisations. Quite a few organisations receive grants from more than one Government Department. No doubt they serve more than one Department, but it would be interesting to know what, if any, co-ordination takes place between the two or more Departments that are funding the same organisation.

Before I came to the House, in the days when I was engaged in full-time work in the voluntary sector, many of the voluntary organisations that I talked to found the process of applying for grants rather confusing. The criteria for success were hard to understand. The decision-making process, on occasion, was rather slow. That concern remains today.

I should like to mention one current applicant without, I hope, damaging its chances for a Department of Health and Social Security grant. It is the Campaign for Mentally Handicapped, a small organisation that does unemotive work. It is doing research into the ways in which mentally handicapped people can be brought out into the community. It is not involved in the provision of services, but is working in an area of stated Government priority. I find it hard to understand why a fairly small application for such an organisation should encounter much resistence when larger organisations, the work of which might be thought to be rather more emotive or appealing to private donors, appear to achieve ready success in large applications to the DHSS.

Therefore, there is sometimes a question mark over the coherence of the Government's policy towards the voluntary sector. That also applies at the macro level. For example, is proper attention paid to the potential role of the voluntary sector when new Government policies are determined? Are we making as much use as we could of the voluntary sector in fighting unemployment?

Let me take a specific example. The Government's policy on care in the community, widely supported, involves many voluntary organisations whose normal relationship would be with Departments other than the DHSS, which is the lead Department for that policy. Housing associations and bodies concerned with sheltered housing have a function relating to the care in the community policy. Transport and employment organisations do. All those bodies, as well as the DHSS-related voluntary organisations, could be involved. Is there a stage at which the impact of the voluntary sector on a policy such as care in the community is discussed interdepartmentally? Is it at an early stage? Such discussion would be needed if the Government were to get the best value for money from the voluntary sector.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): If my hon. Friend does not have this information, perhaps my hon. and learned Friend the Minister will supply it later. When the Voluntary Services Unit was originally established in the Civil Service Department, there was regular liaison between officers at assistant secretary level, in Government Departments, during which such matters were regularly discussed. I am ignorant as to whether it continues, but if it does not, I wonder whether it would be a good idea to revive it.

Mr. Yeo: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I do not know the answer to that question, but no doubt my hon. and learned Friend the Minister will be able to enlighten us when he replies to the debate.

I summarise my four suggestions. First, I suggest more business involvement — the promotion of corporate

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social responsibility. Secondly, I suggest the removal of the remaining tax burden. Thirdly, there should be greater accountability in the voluntary sector, and, fourthly, better co-ordination of Government policy.

My final point concerns the Local Government Bill, which will be debated in the House later this week. Real concern has been expressed by the voluntary sector about the consequences of the abolition of the Greater London council. I hope that the Government will pay heed to it. Of course, it is high time that we stopped wasting taxpayers' and ratepayers' money on many of the absolutely loony organisations that have been supported by the GLC. But let us not throw out the baby with the bath water. We must make sure that the important work that is done by genuine organisations, which is funded by the GLC, is able to continue.

The voluntary sector already plays a very distinguished, valuable and major part in our national life. I believe that that role could be further developed and expanded, and the suggestions that I have made this morning are designed to achieve that end.

7 am

Mr. Alfred Dubs (Battersea): I congratulate the hon. Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo) on raising an important issue, even though he has the misfortune to do so at this time of the morning. I listened with interest to what he said and noted his comments about the size of the voluntary sector, its diversity and its innovative nature.

The voluntary sector can sometimes be local and sometimes national—it can even be international. At all those levels there may be a relationship between the state and a voluntary organisation. I was a little disappointed that the hon. Gentleman did not develop the relationship between voluntary organisations and local authorities. He concentrated more on the national rather than the local level. From what I know of the voluntary sector, a great number of organisations have their main activities at a local level and, to some extent, depend for their funding on local authorities.

The other dimension is the European social fund. It is another confused set of arrangements and many voluntary organisations are unable to derive full benefit from it. However, that is a subject for another day.

I was interested in the hon. Gentleman's suggestions about business support, although he did not tell us why business should find it possible to increase its level of support. I understand the argument about taxation, but there must be a different attitude by business if it is to increase its support for many of these worthwhile activities.

Perhaps the hon. Gentleman knows more than we do about what would make business more energetic. Before I entered the House I was involved in a community relations council. We had the support of a large multinational organisation, which seconded to us one of its computer executives who moved from the world of selling computer systems to community relations in an inner-city area. It was a tremendous shock to him, but also, I hope, of great benefit to his subsequent business career. Alas, that does not happen often. I am not convinced that many organisations would be so generous as to second their staff.

I sympathise with the hon. Gentleman's arguments about the VAT burden. The voluntary sector has four specific advantages and four things to offer which the state —either through central or local government—cannot easily emulate. The first is the experimental and innovative nature of much voluntary work. At a local level it is impressive how voluntary organisations can experiment and try new things that a local authority would find it hard to do.

Secondly, there is the speed of response by the voluntary sector. It can get projects off the ground very quickly while the state, understandably, finds that more difficult.

Thirdly, a voluntary or community organisation has a particular strength as it can involve local people in its activities in a way that a local authority seldom can. It can achieve a level of commitment and interest which is healthy for a community. This is because it makes it feel that a project or activity belongs to it and not to a remote town hall or to central government. That is a great strength of voluntary organisations. If it is developed, it gives them the ability to call on a wider range of support in the community and to get more people involved, or to have a better awareness of the problems in the community. By having so many feelers in the local area, there is an ability to understand quickly and sensitively what is happening.

Lastly—I do not press this argument too strongly when we have a Government who are trying to cut public expenditure all over the place—some of the community groups and organisatons provide good value for money in what they are able to achieve. It should be remembered that they often operate on a shoestring.

Unfortunately, there are a number of difficulties. The hon. Member for Suffolk, South indulged in the familiar game of knocking the GLC. I think that he knows better than to do that really. If we were to go through the list of projects and voluntary organisations that are supported by the GLC, the difference between us would probably be confined to 1 per cent. of all GLC grants. I am not conceding that the 1 per cent. are wasteful or loony, as I think the hon. Gentleman described them. I am saying that the bulk of the money that is provided by the GLC is not directed to controversial areas. It is channelled to worthwhile activities and to organisations that are fearful for their future.

The Minister knows that many organisations in the black community, for example, have been funded by the GLC and have done useful work. That has happened because of the far-sighted work of the GLC. These organisations are extremely concerned about what will happen if the GLC is abolished. No arrangements have been made for their future or for that of the many other organisations that are similarly funded by the GLC.

The second area of uncertainty is that of urban aid. Many voluntary organisations depend upon it and they face uncertainty because the way in which the funding operates does not give them a guaranteed financial basis in future.

An area of enormous political controversy between the two sides of the House that comes to the surface at intervals concerns the accusations that are made by Conservative Members that some voluntary organisations are too political in their activities and adopt something of a campaigning stance. I do not wish to spend too much time on this argument. It is to the hon. Gentleman's credit that he did not mention the issue.

Over the years some voluntary organisations have found themselves in difficulty, and in my opinion unfairly so. By their very nature, organisations that are active in and dissatisfied with the care of the mentally ill, or the provision of legal services in the community, for example, are bound to adopt a somewhat political stance. If there is a feeling that these organisations operate a little to the left of the political centre rather than to the right of it, I do not think that that is a reason for being as hard on them as some Conservative controlled local authorities and some Conservative Ministers have been.

Mr. Rowe: I take the hon. Member's argument, but I should hate him to feel that that is only because these organisations sometimes have a stance to the left of the political centre. There have been many occasions, especially at local government level, when Labour councillors have found themselves extremely annoyed by what they regard as the political activities of voluntary organisations.

Mr. Dubs: The hon. Gentleman says so and that must be true, although I cannot think of any examples. However, if I press him to do so he will no doubt want to intervene again to give me some.

Organisations which have their roots in the community are bound to take a somewhat campaigning stance. It is not sensible for politicians to jump on them immediately if they feel that their local authorities are providing funding. Organisations have to toe the line or at least shut up on some of these issues. I think that that is asking too much of community activists. Mercifully, such criticisms are not made very often, but they surface from time to time.

Another aspect is the relationship between voluntary organisations and political parties, and indeed the House itself. I suppose that political parties could be defined as voluntary organisations, but I shall not pursue that line. Members of Parliament have cause to be grateful to the voluntary organisations. Many of the all-party groups in the House depend for their ability to function on the generosity of voluntary bodies in providing the secretarial back-up to enable us to be effective Back Bench groups. One thinks of the all-party penal affairs group, the all-party disablement group, the all-party group for pensioners, and so on. In a sense, Parliament is run on a shoestring and we should be grateful that information comes to Members, especially Back Benchers with specialised interests, because voluntary organisations are willing to invest the time necessary to educate Members of Parliament and to keep us properly informed.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): And the political parties.

Mr. Dubs: In that sense, of course, political parties are voluntary organisations and provide the wherewithal for the operation of our political system. Indeed, I believe that we are not generous enough to them. I should certainly like a different approach to the funding of political parties in this country, but that is wider than the subject with which the hon. Member for Suffolk, South sought to deal.

Members of Parliament, especially when in opposition, also depend on voluntary organisations for briefing on the details of legislation. Some of them may be something of a red rag to the Minister because they make his life more difficult, but they also make Parliament more effective. The National Council for Civil Liberties, for example, has been enormously helpful in alerting Members of all parties to the dangers and anti-civil-libertarian aspects of certain legislation. The Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants — no doubt the Minister's favourite organisation — provides help for individuals with immigration problems and offers helpful criticism of legislation. There is also the Legal Action Group and dozens of others, all of which help Members of Parliament. Without them our debates would be less well informed, and we should be the poorer for that. I mention that dimension as I should like to express my gratitude to the many organisations which go out of their way to help us and to provide back-up information and briefings at very short notice, although I appreciate that those matters are some distance away from the starting point of the hon. Member for Suffolk, South.

In conclusion, I believe that voluntary organisations or community groups, however one defines them, play a very important role and I should like to see more generosity to that sector by the Government — and by local authorities, if only they were not inhibited by the lack of Government money and the tight controls imposed on local government by central Government. We need more generosity and more understanding of what the voluntary sector does and the useful role that it has to play.

An element of certainty in the funding is also necessary because it is unreasonable to expect voluntary bodies to plan ahead and look to the long-term if they do not know from one year to the next whether they have any basis for their operations.

I am looking to the Minister for a generous response and an understanding of what the voluntary sector does and its important contribution in the community and at national level so that it can operate with a bit more certainty in the knowledge that the Government back what it does, even if they are sometimes critical of some of its activities.

7.14 am

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Waddington): This has been a good debate and I shall do my best not to spoil it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo) raised so many interesting and important issues that his was the type of speech that people will go away and read, digest and make their minds up on rather than come to swift conclusions about. I recognise his expertise and feel humble. As the Minister with my responsibilities but having never worked in the voluntary sector, I am at a disadvantage and have a great deal to learn from my hon. Friend. The House is fortunate to have had the benefit of my hon. Friend's long experience in the world of charities. I shall read carefully all that he said.

There should be no mistake about the fact that the Government recognise the enormously valuable work done by the voluntary sector. In our 1979 manifesto we referred to our determination to encourage the voluntary movement. Nobody who looks at the figures can doubt that that is what we have done. During the past few years, in the interest of the fight against inflation and the laying of the foundations for economic recovery, there have had to be considerable constraints on public expenditure. In spite of those constraints, Government support for an enormous range of voluntary bodies, embracing the whole gamut of voluntary endeavour, has increased considerably.

Leaving aside the £300 million spent by the Manpower Services Commission on training and employment

[Mr. David Waddington]

projects provided by voluntary bodies and considerable grants by non-departmental public bodies such as the Arts Council, Government grants in 1983-84 totalled more than £182 million. That represents an increase in cash terms of 95 per cent. and an increase in real terms of 35 per cent. over 1979-80.

I have been presented with a table which I am sure is pretty accurate. I agree with my hon. Friend, however, that it is not always easy to get accurate figures and to decide what is grant, what is payment for service and the rest. No doubt the table will emerge in *Hansard* as the answer to a parliamentary question, but if my hon. Friend is interested, I shall let him have it.

We know less than we should like about local authority funding of voluntary bodies. Taking grants and payments for services together, in 1982-83, social service authorities in England spent about £110 million, but there was less easily identifiable funding for education, the youth service, to ethnic minority groups, the arts, environmental bodies, advice centres—the list is almost endless. We all know examples of local authority grant giving which some of us criticise as being plain eccentric, but the great majority of authorities adopt a thoroughly sensible approach and the great majority of grants have gone to thoroughly useful organisations.

I was interested to hear what the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs) said about that. I agree with him that many local voluntary services are of enormous value and fulfil a unique role that cannot be fulfilled either by central Government or a local authority. They can be sensitive and informal in a way in which a statutory body cannot, they can reach out to those who may be wary of officialdom, and they can help people to tackle the problems of their communities.

Recently the Government's policies for local government have often been portrayed as a threat to the support by local authorities of voluntary bodies, but once councils have adjusted to their new post-abolition responsibilities and thought how to make the best use of their necessarily limited resources, those fears will be found to be groundless, and we shall find that the voluntary sector has not lost out.

It would not be appropriate for me to get greatly involved in the debate about abolition, because we shall be talking about little else during the next two days. I merely remind the House that steps have already been taken to strengthen the collective grant giving arrangements. Various undertakings have been given about the reconsideration of the upper limit on collective grant giving. There is also transitional funding and the undertakings given about the targets for successor districts taking into account new responsibilities.

However, we need to draw in new resources if we are to see even further beneficial expansion of the voluntary sector to all those areas where it has proved itself so able to help the community. That means stimulating support from individuals and the wealth-creating sector of the economy.

Many charities demonstrate the art of successful fund-raising. My hon. Friend, as former director of the Spastic Society, knows all about that. The Government should do what we can to encourage people to give to charities, and to encourage charities and other voluntary bodies to tap the resources which are undoubtedly available. As the Government we have introduced increased tax reliefs for charities and tax incentives for donors, and publicised them so that small and large charities can profit from them. My hon. Friend will know about the little booklet "Tax Benefits for Charities" published by Voluntary Services Unit, which provides answers to questions, such as, what changes have the Government made to help charities since 1980, what tax reliefs are available for charities, and what tax incentives are there for donors?

I am glad that the booklet has had to be reprinted. I am told that the demand for copies shows little sign of falling off. That is therefore a success for VSU. I am glad that it is there to remind people of the changes that we have made. As my hon. Friend said, we have reduced the minimum period of a covenant which qualifies for tax relief to four years. We have exempted direct gifts and bequests to charities from capital transfer tax, and enabled a company to claim tax relief on the salary of an employee while he or she is seconded to a charity. Recently there has been more good news with the Chancellor of the Exchequer announcing in his Budget that higher and additional rate tax relief on annual gross covenanted payments will be raised from £5,000 to £10,000.

My hon. Friend says that there should be more incentives for corporate giving, and I am sure that my right hon. Friend will bear his words in mind. He also asked for further VAT relief for charities. He will have heard this answer before, but it is a fairly good one and should go on the record in view of what my hon. Friend said.

The main complaint of charities is that they must bear VAT on their non-business purchases, and they have been lobbying for some years for a special refund mechanism. Although limited schemes to benefit some sorts of charities have been put forward from time to time, it is clear from discussions with the VAT Reform Group that, in practice, relief would have to apply to all charities, since no method of discrimination would be acceptable to all charities generally. The number of charities which would seek to benefit from a general relief is estimated as at least 100,000, and its administration would be complicated and expensive in terms of staff.

The cost in revenue terms would also be significant. Charities would benefit unequally, with controversial charities or those with limited objectives benefiting as much as or more than those with wide public support. In short, indiscriminate VAT relief would be an inefficient and expensive way of helping charities. But the Government recognise the valuable work that they do, which is why they have preferred to use limited resources in other ways, some of which I have just outlined.

There is a potential for company giving that we have hardly begun to develop. Bearing in mind the fact that by no means all voluntary bodies supported by industry are charities, we must, therefore, treat with a little caution figures that relate only to charities, but I believe the following figures to be pretty startling. They are the figures given by the Charities Aid Foundation, which I am sure my hon. Friend knew when he quoted the other figures from Business in the Community. The Charities Aid Foundation says that the top 200 corporate donors to registered charities gave £34 million in 1982-83, which represents only 0·21 per cent. of profits before tax. In 1983 in the United States of America, corporate contributions amounted to $3·1 billion, which — according to the Charities Aid Foundation, whose mathematics is bound to

be right—represented 1·51 per cent. of pre-tax profits. The figures given by my hon. Friend are even more disappointing.

But progress is being made. The fast-growing local enterprise agency movement represents a major voluntary contribution by business in Britain to job creation through help to small businesses and the self-employed. Public-spirited businesses—the sort that join Business in the Community, that help not just their local enterprise agencies, but local environmental or social groups and, indeed, young musicians and artists—are growing in number. The discernment which they show in making their contributions, be it by grant, sponsorship, secondment or other help in kind, is there for all to see.

We are interested, too, in the idea that experimental community trusts might be able, as in America, to stimulate new giving to charities and charitable groups at local level.

I have said that the Government have the clear objective of encouraging the voluntary movement; and there are various means—grants, payments for services, fiscal reliefs and other financial advantages and incentives—which we may use, according to circumstances, to help useful organisations and to create the right climate for voluntary sector growth. We have a principle that grants should normally be given by those responsible for policies or services because they can best judge whether the recipients are giving value for money. Our style of grant-giving emphasises the need to ensure that grants go to bodies with the capacity to manage their work cost-effectively and to set and achieve realistic objectives.

I am not sure how much real scope there is for more co-ordination between Departments. This has always worried me. The VSU is in the Home Office, and I am the Minister with a special concern for the general health of the voluntary sector and our dealings with it. Because of that, I have regular meetings with those of my colleagues whose work brings them in close contact with the voluntary sector. I am not, and could not be, a Minister charged with working out a common policy towards grant giving. My hon. Friend showed how enormously varied are the bodies that are supported by different Departments, and my colleagues know better than anyone else how money can best be spent. We can learn from each other, and by meeting we can try to create conditions in which useful, voluntary bodies can flourish.

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): The Minister has raised an important point about co-ordination, which can be a minefield. Referral bodies can be brought in to make the work of parliamentarians easier, and to bring to their attention the problems in their communities. Co-ordination is of prime importance, whether it be with the Home Office, the Department of the Environment or any other. There is a great need for co-ordination that will explain in simple and explicit terms to voluntary organisations the path that they have to follow to gain the advantages that are there to help those bodies to function. There is a great deal of concern about the transitional period that may occur with the abolition of the metropolitan county councils. I hope that the Minister will take on board what he has said about the need for co-ordination so that th benefits for those who play a useful part in community with referrals will continue.

Mr. Waddington: It is the responsibility of the Department that is financing a voluntary body to have a close relationship with that body so that there is understanding as to what is intended. I was concentrating on the difficulties of laying down a policy of grant giving to voluntary bodies, which will be appropriate for the Ministry of Defence, the Department of the Environment and the Department of Health and Social Security. I doubt whether it is possible to lay down a policy in that way.

I heard what my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, South said about the desirability of funding small rather than large bodies, if I understood the importance of what my hon. Friend was saying, when he said that it was probably better to fund less eye-catching bodies rather than the more glamorous. However, one cannot develop that into a policy for Government, controlling what one particular Department should do. Each Department is aware, or should be aware, of how volunteers and the voluntary sector can help them in the carrying out of their statutory responsibilities, and can fulfil needs that cannot be met by the statutory bodies.

I hope that what I have said shows that the Government take the question of the relationship between the state and the voluntary sector seriously. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving me this opportunity to put on record some of our ideas about this complex, ever-changing but durable relationship. I shall go away from the debate weary, but happy to have listened to my hon. Friend and Labour Members. We sometimes quarrel, though tonight there was a recognition on both sides of the House of the valuable work that is done in the community by the voluntary sector.

Education

7.35 am

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): Occasions such as this provide an opportunity to release bees from Back Bench bonnets to buzz busily around the Chamber. Sometimes, one hopes, their sound may be heard more widely outside. Sometimes, too, they provide opportunities for the emission of Back-Bench spleen against Ministers, so I am particularly pleased to pay a warm tribute to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science and his team. It is my serious belief that the present Secretary of State could well go down in history as one of the most effective and genuinely reforming Ministers of Education. But the task facing my right hon. Friend and all of us in truly formidable.

Let me begin by making this point. When a man is encased in plaster from head to foot it is demonstrably absurd to berate him for not moving more easily. An unattractive feature of the present educational debate—I fear that some of my hon. Friends have a share in that unattractiveness—is the widespread readiness to attack teachers. Teachers are immured in a straitjacket made up of institutional rigidities, definitional rigidities and a strangely out-of-date blindness to the whole range of opportunities which would in other circumstances be open to them. They are not, for the most part, idle. Many work very hard indeed, well beyond the narrow terms of their paper contract. But too many of them are weary, stale or disenchanted. It is my purpose in this debate to seek relief for them rather than to denigrate them.

It is time to move, and to move fast. The Secretary of State has taken a number of bold steps, but there is much more to be done. The report of the National Economic Development Council and the Manpower Services Commission—Competence and Competition—tells us that 50 per cent. of the British workforce has not even the equivalent of one CSE pass. And what employer values one CSE pass? In 1981, 52 to 60 per cent. of our 16 to 18 year-olds were in education, against 86 per cent. in Germany and 91 per cent. in Japan. If I may be allowed to adapt H. G. Wells, British history becomes more and more a race between education and catastrophe.

Yet we do have room for manoeuvre within our present resources, so we must look for a moment at what those resources are. They include, of course teachers. But teachers are faced with the trauma of falling rolls: 7·8 million children in schools in 1984, a projected 7·1 million in 1991. They are faced with stagnation in preferment. It is very hard indeed for the average teacher now to see himself or herself in a post that represents promotion. Teachers are also faced with rigidities in the structure. It is extremely hard and unusual, for all sorts of reasons, for teachers to move between one sector of education and another. Teachers are faced, too, with constant demands for changes in their role.

To give some examples, many teachers are much less subject oriented than they were when they came out of teacher training college. They are expected to be much more concerned with passing on skills and, in some mystical way, with the growing up of their pupils to an extent which parents used to feel was much more their role than some do now. Teachers have much less authority and much less parental support. As the school leaving age rises, so do the height, weight and truculence of many of the pupils. Teachers therefore are regarded with less esteem in society, although they have made tremendous efforts to create an all-graduate profession.

Teachers and others are unclear about their job definition. In school and out of school, in class and out of class, they are unclear. At the heart of the present unfortunate and unattractive dispute lies an anxiety about the definition of the teacher's role and job.

Further education is bigger than it has ever been. It involves 80,000 full-time academic staff and an unknown number of part-timers. The Manpower Services Commission is spending more than the whole of the further education budget on tasks which hitherto would have been done by further education rather than some outside organisation.

There has been an explosion in courses and qualifications. An extraordinary incoherence and obsolescence exists. Many courses and qualifications are too narrowly based, too backward looking and too long in the acquiring. I therefore warmly welcome the announcement by the Secretary of State for Employment of a full-scale inquiry into qualifications.

The number of home students has increased by 60,000 since 1979-80. That is encouraging, and yet people on the dole are unable to afford self-improvement, even to meet declared needs in the market, because of the crippling loss of benefit which might result. I hope that the Government will seriously re-examine that aspect urgently.

Higher education is perhaps our most inefficient sector. It is large with 31,499 full-time staff and 2,739 part-timers. However, causes for anxiety exist. When selecting students, universities depend heavily on "O" levels and head teachers' reports, which almost by definition are biased because it is good for a school if its pupils are accepted by universities.

The system of "O" levels is also an inadequate basis for assessing whether a student will make a success of university. I know from my experience as a university teacher that one of the most depressing features of teaching in universities is the number of young people who arrive at university with their intellectual curiosity already dead. One carries them through an over-taught course so that they receive a qualification when one should be stimulating and exciting them with intellectual curiosity. Many colleges and universities do not even interview potential students and are wholly dependent upon inadequate selection procedures.

It is too easy in some subjects and in some universities —but less so in polytechnics—to coast through on the basis of a good schooling. I wonder whether, in an era when young people will have to re-educate themselves throughout their lives, it is necessary to take three or four years to turn out people with only the basis of a qualification to which they will have to add later to be employable. Secondly, they retain too many inadequate students. There is virtually no counselling out of university. At £5,000 to £6,000 per annum, the business of keeping on a student who at the end of the first year is causing enormous anxiety to the course and to the teachers on the course, with the sense at the end of the third of fourth year that any inadequacy that he displays in his examinations is a direct consequence of the incompetence of the teaching so that one feels responsible to the student and allows him to graduate, is not an efficient way of running a part of the education system for which there is still intense competition.

It is worth reflecting that in the United States as many as 50 per cent. of students drop out, but 35 to 40 per cent. more go to university. It may be that somewhere in that discrepancy between us and the United States there is room for adjustment.

I believe that in many colleges and universities the examinations procedures are still grossly inadequate. They are too dependent on written tests and on asking what one knows, not what one can do.

There is a lot of room for argument about how much each of these resources which I have enumerated should be pruned, expanded, controlled or given more autonomy. However, I think that there is no room for argument that, as a nation, we are on the edge of a gigantic expansion in demand, call it what you will. Throughout the country pensioners, the unemployed and wage earners in their growing spare time are taking courses in everything under the sun, in classes, on video, increasingly by cable, as well as through the traditional medium of books. People in work are seeking to diversify their skills, employers to upgrade their work force's skills. Re-education and training is the name of the game, and what a rapidly growing game. Why, then, are our existing teaching resources locked into what is seen as steadily narrowing cul-de-sacs when out there is a whole world to conquer?

There is some interchange between schools and further education, employers and further education, universities and industry, but this depends entirely on local personalities, and not on any coherent national or regional strategy. In this morass, it is not surprising therefore that the Government have used the Manpower Services Commission as their principal agent for change, but how bad that must be for the morale of teachers in the education service.

When the MSC gave evidence to the Select Committee on Employment, the chairman declared that he felt strongly that he had a dotted line of responsibility to the Secretary of State for Education and Science as well as a solid line of accountability to the Secretary of State for Employment. I should like to ask how real the dotted line is, and to what extent the MSC with its many tasks is effectively able to keep in close touch with the Department of Education and Science.

If I may give one small example of the rigidities that I should like to see broken down, Lady Warnock the other day said rather well that teachers are finding themselves increasingly unable to stay in teaching—the job which they like to do—because in order to make a living they have to go into administration. She suggested, among other recourses, that they might go into teacher training colleges. I believe that would be one minor but important rigidity reduced.

We have to look for new boundary definitions. We have falling rolls and empty school buildings, and at the same time inadequate training provision by and for private employers. That by itself is a demonstration of the need for imagination.

When the members of the Select Committee on Employment visited a private recruitment agency recently they discovered that the differential between the price payable to staff capable of operating expensive modern machinery such as word processors and those who were still stuck to their typewriters was so great that it was worth the agency's while to provide a sophisticated training course with one tutor to three students. So great was the demand for the course that the agency decide to expand the operation.

There is scope for placing that kind of resource within the campuses of schools. Training colleges work mostly at evenings and weekends, so that sophisticated expensive machinery—which, by its nature, has a short life span —can be available to schools. The agencies would have access to some of the brighter pupils at a young age and the schools would be able to make use of the machinery. There is too little liaison between schools and employers about the provision of mutual aid.

We must make the maximum use of our resources. It is better to burn them out by using them fully in many different ways than to husband them frugally well past the date of obsolescence. Visits to centres of education are too often like expeditions into industrial or educational archeology.

The training explosion must be understood to realise the demand that exists for teaching skills. Few commercial and industrial organisations have more than a handful of people with real teaching skills. The scope for exchange between an education system in which teachers feel themselves to be boxed in and the commercial world must be great.

When a CBI delegation recently came to the Select Committee, we discussed this issue, and although the members of the delegation held varying views on almost every point, it was clear that some of them were already discussing with the Department of Education and Science the possibility of using teaching skills which are available in schools to help them with their training.

We must look again at the school day. Is there any reason why we should be constricted to a 9 am to 4 pm day? The limited school day was devised in a bygone era and it now serves mainly a purpose of social control. Its intention is to make it possible for two wage earners to go out and earn money while their children are taken off their hands by the education system.

As a long-term goal, we should seriously consider altering the use of schools, adopting a shift system. This is not a new idea, but an idea whose time has come. The Columbus technical institute in Ohio operates from 7 am until 11 pm on Mondays to Fridays and from 9 am until 4 pm on Saturdays. It has considerable use in the evenings, but it is available throughout those long hours, and that must be valuable to a community in which the work patterns of the adults is constantly changing. More and more shifts are being worked, even by senior managers.

Further thought should be given to teacher retraining. It is absurd to suggest that for teachers—or, indeed, for anyone else — one qualification is sufficient for a lifetime. I welcome the Secretary of State's suggestion of more money for local education authorities, although we are still a long way from the recommendations of the James report all those years ago. Why not pay teachers, and not only teachers but employees in many other industrial and commercial operations, with some kind of voucher which would give them a right, as they built them up, to choose where they went for training or retraining? The advantage would be that, if a person did not cash the voucher in that way, it would cost the education authority or the firm nothing. Those who were prepared to undertake training would be able to cash the vouchers at approved institutions.

[Mr. Andrew Rowe]

We need a huge increase in the number of part-time contracts, not as a cost cutting exercise, but because the opportunities are great for people in education to spend part of their time in adult education, technical training and so forth. It is absurd, for example, that in one educational institution that I know of, the suggestion that one of the staff should be entitled to a job share was turned down out of hand. Yet of all activities teaching is one which lends itself to job sharing. In theory the Government are keen on increasing job sharing.

If students grow out of school at an ever earlier age —and there is clear evidence that many school children find being constrained in school sufficiently irritating for them not to give of their best—might they perhaps be allowed to take an educational allowance with them into the public or private college of their choice? The output and standard could be controlled by the Government through the qualifications.

We now see a massive paradox. We see despair and disillusion among teachers while all around us the demand for education grows exponentially. I urge the Government to change the name, the system, the input and the outcome, and today's despair will become tomorrow's golden opportunity.

7.57 am

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): May I first congratulate the hon. Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) on entering the ballot for the debate, on getting it and on making a thoughtful speech? Although it is perhaps too early an hour to be excited about speeches in the Chamber, we owe him a debt because he has brought the issue before us this morning. I agree with much of what he said, although there might be a problem in turning some of his more interesting ideas into practical realities.

I go back to the first question. The hon. Member did not address himself to the sad fact that over the past 10 years our belief in education has evaporated. It makes an interesting exercise to compare yesterday's White Paper on education with the one that was introduced by the Prime Minister when she was Secretary of State for Education during the 1970-74 Conservative Government. The Government talked then about the expansion of nursery education and their aim to get 22 per cent. of the relevant age group into higher education. It is a sad reflection that in the intervening period the sights of the Conservative Government, and perhaps the sights of the nation, have been lowered so much. It would be attractive if we could rekindle that belief in education. We must consider carefully why a belief in education has evaporated to a certain extent. Too often in schools and elsewhere people were told, "Work hard at school and you will get a good job." Once graduates did not get jobs, the belief in education as a means to a meal ticket started to evaporate. It is sad that we did not encourage many more people with the intellectual curiousity to which the hon. Member referred to enjoy education for its own sake rather than as a meal ticket.

The education system was too much a failure system. Whatever the stage at which people left the system, they left feeling like failures. It is regrettable that tremendous emphasis at all ages is placed on getting through examinations. The obverse of that point is that people will fail. The 11-plus examination has not yet been abolished in many parts of the country. From 11 onwards, a number of tests and examinations are imposed on youngsters, most of which say, "You have failed." At university the emphasis is on the quality of the degree. The other day, I heard someone comment, "He got a PhD, but it was not a very good one." Failure seems to stay with people.

The hon. Member talked also about youngsters outgrowing schools. Recently I have been in many schools and have been amazed by the fact that in many primary schools the teachers often treat the youngsters as adults, giving them amazing amounts of responsibility. The youngsters respond extremely well. Too often, the teachers at secondary schools start to treat the youngsters as children, rather than as young adults. It is paradoxical that, the older the youngsters in a school, the less responsibility and independence they are given. I agree with the hon. Member that many youngsters outgrow school, because some schools impose rigid restrictions. Many youngsters move to tertiary colleges and sixth form away from traditional schools because of such attitudes.

It is important that we apportion some of the blame for the way in which belief in education has disappeared. Shirley Williams, as the Secretary of State for Education and Science, during the Labour Government, has to accept some of the blame. The dithering over the examinations system was fatal to education. She allowed the myth to develop that standards were falling. When the right hon. and learned Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Carlisle) was Secretary of State he allowed the myth about falling standards to continue. Assisted places and vouchers implied that some of the state schools were not good enough and that standards were falling.

Standards have risen. If standards are measured by examination results or other criteria and if schools of today are compared with those of 20 years ago, the achievement is considerable.

We do not give enough credit to the education system which coped with a major bulge in the population of young people. By and large, the school system coped successfully. It is only now that youngsters are leaving school and searching for jobs and only now that they are searching for housing accommodation that society is letting them down. We should have placed on record the fact that over the past 20 years our education system has succeeded, although, of course, it could do better.

The Government were right in the White Paper yesterday to talk about wanting to raise standards, but they should give credit also to the fact that schools have done well. I appreciate the fact that the Government are grasping the nettle of reorganising examinations. I am a little worried, especially with the present dispute, that the Government are not giving teachers sufficient time to get the curriculum going. I am worried also that many schools with imaginative curricula will find that their curricula will be reduced to fit a national pattern. That would be disturbing. At least the Government are getting on with reorganising the examination system. I am pleased that the Government are going for the record of achievement, which I believe will encourage youngsters.

The real problem with all of those initiatives is whether the Government are producing the money. Resources are the key to improving standards. We got through the past 20 years with massive economies of scale. The education system has done well to get through those economies of scale, but now the Government are asking for economies

from contraction. That really is not possible. The Government say that the pupil-teacher ratio is better and expenditure per pupil is better, but an awful lot of capital items are there whether there are 30 pupils or 20 in the class room. They are not items on which you can benefit from economies of contraction. And it is going to cost more to maintain curriculum width for fewer pupils. So the Government have to take on the question of the amount of resources available.

Certainly, if the hon. Gentleman is right that there is going to be a tremendous expansion in demand, we have got to convince the country that it must be prepared to pay. I wish that the Minister and the Secretary of State would spend a bit more time going out into the country campaigning for education and pointing out that if we want to be a prosperous country education is important.

The hon. Member gave a few details of the number of people getting education in this country as with other countries and pointed out that if we are to be able to compete in the world we must have more highly trained personnel. He reminded us that we are very proud that we are a democracy in this country, but increasingly taking decisions involves a great deal of information and the skills to evaluate it. If we want to be a genuine democracy we have got to talk about widening educational opportunities and supplying information and skills to the whole population, not just to a selected group.

When it comes to leisure opportunities, again education is a very important component for a very large number of people in making their leisure enjoyable.

There is a Government myth that we can transfer resources from the arts and the social services to technology. We cannot do that effectively. We must find extra resources. It is ironic that in many ways it is not our scientists and technologists who are letting this country down. If we take the mining industry in the last 12 months, it was not that we did not have good mining engineers and good mining technology; it was our inability to manage the industry effectively that let us down. If we take housing, it is not that we have not got good architects and builders; it is our inability to put those skills together to ensure that people live in decent housing. I could give a lot of other examples.

If the Government want a peaceful, contented society, it is important that we put extra resources into the whole education field and that we do not rob one diminished area to build up another area.

It seemed to me very sad that in the Government White Paper on better schools there was not a commitment to expand nursery education. Getting the start right is crucial in our education system. The hon. Member for Mid-Kent made the point that we have an awful lot of empty school buildings, so it would not be all that expensive to take the opportunity now to expand nursery education. Even if we returned to the target set by the Prime Minister when she was Secretary of State for Education and Science, we should be talking about a very considerable expansion of nursery education.

The Government must also take up the whole question of teacher morale. There will not be good results from education if the Government continue the conflict with the teachers. In one of the schools that I visited this week the head was talking about wanting to get curriculum development going. He pointed out that for much of the summer term last year there was virtually no discussion of this among the staff outside school hours because of the sanctions. And the same thing will happen this year. I believe that the Government have got to find some more money and that with an injection of new money they could get effective talks going, improve the morale of teachers and set in train many of the things that the hon. Member for Mid-Kent wants to see done in the schools.

If we have got falling rolls we must look at making the schools a community resource. We have got to tell the teachers that it is important that they bring other people into them, because that changes the attitudes in schools.

We await with interest the Government Green Paper on higher education, but it is very sad that this is being prepared in terms of maintaining the status quo and of contraction rather than in terms of the importance of expanding higher education in the interests of prosperity, democracy and enhancing people's leisure.

I was a little disappointed that the hon. Member did not refer to the Open University. This would have been an opportunity to put in a firm plea for the Government to listen to all the advice that was given by the visiting committee, which said that the Open University was doing a first-class job. We should be talking about expansion and widening the university's role, demonstrating that its skills of distance learning can be applied to a wider group of people and can also be used as a resource for many of the schools and other educational areas. Yet apparently the Government's response to the visiting committee is to leave the Open University with the same cuts, but just a year later than was said before.

The point that I want to make to the Minister—I think that it is the point that the hon. Member for Mid-Kent was really making—is that for all our futures' sake, we must expand education and make sure that it becomes an exciting world where intellectual curiosity is important, but where we are also serving the nation. All our futures depend on having a first-class education.

8.11 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Peter Brooke): Like the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett), I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) not only on his good fortune in securing a place in tonight's debate but on his choice of subject. From the compendium portmanteau title that he gave to the subject, it was a little uncertain quite what to expect. The debate strayed somewhat into the area covered by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment, and it would not be proper for me to say too much about it, but I hope to say something about relations between the Department of Education and Science and the Manpower Services Commission. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his compliments to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science on the manner in which he holds his office in my Department. It is also a pleasure to have the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish taking part in the debate.

There is an element of chance that we are having the debate within the same parliamentary sitting as the launch of "Better Schools". I hope that my hon. Friend will forgive me if I say something about "Better Schools", because the more widely the propositions in it are understood in the nation, the better it will be for our system.

The White Paper sets out the Government's policies for schools in a way that has no post-war precedent. Whereas

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earlier White Papers were mainly concerned with the structure and organisation of the school system, "Better Schools" is mainly concerned with what is actually taught and how it is taught. That follows logically from the Government's two principal aims for education at school, first to raise standards at all levels of ability, to which I shall return, and secondly to secure the best possible return from the resources invested. I shall also return to that matter in the context of the speech by the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish.

The White Paper shows how all the Government's policies for schools pursue those two aims by making the curriculum as it is delivered in the schools serve better than it does now the needs of the individual and of the nation by developing each pupil's full potential and preparing him for the responsibilities of citizenship and working life in a technological and competitive world. Many schools cope successfully with their increasingly demanding task, to which my hon. Friend referred in his remarks about the teaching profession. However, many schools also show weaknesses. If the high standards achieved by pupils of all abilities in some schools could be achieved in all comparable schools, the quality of school education would rise dramatically.

The Government cannot act alone. The education service is a partnership in which local education authorities and teachers have essential roles. However, the Government have a responsibility and a duty to give a lead and also to have regard to the needs of the schools' customers, not least parents and employers. The Government are not taking new legal powers to discharge that responsibility, but are using their existing powers to fulfil a duty and meet a national need. Criticism that the Government's policies are centralist is misplaced. They acknowledge the distribution of functions between the partners and the need for a co-operative effort. It can only help good education for the Government to set out how they will discharge their functions and what they expect of their partners in the discharge of theirs.

In terms of the objectives in the White Paper, the Government will take the lead in promoting national agreement about the purposes and content of the curriculum. The proposals will encourage schools to do more to fulfil the vital function of preparing all young people for work. They will complete the reform of the public examination system taken at 16 in the interests of the curriculum and standards. They will introduce the new examination—the AS-level—to broaden the programme of students on A-level courses. They will work towards a national system of records of achievement, and I was pleased to hear a welcome for that. They will make the in-service training of teachers more effective through new financial arrangements; that matter played a large part in my hon. Friend's speech. They will give school governing bodies more balanced membership and improve the distribution of functions of governors, local education authorities an heads in regard to their schools. They will set new guidelines on the minimum size of schools. They will take steps to reduce under-achievement, including that found among many ethnic minorities, and they will tackle truancy through improvements in the work and training of education welfare officers.

As my right hon. Friend said yesterday, the Government recognise that it may be difficult to achieve those policies in full within existing real levels of expenditure per pupil, but substantial progress can be made with better use of the available resources and there is considerable and continuing scope for redeployment through increased efficiency. The efforts made by the education service can only help its future claims on resources.

My hon. Friend cited the proportion of the work force who do not have even one CSE pass. It was that basic statistic, among others, that stimulated my right hon. Friend's speech in Sheffield a year ago, in which he addressed the questions of breadth, balance, differentiation and relevance in the curriculum and also signalled the changes in the examination system.

The hon. Member for Denton and Reddish is more confident than the majority of the House that standards have risen during the past 20 years. He clearly joined issue with us on that, and it was one of the common causes that followed the Sheffield speech. But much still needs to be done and the more that the various partners in the system can collaborate the more we are likely to achieve.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Is the Minister really claiming that standards have not risen? Surely he accepts that standards have risen in exam results. I remember teaching in secondary modern schools in the 1960s and the problems we had to contend with then are not present in the vast majority of schools now.

Mr. Brooke: I take the hon. Gentleman's point. By putting the matter in the way that he did, he underestimated the concern of parents about the quality of present standards, which of itself provides motive for a further improvement.

Although the fact that a large number of people have limited qualifications played a large part in the Sheffield speech, the speech also continuously emphasised the concern about our under-achievement overall and not simply in the bottom half.

My hon. Friend referred to the role of teachers and the new demands on them. "Better Schools" addresses itself specifically to that issue and recognises the difference in roles which they are being asked to fulfil. The White Paper reminds us of the work which was set in motion by DES circular 3/84, which was Welsh Office circular 21/84 on initial teacher training. It set out the considerations on which the council for the accreditation of teacher education will base its work in the reform, review and upgrading of teacher training throughout the system.

The most significant element is that which relates to in-service training. This is a response to the recent ACSET report. I remind the House of paragraph 176 in "Better Schools", which sets out what is envisaged. The Government have concluded that the most effective way of achieving these aims on in-service training would be through the introduction of a new specific grant to support LEA expenditure on most aspects of in-service training, including that expenditure currently supported through the in-service training pool. They propose accordingly to introduce legislation to extend the Secretary of State's existing power to grant-aid in-service training.

It is envisaged that the grants paid under the extended power would fall into two parts. One part would continue the existing in-service training grants for national priority areas of training. The other would be a general in-service training grant to cover both provision and release costs for

training that is planned to meet locally assessed priorities. The expenditure to be supported by the grant will be determined each year. It is envisaged that the conditions of grant to be specified in regulations made by the Secretary of State would require each LEA to submit information about its plans for in-service training, including arrangements for identifying teachers' needs for in-service training and making good use of the teachers who have been released to engage in this training.

Responsibility for planning and implementing much in-service training would continue to rest with the LEAs as employers of most teachers, but within a framework that would enable the more effective planning and management of training. Those last three words are key words in the process that is envisaged.

I recognise the problems which are contained within the present situation which my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent graphically described. The Government are clear that a key method of improving standards is to concentrate on teacher training both initially and in in-service work. Clear proposals are coming forward on how that will be implemented.

My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent talked a bit about further education, but it did not play as large a part in the speech of the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish. My hon. Friend referred to the announcement of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment that there will be a working study and review of qualifications in this area.

In further education, there is a responsiveness to meet the changing needs of industry and commerce. That was very much a problem which was addressed in "Training for Jobs". I remind the House that that was a White Paper which was brought forward by my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Education and Science and for Employment. As the House will recall, there was an Her Majesty's Inspectorate report shortly thereafter on the relationship between the further education college system and local industry. It showed that in nearly half the cases considered relations were good and that in a further third relations were adequate. However, in 20 per cent. of cases relations were not good and that is where work needed to be done. "Training for Jobs" is directed to that objective. It is now well known that the Audit Commission will be producing a report on efficiency within the FE system, and that will demand a response by the Government. There is also concern to exemplify value for money within the system.

In this context, I acknowledge—I am glad to say that employers now acknowledge this, too—that employers do not always articulate their needs as clearly as they might. I was delighted to have the chance to launch one of the college-employer link projects. These are being undertaken on a pilot basis to see what can be learnt from eight cases spread around the country—north and south, urban and rural—about ways of further improving the links between colleges and employers. Those projects are now well advanced.

My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent referred to the report "Competence and Competition". A clear message of the report is the need for greater investment by employers in the whole training process. The Government's response is the commitment to the youth training scheme that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor made last week. A substantial part of the additional cost of a two-year scheme will be expected to come from the employers' side. A significant feature of the move towards a two-year scheme is that a longer course should lead to recognised qualifications. My hon. Friend referred to the study that is to be made of that. One thing that will be examined is the extent to which we can build up a modular credit system in the framework of CPVE — the certificate of pre-vocational education—so that people on the scheme can put together a qualification by means of a series of modules.

I am not sure that it is sensible to dwell at length on TVEI — the technical and vocational educational initiative—today as it is still at the pilot stage, although it has been greeted with enthusiasm by all those involved —teachers and pupils. Local authorities have also been anxious to participate. What is clearly emerging is a shortage of teachers to teach the required subjects in certain areas, so in the next couple of years, before the Government secure through Parliament legislative powers for specific grants there will be a period in consultation with the Manpower Services Commission of expanding in-service training in those areas.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: The attractive feature of TVEI for the schools participating is the injection of resources and equipment. If it is intended to extend TVEI or anything else, the Government will have to find the resources to make it a practicality.

Mr. Brooke: I take the point. An element of the enthusiasm has been the availability of resources with which to work. The presence of volunteer teachers and pupils and of some extra resources clearly does wonders for enthusiasm.

Incidentally, on the industrial secondment of teachers under the Department's scheme to provide direct grants to LEAs in this context, I am glad to say that that now extends to further education. Likewise, I am delighted that one of the education support grants is directed to in-service training among further education teachers in information technology.

My hon. Friend used fighting words about higher education and talked of it being the most inefficient sector. This is a matter in which I have direct responsibility. Indeed, I am chairman of the National Advisory Body for Public Sector Higher Education, so I am clearly on sensitive and vulnerable ground in the light of what my hon. Friend said.

The review being conducted under the chairmanship of Sir Alex Jarratt by industrialists and academics on efficiency in the university system is due next month.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Will it be published next month?

Mr. Brooke: It will be received next month. I cannot give a date for publication, but the hon. Gentleman knows that the Government have a good record on publishing documents, even when they are sometimes inconvenient.

My hon. Friend will know from public expenditure White Papers that there has been a continuing efficiency squeeze on universities' resources, which is reflected in staff-student ratios. The effect is even more noticeable in the public sector where the increase in productivity has been significant—it has gone up from about 8:1 to 11:1 under this Government.

My hon. Friend took an idiosyncratic view of the low drop-out rates. Many people feel that one of the glories of

[Mr. Brooke]

the British system is that those who enter higher education pass out with degrees faster and more efficiently than elsewhere. One in four of the cohort which arrive each autumn—not just freshmen—get a degree the following summer. The figure for the West as a whole is one in seven, so in terms of the deployment of resources, ours is a significant achievement. Professor Marris' recent lecture at Birkbeck college dwelt on that. I should be loth to extend our successful three-year course. The familiar statistic is that there have been 60,000 more students in higher education since 1979.

As for the efficient use of buildings, I hesitate to say that, outside the House, few people like working through the night, so there are problems associated with getting more intense use of facilities. Much maintenance of buildings and equipment is done during vacations and, of course, research continues. A significant development has been the use of university facilities and campuses for conferences on a large scale. It is not widely known that the total income of British universities, including all outside sources of income, research contracts and grants, has increased by 18 per cent. in real terms since 1979. That is a significant achievement on the part of the institutions.

The hon. Member for Denton and Reddish referred to the switch to engineering and technology. The Government are determined to pursue the conversion of higher education to even greater economic and social relevance. The hon. Gentleman said that we are deploying resources away from the arts to science and engineering. The extra numbers of science and engineering students are among the 60,000 I mentioned earlier, and there is no reduction in the other subjects to which he referred. The hon. Gentleman will know that £43 million for the next three years was announced in the Budget, and further exemplified in documents since.

Mr. Bennett: Not completely new money.

Mr. Brooke: I agree that there is a degree of redeployment. Nevertheless, three quarters of it is money that would not have previously been available to higher education, and in that sense it is an expansion.

Mr. Bennett: How much of it is new money?

Mr. Brooke: It is new money to those who will be able to deploy it in science, engineering and technology. It comes from outside the UGC's previous grant.

I welcome my hon. Friend's emphasis on quality and rigour. Some of what he said will be read with interest in higher education institutions throughout the land. I am not wholly sure that his comparison with American experience is helpful in our context because much of the American emphasis in higher education is on the graduate degree, and the undergraduate degree would not be regarded as strictly comparable to that which exists here.

My hon. Friend referred to adult and continuing education in his comprehensive speech. In terms of the adult training strategy, my Department and the Department of Employment are involved. I am delighted at the success of PICKUP. It is possible to under-estimate what is happening and the strength of the current in this area. To take an example from my hon. Friend's county, it is warming that the university of Kent and Kent local education authority have combined in an adult education centre, where university and county provision go on side by side. It is reported that students in one category are sampling what is available in the other. A great deal is going on in adult education.

My hon. Friend referred to the Manpower Services Commission. The new chairman of the MSC and I have, wholly by chance, known each other for more than 20 years. He is kind enough to say that I launched him on his career. It profoundly helps the quality of the working relationship between my Department and the commission.

I shall say a brief word about the links betwen schools and business. Again absolutely by chance, I had occasion yesterday to visit St. Mary's, Twickenham, where there is a pilot diploma in the practices and principles of industry and commerce as an in-service training exercise. I met the teacher-students on the present course and those from last year's course. The enthusiasm for the work that those on last year's course were getting from pupils, employers and fellow teachers was particularly warming. At present the diploma course is funded by industry. It is a most impressive initiative.

My hon. Friend referred to hours in schools and in other parts of the system. He would be encouraged by the considerable use made of equipment in the TVEI experiments. In the public sector of higher education, the contact hours on computers is jumping regularly each year as a function of their being used longer and longer throughout the day.

Of course, I understand what the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish said about resources, and he will be aware of what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said yesterday. He will also be aware of the study which we published late last year on how the teaching force might be redeployed, with the intention of increasing the number of teachers in areas where we wish to see improvements and for which we have set objectives. That increase would be partly sustained by the redeployment of other teachers from areas with falling rolls. I recognise that that requires a considerable exercise in political will, but we shall not need extra resources to achieve the switch. I hope that we shall see more of it. The hon. Gentleman regretted the fact that there was little reference to nursery education. I am delighted to say that more under-fives are receiving nursery education now than ever before, but I recognise that it is still a minority.

My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent referred to the process of recruitment into universities and higher education generally. The advice that we received from the University Grants Committee and the national advisory body last September extended the Robbins principle into the ability to benefit. In a debate in the House on 26 October, when giving an initial Government response, which will be amplified in the Green Paper, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said that he was content with that extension, provided that there would be real rigour in the higher education institutions in analysing and assessing the ability of the candidate to benefit from the system. I am delighted to say that the number of mature students in higher education has increased during the lifetime of this Government and their immediate predecessors, and the projections for the rest of the decade and into the 1990s show a higher increase.

The hon. Member for Denton and Reddish mentioned the Open university. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said in response to the visiting committee's report, in one way or another a further £2 million has been

provided for each of the next two years, against the original cut of £4·7 million. I agree that the Open university still believes that it needs more, and that dialogue will continue.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: But the Open university did not accept the Government's figure for the cut, did it? It believed that it was much more.

Mr. Brooke: That is perfectly true, but we eventually reached reconciliation. A problem with the Open university, which was exemplified by the slowness with which it explained the figure of £13·2 million which it cited, is also reflected in the visiting committee's report. Chapters 1 and 6 contain references to the visiting committee asking the Open university for details of how its costs were made up, in terms of the savings that it was seeking, and the Open university was unable to answer those questions.

I said at the beginning that it was impossible to know what to expect from my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent. He has stimulated a most valuable debate, and I am delighted to have taken part in it. I hope that in the future there will be similar opportunities to discuss the education system. It was warming to see yesterday the many hon. Members who wished to ask questions about the White Paper, which is a sign of the concern which the House has for education.

Radio Regulatory Regime

8.43 am

Mr. Barry Henderson (Fife, North-East): Despite having sat through the night, we have only 17 minutes before the end of the debate during which I must make my points and my hon. Friend the Minister must respond to them. Therefore, I shall cut significantly points that I felt it would be important to draw to the attention of the House about the radio regulatory regime. I shall concentrate—in so far as one can at this time—on some of the key points which I believe require further study, and which I hope will be further studied by the House on another occasion. Parliament has granted the Executive exceptional powers for radio regulations, stemming from the first Wireless Telegraphy Acts of the last century, and continuing to the most recent enactments. Great advances in technology have been made, and recently, the Government have committed themselves to the liberalisation of the telecommunication and radio regimes.

There is a new explosion of services—new firms are being established and new jobs are being created in response to the growing number of business and personal users. Everybody is catching up or catching on, except the radio regulating department, despite its transition from the Home Office to the Department of Trade and Industry. Parliament has given it extraordinary powers, but, if they are to be granted, there must be certainty that they will not be used harshly by the Department.

If a policeman seized a bicycle chain from somebody at a football rally, that would be good, and most of us would agree that that would be the right exercise of his powers as an officer. However, if he went along to the newspaper boy's bicycle and took the chain off it, that would be bad; and, even if it were legal, it would be an abuse of the powers conferred on that officer.

The regulatory authorities also have powers, for example, through the Telecommunications Act 1984. Section 79 (3) says:

> "If a constable or any person authorised by the Secretary of State to exercise the power conferred by this subsection has reasonable grounds to suspect that an offence to which this section applies has been or is being committed, he may seize and detain, for the purposes of any relevant proceedings, any apparatus or the thing which appears to him to have been used in connection with or to be evidence of the commission of any such offence."

In individual cases, these powers should never be used, unless we can be sure that such extreme action was the only reasonable and practical course.

How much more that consideration should apply when the equipment concerned provides a common base station for a number of users. The one near me provides a medical emergency service and private security services. However, the power exists to pull the plug on that without so much as a "by your leave" to anyone.

If such use of the power could ever be justified, it would have to be in such circumstances that the combination of evidence and necessity should be so strong that immediate and real action would be taken against the alleged transgressor. If it were not so, I hope that the House would condemn the use of the administrative procedures in the way that they have been exercised. That a business can be killed by having its equipment removed and by dragging out further administrative procedures, until the customers

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have disappeared, is scandalous. If the House believed that that was happening, I hope that steps would be taken to withdraw those powers.

It is not so much a question of ill-will among the radio regulatory authorities as sheer inefficiency. A case has recently been drawn to my attention in which a firm was requested to pay an incorrect amount for a licence. On 20 January 1984, 7 June 1984 and 18 February 1985 this firm applied for permission to use equipment that was additional to the equipment for which the licence was granted. Because of that application, the amount was wrong. The Department was undercharging the firm for the use of its equipment.

I believe the Department got it wrong because its records had not caught up with the information that had been provided on the dates I have mentioned. Therefore, it sought to undercharge this firm. I believe that a different arm of the Department thought that the firm had not told it all that it ought to have done. That may be the reason why harsh action was taken against the firm. However, the Department had not caught up with its paperwork.

If I may give another example, within a period of seven weeks a firm applied for 22 licences. A pre-paid acknowledgment card was supplied with each application. Only three have been returned, but no licences. Yet another firm wanted to change an existing licence to a different frequency. It applied on 27 February. No acknowledgment was received, so rather less than a month later, on 18 March, a telephone call was made to the Department. The Department denied having received the application. When the firm mentioned that it had sent the application by recorded delivery it took the Department just five minutes to change its mind. It then informed the firm that it could do nothing about it as the required files were on the other side of London. As the firm very reasonably points out, its customer required the equipment and it required the revenue but everything was held up to ransom by the arbitrary action of the Department.

I am very concerned about my discoveries in recent weeks. I hark back to some of the early discussions during the first round of proceedings on the Telecommunications Act. Concern was expressed at that time about the way in which some people behaved towards the radio regulatory authorities. I condemn the taking out on servants of the Crown of the frustration that is felt because of the way in which the Crown exercises its powers. Concern has also been expressed about the effect that the Department can have upon businesses.

If it can be shown, as I believe would be possible if we had more time in which to debate the problem, that the Department's efficiency of service is inadequate to meet the needs of today or that it is exercising its powers unreasonably, I hope that my hon. Friend will take the most urgent action to put things right. We are in business to help businesses, not to ruin them.

8.54 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. John Butcher): This Government are in the business of helping business. We would not connive at practices which would be detrimental to business interests and wealth creation, and therefore, to job creation. I am familiar with the background to the comments by my hon. Friend the Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Henderson) and I shall respond in general terms on the principle of radio regulation, but I shall not go into detail, as my hon. Friend did, on a constituency basis.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving me this opportunity to explain the importance of radio regulation and to outline the Government's policy on the enforcement of wireless telegraphy legislation.

Radio-borne services affect nearly every aspect of our lives. The absence or degradation of these services could undermine the economic viability of a wide range of important service industries ranging from taxi services to airline operations. The operations of defence, law and order and safety of life services are now virtually unthinkable without effective radio systems. Escalating demands for information, news, entertainment and telecommunications can also be met most readily by radio systems, and no space system is viable without effective radio communication.

Regulation of the radio frequency spectrum is a necessary pre-requisite to the effectiveness in all radio operations and all manufacturing or service industries that depend on radio. This is first because of the growing variety, scale and importance of these services and their conflicting demands for a limited natural resource. Secondly, it is because of the characteristics of radio waves and the technologies available to handle them.

The important characteristics are first that radio waves do not stop at national frontiers. A nation cannot draw up its plans unilaterally, or it will both suffer and cause harmful interference. The effective use of radio demands a very high degree of international co-operation. The more intensively the spectrum is used, the more important the international dimension becomes.

Secondly, it is a resource that can be shared by a distinctive frequency assignment to each user; by users on the same frequency assignment on a geographical basis; by users of the same frequency on a time basis; or by invoking advanced technology to superimpose transmissions.

Thirdly, it is susceptible to pollution. Harmful interference can be caused by other users of the radio spectrum and by spurious radiation produced by other electrical equipment. Without regulatory control, parts of the spectrum could be rendered useless by interference. Fourthly, it is in increasing demand.

Responsibility for radio regulation in the United Kingdom rests with the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, who is responsible for United Kingdom participation in the international negotiations in the International Telecommunications Union, for licensing and law enforcement on the use of the spectrum nationally, under the powers conferred by the Wireless Telegraphy Acts 1949 and 1967, and the Telecommunications Act 1984.

At international level, administrations co-operate to produce international radio regulations and international frequency allocation tables. These tables form the basis of the United Kingdom national frequency allocation tables which are the framework within which frequency assignment and licensing is carried out. Thus, the whole process from the international agreement to the licensing of an individual taxi firm is an unbroken continuum.

The BBC, IBA, British Telecom and Mercury each have a single omnibus licence with schedules authorising the use of their various frequencies. Other users must

apply for one of about 70 types of standard licences, designed to meet a variety of needs. Users of radio are grouped in frequency bands within which individual assignments for similar radio services can make the best use of radio frequencies without causing or experiencing harmful interference.

Frequency assignment processes are technically complex and are becoming more so with the growth of demand for radio services. They are distinctively different for various types of use and in different parts of the radio frequency spectrum. In order to make the best possible use of the spectrum most users of land mobile and fixed services do not have their own exclusive frequency. Frequencies can be re-used across the United Kingdom by exploiting geographical separation and terrain.

This re-use means that every proposed frequency assignment has to be co-ordinated with other existing and proposed assignments for the same frequency, together with adjacent and related frequencies. Further co-ordination requirements are imposed where users of a service are required to share the same frequencies with other services. To make this system work, each authorised land mobile radio user receives a licence to which is attached a schedule——

It being Nine o'clock on Wednesday morning, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

Fleetwood (Grants)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Mather.]*

9 am

Sir Walter Clegg (Wyre): I am pleased to be able to raise the Adjournment debate even at the end of a long, weary all night sitting, and I would not have contemplated raising the debate unless I thought it was of great importance to my constituents.

I wish to bring to the attention of the House and of the Government the problems that confront the port of Fleetwood consequent upon the loss of its deep sea fishing fleet. Since the beginning of the century, Fleetwood has been the biggest deep sea fishing port on the west coast of England. During both world wars, its trawlers fed the country and its trawlermen manned many of the Royal Navy's minesweepers. The deep sea fleet was the heart of a thriving community. As a rough rule, it could be said that for every fisherman at sea there were five jobs ashore. The ancillary trades included merchants, dockers, filleters, fish processors, engineers, chandlers, transport workers, ice house workers, fish meal factory workers, ship's husbands and the clerical trades and employment that go with the administration of such an ancillary network.

The deep sea fleet, therefore, was a staple industry of the port. It was like the pit to the mining village, the steelworks to the steel town and the textile mills to the cotton and woollen towns.

It is crucial to my argument that the Government and the EEC should regard Fleetwood's loss of its deep sea fleet in the same way as they regard the rundown of the basic industries in coal, steel and textiles in particular.

I should like to give the House some basic statistics which have already been provided by Wyre borough council to the Department of my hon. Friend the Minister.

In 1963, the number of fishermen fishing out of Fleetwood was 1,583, a total which represented 11 per cent. of the employment in the Fleetwood exchange area. By 1981, that figure had fallen to 243, which represented nearly 2·8 per cent. of employment. Now there are virtually no deep sea fishermen sailing regularly from Fleetwood.

In 1963, Wyre borough calculated that some 4,000 jobs, or 28 per cent. of the total employment in Fleetwood, were dependent on the industry. All that has changed. It is easy to understand why. In 1976, we had a distant water fleet of 29 vessels. By 1982, it had been reduced to 10 vessels, and now in 1985 there is none. The decline of the deep sea fleet was not confined to Fleetwood alone. Hull, Grimsby and Aberdeen suffered in the same way.

The reason is not hard to identify. The decline was due not to the inefficiency of the industry or over-manning. It was due directly to the loss of the Icelandic fishing grounds, where for years the fleet had legally fished. There were no alternative grounds, either within our 200-mile limit or in EEC waters, that could make up the loss of the commercial fishing grounds off Iceland.

The long and complex negotiations for a common fisheries policy added to the uncertainty, and there is nowhere in sight a fishery that could replace the Icelandic grounds. Thus, the rush out to 200-mile limits, internationally recognised, sounded the death-knell of our deep sea fleet.

[Sir Walter Clegg]

The position in Fleetwood now is that we have an inshore fleet of 69 vessels, many of them old, and those vessels are incapable of making up for the loss of the deep sea landings. These inshore vessels lack the catching capacity of the old deep sea fleet, and its ability to stay at sea in bad weather to maintain year round supplies. Indeed, the inshore fleet is having great difficulty in surviving. Its fishing grounds in the Irish sea have been clobbered by the incursions of foreign beam trawlers and the costs of nets, fuel oil and other vital equipment are constantly rising. The inshore fleet is living from hand to mouth and is being sustained only by the grit and determination of its fishermen. The fishing port is now reliant on fish sent overland, largely from Scottish ports.

We have seen in Fleetwood the loss of a staple industry. It is as though a pit, a steel works or a textile mill had closed in a community that depended on it. Nor were there redundancy payments from the EEC or employers for fishermen who lost their jobs. Because of the method of employment, the vast majority of Fleetwood's fishermen — as those in Hull, Grimsby and Aberdeen — got no redundancy, and certainly not the sums one hears mentioned for the steel industry, with over £20,000 being paid to some workers on being made redundant.

The fishermen who, through no fault of their own, lost their jobs, received no compensation. They have not been able, therefore, to start up the small businesses that have been started in some steel towns, where redundancy payments have been used to revivify industry in those places. The British Fishermen's Association is fighting the case for compensation to be paid, and I fully support it in that endeavour, but it will be a hard fight.

What help is Fleetwood getting to cope with the rundown of this staple industry? Precious little, is the answer. There are de-commissioning grants for some vessels, but they are paid for taking them out of fishing, not for increasing their fishing capacity. We were an assisted area, but that status has now been taken from us. With the loss of that grant has gone our access to EEC funding, which was proving useful to the community in helping to overcome the rundown of its staple industry. In January 1985, Fleetwood had an unemployment rate of 28·5 per cent. among men and 16·2 per cent. among women—a total of 22 per cent., compared with 17 per cent. for total unemployment in the Blackpool travel-to-work area of which we form a part, 16·7 per cent. in the north-west region and 13·7 per cent. in the United Kingdom as a whole.

As a direct comparison, in the Hull and Grimsby travel-to-work areas, which have similar problems to ours, the unemployment rates are 17·1 per cent. and 17·3 per cent. respectively. Both Hull and Grimsby and the textile areas of Lancaster and east Lancashire get help from the EEC regional development non-quota fund which, I understand, has been established to deal with areas where there has been a deep decline in staple industries. I believe that Fleetwood should be given similar treatment to help it diversity its industries and deal with the problems that the loss of the deep sea fleet has created.

It is not that the port is just sitting on its backside rattling a begging bowl. For example, the Wyre borough council has set up in the Fleetwood area the Wyre Development Agency, which was created with sponsors such as ICI and which, in its first year, created 186 new jobs; and Wyre Community Services, acting as agent for the MSC, which provides up to 250 jobs a year on community programme and youth training projects.

To present a fair picture, the non-fishing side of the port has developed a roll-on, roll-off ferry service to Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic, operated by Pandoro and B and I. It has increased its imports of grain and timber and exports of scrap metal. A great deal is being done to keep the non-fishing side of the port very active.

We need help to get more projects going which could increase the port's efficiency and the general structure of industry in the town. I could go on at great length about the other projects that are being undertaken and also mention many of the projects that have already been cited to the Department by Wyre borough council when its members came to see my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry—the hon. Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Mr. Trippier).

I am asking not for charity but for a fair deal from the Government and the EEC. I believe that Fleetwood's case has been fully made out. It is as powerful a case as that put forward by Hull, Grimsby or the textile towns. We have suffered from events far beyond our control. I plead with the Under-Secretary of State to ensure that Fleetwood gets a fair deal. That would only be justice.

9.13 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. John Butcher): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre (Sir W. Clegg) for taking this opportunity to raise an issue which is obviously dear to his heart. He mentioned a number of dilemmas and difficulties on behalf of his constituents who have been well served by him this morning in this, the dawn patrol of our all-night debate. Perhaps only an hon. Member who represents an erstwhile fishing industry has the stamina to endure the rigours of life in Parliament on such occasions and to come up with the first-watch speech on this issue.

I think it is right that the House should therefore thank my hon. Friend for bringing these problems, and particularly the problems of Fleetwood, to its attention. He has shown diligence in pursuing the interests of his constituents; indeed, earlier this year, as he has said, he accompanied a delegation from the Wyre borough council to impress further on my hon. Friend the Minister responsible for small businesses the problems of the area.

I can assure my hon. Friend that the situation in Fleetwood is not unknown to the Government, partly owing, as I said earlier, to the efforts of my hon. Friend in drawing them to our attention. The docks have suffered serious decline owing to the effects of the Icelandic fishing agreement, which excluded British vessels from Icelandic fishing waters. As my hon. Friend correctly pointed out, that was not the fault of those who were fishing and were based in Fleetwood. They were the victims of matters which were well and truely beyond their control.

This has, of course, caused problems regarding the rate and the structure of employment in Fleetwood. As my hon. Friend pointed out, the rest of the docks are successful and —excluding Liverpool, which is Merseyside — they make up Lancashire's busiest port. Between 1975 and 1980, the volume of trade through Fleetwood doubled to around 2 million tonnes per annum. Facilities available include a roll-on roll-off freight terminal, a berth for car and passenger ferries and a 55-hectare dockside estate, which is quite successful.

It would be wrong to give the impression that all is gloom in Fleetwood. There are one or two notable success stories.

With the decline of the fishing industry, Pandoro came on the scene in 1975 to provide a vital lifeline for the docks. Pandoro came in with a massive cash investment to establish a container shipping company linking Fleetwood with Ireland. Ten years on, Pandoro remains one of the biggest employers in North Fylde, with a work force of about 600 in England and Ireland. Services from Fleetwood have expanded and the company's investment in the venture has soared to near the £40 million mark. Today Pandoro's much-expanded services move 70,000 loads annually to and from Northern Ireland, in contrast to the 30,000 in the inaugural year.

My hon. Friend did not mention the potential of the Morecambe bay gas field and perhaps future offshore developments, but he will know that there are several developments on the horizon. We would hope to see Fleetwood and my hon. Friend's constituents participating in the potential in this area.

Britain is on the brink of the ninth oil round and tracts on the new frontier deep-water areas include blocks in the Irish Sea and areas to the north of the Isle of Man and off Cumbria, Lancashire and north Wales. Discretionary licences will be awarded by the Department of Energy probably towards the end of April or the beginning of May. The local central and west Lancashire chamber of commerce believes that there are oil and gas sources to be tapped which will be of benefit to the area. It is expected that Fleetwood will benefit as it had a strong involvement in the exploration programme leading up to the opening of the Morecambe bay gas field. I sincerely hope this will be the case.

Before I talk about the EC grants to which my hon. Friend has referred, I welcome this opportunity to explain to the House the basis of the new assisted areas map. The opportunity is welcome, as misunderstanding has been and still is rife. Many seem to have come to believe that the new map is biased—though which way it is thought to be biased depends on the viewpoint of the commentator.

That was not an assertion made by my hon. Friend, whose speech was founded in empiricism and was really a request for help on the basis that those unfortunate trends which have affected Fleetwood were not self-induced or indeed caused by those who work in not just the fishing industry but the subsidiary industries that supported that fleet in Fleetwood.

As we made clear in our White Paper, "Regional Industrial Development", the aim of regional industrial policy is the reduction of regional imbalances in employment opportunities on a stable, long-term basis. I dwell on that matter for only a moment because it is the assisted area map which, as my hon. Friend knows, dictates so much of what we can achieve in the European context. Indeed, specific types of help are excluded from those areas that the United Kingdom itself does not identify as assisted areas.

We invited views on the criteria for designating assisted areas, and over 300 submissions were received. Support for continuing to use unemployment as the main criterion in determining the policy was overwhelming. I shall refer to the figures that my hon. Friend mentioned. Those arguing that long-term unemployment was an appropriate additional factor amounted to 18 per cent., fewer than those who argued in favour of industrial structure as the main factor or for peripherality.

Taking account of those submissions, our decisions on the map were based solely on areas' relative need for current and future employment opportunities. The main criterion was relative annual average employment rates. Relative long-term unemployment was also taken into account. In making our decisions on the map, we also took account of such factors as the relative pressures for new job opportunities expected to result from the varying age structure of the population in differing parts of the country. We also recognised that this may be affected by changes in local economic activity rates. Other factors were involved such as areas' differing industrial structure, and the occupations and skills of the population as they reflect the quality of local employment opportunities and the pool of entrepreneurial talent. We also considered handicaps to economic recovery, such as great distances from main markets and the general trend of industry to move out of the densely populated inner cities.

All those factors are objective criteria, but their relative importance is essentially subjective. We considered in great depth the scope for using a synthetic index. However, we concluded that no single index was capable of adequately reflecting the needs of areas, especially as account also needed to be taken of the relative positions of neighbouring areas.

So we came to the much-discussed travel-to-work areas and whether they could or should be used as building blocks for assisted area status. For areas that fall well short of being self-contained, the relationship between unemployment and job opportunities is greatly affected by the situation in adjoining areas—too greatly for such areas to be useful as the basis for a cost-effective regional industrial policy aimed at reducing disparities in employment opportunities.

Travel-to-work areas are the smallest units for which nationally comparable unemployment rates are available, and thus the best basis for a nationwide comparison of relative needs for employment opportunities. However, as colleagues and I have said before, their importance goes further than that, because new job opportunities are generally taken by people living in the whole local labour market rather than those solely in the immediate vicinity of the employment.

My hon. Friend is no doubt familiar with the case put forward by chambers of commerce up and down the country, which they summarised under the unemployment black spot proposals. They wish to see a much more focused regional aid and assisted area policy, particularly in areas of severe blight in inner cities. We looked at that matter closely. There was much sympathy for that approach, but we found that there was one flaw in it that tended to work against the areas of very localised and high unemployment. It was that there was no way that a Government, least of all an employer, could guarantee that any factory or enhanced activity set up in a particular location could automatically be totally staffed by those who live in the immediate vicinity of that new or enhanced facility. That "Realökonomie" tended to drive us back to the use of TTWAs. It is, therefore, within the travel-to-work areas that we find that unemployment rates on that general basis had a quite dramatic effect on who qualified or did not qualify for the coverage under the new assisted area map.

[Mr. John Butcher]

I fully appreciate the concern of my hon. Friend over the loss of assisted area status for the Blackpool travel-to-work area, but I can assure the House that we looked most carefully at the case for assistance for all such areas to see whether or not they merited continued prefential treatment over the rest of the country. But even with the substantially wider coverage of the new map, we could not justify continuing to assist all the areas previously covered on the old map.

It is for that reason that I have taken a little time this morning to explain the methodology which led to this decision. I am in no doubt that the decision was an unwelcome one, but I hope I have reassured my hon. Friend that it was an objective one in the impartial circumstances of national consideration.

On the question of how the Commission can help, the situation is that in December last year the Commission made proposals, in the form of a draft regulation, for measures under the European regional development fund to help with the development of new economic activities in certain areas affected by the implementation of the Community's fisheries policy. In broad terms, the assistance would be for areas where fisheries activities have been concentrated and have declined; but only areas meeting the criteria proposed in the draft regulation would be eligible. The criteria relate to employment and job losses in the fisheries sector and to the social and economic situation of an area.

Fleetwood is not one of the areas proposed by the Commission to be eligible for such aid. The Commission concluded that Fleetwood does not meet the criteria it has in mind. The Commission's proposals are that there should be nearly £7·5 million of assistance for the United Kingdom, the same amount for Denmark, and about £5 million for France. For the United Kingdom, the Commission has proposed that the aid should be available only to Hull and Grimsby. There is no doubt that Hull and Grimsby should be among the areas to benefit, but there are other ports in England, Scotland and Wales which also have a case to be accepted as eligible for aid on this kind of basis. Fleetwood has a case; and we shall press the case for Fleetwood — and other United Kingdom ports — to benefit as well as Grimsby and Hull.

As it is, we do not yet know when the Commission's proposals may come before the Council of Ministers for consideration, or what form the proposals will then take. The Commission's proposals were for the assistance to be made available under the non-quota section of the European regional development fund. However, the new ERDF Regulation which came into effect on 1 January this year made considerable changes in ERDF arrangements. Under the new regulation, there is no longer a non-quota section of the fund and the Commission has not yet said how its proposals will be related to the circumstances of the new regulation.

The proposals are for measures very much like the existing ERDF non-quota section measures under the old regulation for assistance to certain shipbuilding, steel and textile areas. Following the usual pattern, the assistance would not be for the fishing sector itself, but rather for the encouragement of alternative activities.

My hon. Friend has clearly demonstrated that Fleetwood is determined to help itself, but is looking for support to show solidarity with that self-help. The measures proposed include ERDF contributions to the cost of redeveloping and improving industrial sites where United Kingdom public expenditure is involved, measures for the promotion of tourism, and a range of assistance to help the development of small and medium-sized firms.

I cannot forecast what progress will be made with the Commission's proposals, or what the outcome may be; it is not entirely up to us. But we should like to see early progress and, as I have said, progress that would make the proposed assistance available to a number of United Kingdom ports, including Fleetwood.

The Department will again examine the comments that my hon. Friend has made on behalf of his constituents. We are grateful to him for keeping this issue to the fore. We appreciate the dilemma that the new map has caused him and a number of my hon. Friends from neighbouring parts of Lancashire and Scotland, who are in the Chamber.

I once again thank my hon. Friend for raising an issue of importance to many of my hon. Friends, and one that his constituents feel is crucial.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at half-past Nine o'clock on Wednesday morning.

House of Commons

Wednesday 27 March 1985

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Royal Assent

Mr. Speaker: I have to notify the House, in accordance with the Royal Assent Act 1967, that the Queen has signified her Royal Assent to the following Acts:

1. Consolidated Fund (No. 2) Act 1985
2. Mineral Workings Act 1985
3. Cinemas Act 1985
4. Shipbuilding Act 1985
5. Surrey Act 1985
6. Valerie Mary Hill and Alan Monk (Marriage Enabling) Act 1985

Oral Answers to Questions

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Aerospace Industry

1. **Mr. Clifford Forsythe** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the 10 largest manufacturers of aerospace equipment in the United Kingdom.

The Minister for Information Technology (Mr. Geoffrey Pattie): The largest manufacturers of aerospace equipment in the United Kingdom include: British Aerospace, the Dowty group, Ferranti, GEC, Lucas Aerospace, Rolls-Royce, Shorts, Smith Industries, Thorn EMI and Westland.

Mr. Forsythe: Will the Minister continue to assist Shorts in exploiting its well-known expertise in the aerospace industry?

Mr. Pattie: Yes.

Mr. Hayward: Is my hon. Friend aware that Rolls-Royce is now producing the 535 E4 engine for the Boeing 757 which is the only engine to power a large jet which can land at airports which operate a curfew through the night, that it is proof of British excellence, and that airports, such as Heathrow, need not fear its increased use for day and night-time flights?

Mr. Pattie: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making that important point. He will be aware that the Government have given considerable support to Rolls-Royce in recent years. Most recently they have given £70 million of launch aid for the RB 211 535 and £60 million for the V2500 which was announced some months ago by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

Mr. Ashdown: The Minister will no doubt accept that Westland Aircraft is a vital component of the British Aerospace industry. Does he agree that it is important that that company should be able to go into the European collaborative projects of the early 1990s in as strong a position as possible and that therefore some of the delays that we are now experiencing over the AST 404 decision are unhelpful to the company?

Mr. Pattie: As the hon. Gentleman would have heard if he had been present for defence questions yesterday, my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement gave reasons for the possible delays in the AST 404. That is a matter for the Ministry of Defence. I note the hon. Gentleman's other point.

Mr. Carter-Jones: Does the Minister accept as one of his most important tasks the need to give positive direct and indirect help to preserve jobs in advanced technology in aviation and at the same time to preserve that technology? Will he give full support at all times to civil and defence projects?

Mr. Pattie: Part of my brief in my right hon. Friend's Department is to take responsibility for advanced technology. Much of the activity of the aerospace industry is in that area. As we have said in the House many times in the past, we see no advantage to the United Kingdom in losing the vital capability to design as well as to manufacture advanced technology products.

Mr. Gerald Howarth: Does my hon. Friend agree that delays in reaching a decision on the European fighter aircraft could seriously prejudice British Aerospace's design and manufacturing capability? Will he do all that he can to ensure that a quick decision is reached on the matter, or give us an assurance that a national programme will be put in hand instead?

Mr. Pattie: As I think my hon. Friend is aware, the Department of Trade and Industry is working closely with the Ministry of Defence on this development. I would not agree that there have been significant delays. I understand from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence that the date of the next ministerial meeting to consider the matter has slipped by about six weeks from the date originally envisaged. The Government take the point that no unreasonable delay must be allowed.

Mr. Geoffrey Robinson: The Minister cannot shrug off his responsibilities as a representative of the sponsoring Ministry for Westland. Notwithstanding whatever was said yesterday, will the Minister undertake to use his best offices to ensure that perhaps even a small production order for the W30 helicopter is secured from the Ministry of Defence? The rumours in *The Mail on Sunday* and other newspapers are having a damaging effect on the export prospects of that company's products.

Mr. Pattie: There is no question of shrugging off responsibilities. I have already told the House that we are working closely with the Ministry of Defence on this and other matters. We are fully aware of the company's loading and future aspirations. We shall continue to work with the Ministry of Defence.

USSR (Balance of Trade)

2. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement about the balance of trade with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

The Minister for Trade (Mr. Paul Channon): In 1984, exports from the United Kingdom to the Soviet Union increased by 65 per cent. to £735 million, while imports from the Soviet Union rose by 17 per cent. to £854 million, producing a balance in the Soviet Union's favour of £119 million.

Mr. Chapman: I welcome the reduction in the imbalance of trade between the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union compared with previous years, and recognise that many of the imports are processed for re-exporting from this country. However, will my right hon. Friend assure the House that countries entering into the COCOM agreement to restrict the export of certain technologies and products to Eastern bloc countries abide by that agreement, and that it is not unilaterally broken at the whim of any one country?

Mr. Channon: Yes, I can give my hon. Friend that assurance. COCOM works by unanimity. I know of no example of a country trying to do what my hon. Friend is protesting about. If he has any evidence that it was being done, we would investigate the complaint as a matter of urgency.

Mr. James Lamond: Will the Minister take a look at the list of items which may not be exported to the Soviet Union? One firm in my constituency, which is engaged in high technology, is prevented from exporting commercial packages and microchips to the Soviet Union, despite the fact that the same products can be bought virtually over the counter in London. There is no doubt that the restrictions are circumvented in that way. Would it not be better to reconsider the list and open up the possibility of trade to all such firms?

Mr. Channon: There must be some restriction on exports to Soviet bloc countries. The list was reviewed last year, and I hope to make an order setting out a new list, which will be laid before the House in the very near future. The list is kept continually under review. If there are any specific points that the hon. Gentleman wishes to raise, perhaps he will get in touch with me.

Mr. John Browne: If the Soviets are to restore growth to their economy, will they not have to accept some forms of financial incentive and decentralisation, and will they not also require massive imports from the West? Will that not therefore offer great opportunities for British manufacturers, financiers and traders, outside the restrictions on strategically important high technology exports?

Mr. Channon: My hon. Friend is quite right. Exports from the United Kingdom to the Soviet Union increased by 65 per cent. last year—an extremely good figure. When Mr. Gorbachev was in London, he said that he hoped that over the next few years there would be an increase of another 40 to 50 per cent. The chances are very good indeed.

Mr. John Smith: Does the Minister agree that, following the election of Mr. Gorbachev in the Soviet Union, the time is right—[HON. MEMBERS: "Election?"] Mr. Gorbachev was elected by the Praesidium. It would be helpful if Conservative Members paid some regard to the diplomatic niceties, if they wish to advance our trade with the Soviet Union.

Would it not be advisable for the Minister and his colleagues — the matter is probably beyond the imagination of the Secretary of State — to mount a special trade mission to the Soviet Union to follow up what one hopes will be the beneficial results of a thaw in the political climate? Can the Minister say what were the results of the discussions with Mr. Gorbachev on his recent visit?

Mr. Channon: Yes. When I saw Mr. Gorbachev in December we discussed the possibility of drawing up a new programme for a long-term trade agreement between our countries. I look forward to seeing his colleagues, who are coming in June for the United Kingdom-Soviet joint trade commission. I hope that we shall draw up a new trade document then. We shall certainly be prepared to consider further exchanges, either by trade missions or some other way, to increase the already great increase in British exports.

British Tourist Authority

3. **Mr. Adley** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he next intends to meet the chairman of the British Tourist Authority; and if he will discuss with him the level of British Tourist Authority funding.

The Minister of State, Department of Trade and Industry (Mr. Norman Lamont): I am next meeting Mr. Bluck on 15 April. I expect to discuss a range of issues with him concerning the promotion and development of the United Kingdom tourism industry, which I am very pleased to see has just had a record year and seems set for even further growth in 1985.

Mr. Adley: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply. He will be aware of my interest in the tourism industry. Does it remain Government policy to invest in success? Is my hon. Friend aware that, unlike the spurious claims of cuts in the National Health Service, there has been a cut in real terms in the budget of the British Tourist Authority overseas? Can he tell me of any other investment by the taxpayer which has been so cost-effective?

Mr. Lamont: Of course we want to encourage tourism. It is a great growth industry and a positive prospect for employment. My hon. Friend is right, there has been a cut in real terms in the budget of the BTA, but it was relieved of some responsibilities in 1983. Furthermore, spending on tourism as a whole—the English Tourist Board, the BTA and section 4 — has broadly kept pace with inflation. We strongly want to encourage tourism.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Is the Minister aware of the recent increase in tourism in industrial areas and the efforts of some northern cities to attract foreign tourists to learn some of the history of our industrial areas and to visit local museums? Will he discuss that with the British Tourist Authority and help it to encourage that process?

Mr. Lamont: I entirely agree. Cities such as Bradford have done remarkably well, as has Liverpool——

Mr. Meadowcroft: And Leeds.

Mr. Lamont: And Leeds, the hon. Gentleman prompts me. I have discussed the matter with the chairman of the BTA. We want to encourage such domestic tourism.

Mr. Bevan: As to investing in success, when my hon. Friend meets the chairman of the BTA, will he discuss an investment which the chairman could make through the ETB in the Birmingham convention centre? Following the success of the national exhibition centre, it will create thousands of jobs and bring prosperity, through business tourism, to the midlands, and especially to Birmingham. I should be obliged if he would take that chance.

Mr. Lamont: I shall certainly discuss that matter. When my hon. Friend talks of investing in success, he should bear in mind that our intention is to support the boards so that they can support British tourism. The overwhelming proportion of the money invested in tourism will and must come from the private sector.

Mr. Hicks: Is my hon. Friend aware of the real contribution that tourism makes to regional economies? Is he further aware that it is important, especially in respect of section 4 grant-aid, to make additional funds available to increase the quality of tourist attractions?

Mr. Lamont: I am aware of the importance of tourism to the regions and areas such as the south-west. When I announced the conclusions of the review of tourism, I said that we intended to maintain the level of section 4 assistance, which we have increased to £8 million. That remains our intention.

Mr. John Townend: When my hon. Friend meets the chairman of the BTA, will he emphasise the need for Yorkshire and Humberside, and especially the seaside resort of Bridlington, to receive treatment equivalent to Wales, which has hitherto had a much greater share of resources than its population warrants?

Mr. Lamont: The comparison should be between not the Yorkshire and Humberside tourist board and Wales, but between the English Tourist Board and the Wales Tourist Board. I am aware of the point that my hon. Friend makes.

Aerospace Industry

4. **Mr. Beggs** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he plans to introduce measures to promote the growth of the United Kingdom aerospace industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Pattie: I have no plans to add to those measures which already exist to help promote growth in the United Kingdom aerospace industry. The Government have given considerable assistance to the industry in recent years. It is our intention to increase further the international competitiveness of the industry by returning to the private sector as soon as possible those parts of the industry which remain under state control.

Mr. Beggs: I thank the Minister for that answer. Does he accept that equality of opportunity exists in the Short Bros factory in Belfast? Does he also accept that, as Shorts has made a commitment to use a small site in west Belfast, that site should be used by the company for future apprentice training?

Mr. Pattie: I am sure the hon. Gentleman will accept that that is really a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

As to the first part of his question, in awarding the contract for the United States air force aeroplane — known as the Sherpa — to Shorts, the United States Government satisfied themselves that no discrimination was practised by Shorts. The contract was awarded not only on merit, but on the fact that the United States Government were satisfied on that point.

Mr. Robert Atkins: Does my hon. Friend agree that the growth prospects for the United Kingdom aerospace industry as a whole would be enhanced if the Ministry of Defence were encouraged to make the attrition order for Tornados to keep the lines going throughout the country, and that every encouragement should be given to ensuring that the European fighter aircraft project gets off the ground so that the United Kingdom benefits throughout the length and breadth of the land? Will he use his considerable influence with the Ministry of Defence to put that into effect?

Mr. Pattie: I can give my hon. Friend the assurance that he seeks. I am sure he will be aware that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence will read this exchange tomorrow.

Honda Car Company

5. **Mr. Roy Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has had any further discussions with the Honda car company concerning its Swindon site; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: My Department holds discussions with Honda from time to time, as with any other potential investor in the United Kingdom. Such discussions are commercially confidential.

Mr. Hughes: Does the Minister agree that it is inappropriate to hide behind the cloak of business confidentiality, because people want to know what the British content will be if a project is built at Swindon? What will be the effect on the fortunes of British Leyland? As a Welsh Member of Parliament, I should like to know whether Wales was seriously considered for this project. Alternatively, because of recent Government changes in regional policy, is Wales now so much less attractive to potential investors?

Mr. Lamont: I am not sure to what project the hon. Gentleman is referring. Honda has publicly stated that it has no firm plans for an engine-making plant or for full car production in the United Kingdom. It is not just convenient, but it is absolutely necessary to shelter behind the cloak of commercial confidentiality, as anyone will realise when discussing such matters with companies which might invest in this country. The hon. Gentleman has raised the same question as he raised last time. I wish that he would make up his mind whether he is against any project or whether he wants it in his constituency.

Mr. Coombs: Is my hon. Friend aware of the delight in Swindon at Honda's interest in that town, as well as the full-hearted support from all parties for the move that Honda is proposing? Will he give an absolute assurance that in no way will he be tempted by the hints of centralised planning from the hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes)?

Mr. Lamont: I have noted what my hon. Friend has said, as, I am sure, has Honda.

Mr. Park: Inward investment is bound to be welcome, but is the Minister at all concerned about the loss of design, research and development capacity in industry? I hope he will accept that we do not want a series of screwdriver operations, thereby losing the skills and abilities which are so necessary to our future.

Mr. Lamont: Of course we are concerned about loss of research or design capacity, but in this hypothetical case we are talking not about a loss but about a potential addition. It is Government policy on any inward investment to take account of the effect on domestic industry.

Mr. Roger King: When discussing inward investment, and especially any proposals from Honda to produce vehicles or components in this country, will my hon. Friend bear in mind the problems identified by the Ford Motor Company—that, in view of the present state of the European market, there is too much production capacity, and that that company is seeking to eliminate some of its own capacity?

Mr. Lamont: If a company wishes to come to this country, using its own money, it is up to that company to judge whether there is overcapacity in this country. People may wish to invest here without any Government support or involvement, but if the question of Government support arises we certainly take account of the points raised by my hon. Friend.

Mr. Geoffrey Robinson: We do not wish the Minister to betray any commercial confidences, but we would welcome any increase in research and development or production of motor cars in this country. Nevertheless, the terms must be right. Will he confirm that he will not consider any takeover bid by Honda for Austin Rover and that inward investment from abroad will not be regarded as a substitute for a continued heavy research and development and production effort by Austin Rover? Will he also consider further Government assistance to Austin Rover on merit, not on the usual Government prejudice?

Mr. Lamont: Any proposal for inward investment requiring Government assistance must be on the basis that the terms are right. We have regard to the local content, especially as there are conditions relating to the import of Japanese cars into this country. No proposal for a takeover of Austin Rover has been put forward, and I decline to answer such hypothetical questions. We shall, of course, consider carefully the impact on indigenous producers of any proposed investment by any vehicle manufacturer.

Small Businesses (Assistance)

6. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what studies he has undertaken of Government assistance to small businesses in other European Economic Community countries.

Mr. Channon: My Department keeps continually in touch with other EC Governments' measures in the small business field.

Mr. Kirkwood: Does the Minister accept that the imposition of rates as a cost to small businesses is unique in Europe in that it is not related to any ability of the businesses to pay? Will he undertake to make representations on behalf of small businesses to his colleagues who are studying the rating system to try to alleviate that impost?

Mr. Channon: As the hon. Gentleman implies, that is largely a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. Nevertheless, I note what the hon. Gentleman has said. It is extremely nice to have all-party support for attempts to reduce rates. That has not always been evident in all parts of the House.

Mr. Richard Page: In the past my right hon. Friend and his predecessors have taken note of any EC initiative to help small businesses, such as the loan guarantee scheme and improvements in employment legislation. Will he guarantee that if another good idea comes out of the EC that, too, will be introduced here?

Mr. Channon: Yes, indeed, but we have quite a few good ideas of our own. We are determined to go on removing any burdens which can sensibly be removed from small firms to increase their expansion and numbers.

British Shipbuilders (Southampton)

7. **Mr. Chope** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will make a statement on the latest progress achieved in the privatisation of British Shipbuilders' interest in Southampton.

The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Norman Tebbit): I have asked British Shipbuilders to sell all its warship-building interests, including Vosper Thornycroft, by 31 March 1986. I understand that British Shipbuilders hopes to issue a sale document for Vosper Thornycroft by the summer. Vosper Shiprepair is also on the market and British Shipbuilders is in discussion with potential purchasers.

Mr. Chope: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for that full reply. Is he aware that the continuing delays have caused much anxiety among the work force? Will he ensure that British Shipbuilders does not delay any further in implementing these important privatisation measures?

Mr. Tebbit: I know that British Shipbuilders is anxious to get on with the matter. It is not always easy to handle all the sales at once. It is getting on as quickly as it reasonably can, and certainly I shall give it all the help that I can to complete the task.

East Anglia

8. **Mr. Freud** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what new steps he is taking to encourage tourism in East Anglia.

Mr. Lamont: The Government will continue to fund the promotion of all areas of England, including East Anglia, through the English tourist board and to provide an economic climate in which this sector can continue to grow and prosper.

Mr. Freud: I am grateful for the reply, and East Anglia is grateful for what the Government have done but will the Minister speak to the English tourist board and do something about its preoccupation with advertisements for Stratford, Oxford, Caernarfon and Edinburgh, and encourage it to broadcast the allure of Foul Anchor, Prickwillow and Pidley Fen?

Mr. Lamont: I know of the hon. Gentleman's personal interest in tourism, as I had to pay, not an extortionate, but a handsomely priced car parking fee when I went to the Walberswick crab fishing festival last year and used his car park.

Mr. Freud: For charity.

Mr. Lamont: I shall certainly draw the attention of the chairman of the tourist board to the hon. Gentleman's point. It is our intention that the regions of England should be able to market themselves strongly through the tourist board's activities. I am in favour of some devolution from the ETB to the regions.

Mr. Yeo: Is my hon. Friend aware that the Budget changes in national insurance contributions will stimulate employment in the tourist industry in East Anglia by making it possible for people to accept lower paid jobs in that service industry, and that, therefore East Anglia will be ready to meet the large influx of tourists which my hon. Friend is helping us to achieve?

Mr. Lamont: My hon. Friend is right. The changes in national insurance contributions announced in the Budget will make a considerable difference to the economics of the hotel and tourism industries.

Manufacturing Industry

9. **Mr. Kenneth Carlisle** asked the secretary of State for Trade and Industry what increases have occurred in input costs for manufacturing industry over the past 12 months; and to what extent these have been offset by improvements in productivity.

Mr. Pattie: Comparing 1984 with 1983, material and fuel costs of manufacturing industry rose by 8 per cent., while wage and salary costs increased by 8·75 per cent. The strong productivity performance, up 4·5 per cent., allowed the increase in unit labour costs and manufacturers output prices to be limited to 4 per cent. and 6 per cent. respectively.

Mr. Carlisle: I welcome the increase in productivity. Does my hon. Friend agree that as a trading nation we must compete with the performance of other countries, and that the creation of jobs depends on that? Does he further agree that in that respect it is essential that our unit costs rise less than those of other countries? How has our performance been in that respect?

Mr. Pattie: My hon. Friend is absolutely right in drawing attention to this problem. Unit labour costs continue to rise too fast compared with those of our competitors. On the latest figures available, unit labour costs in manufacturing fell during the past year by 5 per cent. in Japan, and 2 per cent. in Germany. They remained static in France and rose by 1 per cent. in the United States.

Mr. Ashdown: Is it not the case that total factory production has fallen by 8·7 per cent. since the Government came to power? Will the Minister tell us when he expects the total ex-factory production in the United Kingdom to reach the point that his Government inherited in 1979?

Mr. Pattie: The hon. Gentleman's statistics are incorrect. Productivity has increased considerably in the last two quarters. We see no reason why it should not continue to do so.

Mr. Hickmet: My hon. Friend will be aware of the effect that the increase in raw material costs priced in dollars has had on the British Steel Corporation. Has his hon. Friend who attended the Steel Council meeting yesterday informed him of what success he had in increasing BSC's steel quota, the United Kingdom's steel quota or United Kingdom steel prices? What is the prospect of offsetting those increased costs?

Mr. Pattie: My hon. Friend will agree that that matter does not arise out of this question, but I am sure that he will find ways of drawing his point to the attention of my hon. Friend.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To what extent are high interest rates impeding industrial expansion?

Mr. Pattie: Obviously, to some extent. We estimate that higher interest rates have added about £230 million for each 1 per cent. rise in interest rates, but we should not consider that in isolation. Many firms will benefit from the lower value of sterling. It is interesting to note that the 4·5 per cent. increase in base rates in January is equivalent to about 1·25 per cent. of companies' pay bills. Therefore, to return to the original question, a modest slowdown in the growth of earnings would offset the damaging effect, if any, of the increase in interest rates.

Privatisation (Departmental Savings)

10. **Mr. Thurnham** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what are the current estimated savings by his Department for 1984-85 as a result of privatisation schemes.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Alex Fletcher): There have been no privatisations of the functions of my Department in 1984-85. Savings as a result of contracting-out of services are estimated as at least £600,000 in this financial year.

Mr. Thurnham: Will my hon. Friend ensure that small firms are given every opportunity to tender for those schemes?

Mr. Fletcher: Yes, Sir. Several contracts have been placed with small firms for cleaning, data preparation, reprographics, press cuttings, the printing of *British Business* and workshop services.

Mr. Caborn: What savings have been made by privatising parts of the steel industry, especially with regard to Phoenix 1 and 3? When will there be an announcement on Phoenix 2? Are steps being taken to restructure the BSC engineering steel division before Phoenix 2 is announced?

Mr. Fletcher: All those matters are currently under consideration in the Department.

Mr. Squire: Will my hon. Friend, as a Minister in the Department, underline the position that every company, big and small, in the private sector, as a matter of course, considers its ancillary services to see whether they would be better handled in-house or out-of-house? Does he agree that that message must be hammered home, especially to Opposition Members, who seem to have forgotten that simple fact?

Mr. Fletcher: It is an important part of Government policy to transfer work out of Government Departments when that is commensurate with sound management and good value for money for the taxpayer.

Mr. Alton: How can the Minister justify small savings from privatisation when British consumers and industry

can lose so much as a result of procurement decisions by, for instance, British Telecom? Will he assure the House that no decision will be taken by British Telecom to go ahead with systems X or Y until Professor Bryan Carsberg has completed his investigations on behalf of Oftel?

Mr. Fletcher: The Director General of Oftel made a statement on that matter on 22 March. He will consider the implications of any such move.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim: As it seems extremely likely that British Telecom will acquire some digital exchanges from Ericsson, is my hon. Friend satisfied that Plessey and GEC have reciprocal access to the Swedish telecommunications market, where Ericsson has almost a state-assured monopoly?

Mr. Fletcher: Most European countries do not have easy access to telecommunications. We are anxious to ensure that those markets are open to British industry, just as British suppliers are seeking quotes elsewhere.

Mr. John Smith: Has not the Minister just admitted that the Government abide by the rules, while all our competitors break them as often as they can? Is it not high time that, instead of apologising for that, Ministers took the more robust defence of British interests as their most important objective?

Mr. Fletcher: We make a robust defence of the interests of British consumers.

New Companies (Registration)

11. **Mr. Soames** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps he has taken to facilitate the registration of new companies.

Mr. Fletcher: The time taken to incorporate new companies has been reduced to 15 working days under the simplified procedures introduced by the Companies Act 1981.

Mr. Soames: I congratulate my hon. Friend on the progress that his Department is making in this respect. However, with the enormous number of companies being formed, is it not important that we continue to simplify this process, as some people find it difficult to fill out all the forms?

Mr. Fletcher: I will be pleased to hear from my hon. Friend of any difficulties that his constituents have experienced.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton: Of the new companies that have registered in the past five years, how many are flouting the law by refusing to file their annual accounts? Is the Minister aware that about two fifths of companies in Britain are disobeying the law by doing just that? As the Government are always shouting about the importance of the law, what energetic steps are they taking to ensure that private business obeys the law?

Mr. Fletcher: The backlog is being reduced vigorously and action is being taken against companies which fail to file their accounts in time.

Motor Industry

12. **Mr. Michael Forsyth** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what conditions are attached to the block exemption of the motor industry from the competition rules of the treaty of Rome.

Mr. Tebbit: Those designed to help give consumers the benefit of a genuine common market in motor vehicles.

Mr. Forsyth: I welcome my right hon. Friend's answer, but is he satisfied that the distribution system under the new regulation can possibly be in the interests of the consumer?

Mr. Tebbit: There is little doubt that the new regulation, when it comes into force, will help the consumer. It is a difficult matter to get a common market in motor vehicles that is properly effective in Europe, not least as the German decision on vehicle emissions has tended to lead to even greater fragmentation of the market.

Mr. Sackville: Is my right hon. Friend satisfied that the present arrangements allow for the necessary price reactions by manufacturers to future changes in taxation and currency among EEC member countries?

Mr. Tebbit: Yes, there are protections for the manufacturers, and that is why comparisons with prices in markets that are distorted by excessive taxation or price controls are excluded. It is interesting, in the light of the noises being made a few moments ago about the need to protect British industry rather than the consumer, that there is so little comment from Labour Benches now. They want it both ways.

Mr. Park: Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that one of the problems is that while we may have a Common Market, there are not common conditions throughout the market?

Mr. Tebbit: Yes, that is absolutely correct and that is why some parts of the market will not be used for comparative purposes, as it would be unfair to do so. I wish that we could persuade somebody from the Labour Benches to get up and say a good word for the rights of the consumer to buy his motor car at the most advantageous price in the European market.

Multi-fibre Arrangement

13. **Mr. Latham** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what recent representations he has received from organisations representing the textile and knitwear industry regarding the need for an extension of the multi-fibre arrangement; and what response he has given.

Mr. Channon: I have received representations from the TUC, the British Textile Confederation, the British Clothing Industry Association and the Knitting Industries' Federation and from individual companies in those industries. I have told these bodies that their views, and those of other interested parties, will be taken into account in the formulation of the Government's policy.

Mr. Latham: Is my right hon. Friend aware that substantial concern persists in the knitwear and textile industries, which are major employers of labour, that Ministers are taking an ambivalent attitude towards the extension of the MFA? Will he give an assurance that he understands the disastrous effect that there would be on employment if the arrangement were not effectively renewed as soon as possible?

Mr. Channon: I take note of my hon. Friend's comment. The Government are consulting all concerned and in due course will make a statement. The MFA does not completely run out until the end of next year, so there is still some time.

Mr. Madden: Does the Minister not understand that there will be massive job losses if the MFA is abandoned or radically liberalised? Does he not understand also that in west Yorkshire one in three manufacturing jobs are in the textile and clothing industry? As the so-called Budget for jobs has done nothing for areas such as mine, will he give a firm, clear and unequivocal assurance that the Government are committed to renewal of the MFA, and a tough MFA at that?

Mr. Channon: I looked recently at the figures for the Yorkshire wool industry, and I was glad to see that the wool textile sector increased its exports by 23 per cent. last year. All of us want to see a flourishing clothing and textile industry. The Government are consulting, and the figures for unemployment which the hon. Gentleman cites are by no means agreed. This is a matter of great importance, about which the Government are entitled to think clearly.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the textile, clothing and knitwear industries are the country's fourth largest employer, that unanimously the representatives of those industries have demanded a renewal of the multi-fibre arrangement and that the Silberston report, which comes to some very ridiculous conclusions, provides no substantive evidence for those conclusions? Unless the Government renew the MFA, not only in 1986 but subsequently, unemployment in this country will increase and an important manufacturing base will be undermined.

Mr. Channon: I note my hon. Friend's views and I understand the feelings expressed by my hon. Friends and other hon. Members. Naturally, it is a factor which will be taken into account.

Mr. Winterton: That was a pathetic reply.

Mr. Sheerman: Is the Minister aware of the urgent need to give confidence to this major employer and exporter to invest in new plant, material and machinery? Confidence is needed now. Post-Silberston there is a lack of confidence in the industry. The Minister must act quickly on the MFA to restore confidence so that investment can take place.

Mr. Channon: Of course the Government will have to act with reasonable speed about the matter. On the other hand, I have already pointed out that the MFA does not expire until the end of next year. On an issue of very great importance it is perfectly reasonable for the Government to consult all the interested parties. I am to see some of them tomorrow. I think it is a bit rough to be expected to announce a decision today.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: I understand the generality of our stance against protectionism——

Mr. Winterton: It is not protectionism.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: My hon. Friend should ask his own questions.

Mr. Winterton: I do, I do.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) must contain himself.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: I am grateful to you, Mr. Speaker.

I am sure my right hon. Friend understands that much of the employment in the textile industry is female intensive in areas of high male unemployment. In that special situation, does the Minister not believe that some agreement is essential?

Mr. Winterton: Quite right.

Mr. Channon: I take my hon. Friend's question extremely seriously. He raises a very important point—*[Interruption.]* I am surprised that the right hon. Gentleman takes that attitude. The textile and clothing industry is a very important industry. British textile and clothing exports rose by over 15 per cent. last year to almost £2·5 billion. The Government take this question extremely seriously. All of these points will be borne in mind, and of course I note the views of the House on this matter.

Mr. Williams: As the European Community has just vetoed any extension of Government support for the textile industry, and as the Government themselves have deliberately debarred the industry from any modernisation assistance under regional development grants, will the Minister take this opportunity to give the industry a categorical assurance that the Government will fight for a strong MFA?

Mr. Channon: I have now answered this question about nine times. I have already said that the Government are consulting all the interested parties and will announce their conclusion at an early date. I take note of all the points of view expressed by the House. I think that some of the right hon. Gentleman's preamble was misleading, but I certainly take note of what the House thinks.

Frontier Arrangements (Liberalisation)

14. **Mr. John Mark Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the trade implications of the liberalising of frontier arrangements between France, West Germany and the Benelux countries.

Mr. Channon: So far, the trading implications of this possible move are not clear.

Mr. Taylor: Does my hon. Friend agree that it would be unfortunate if Her Majesty's Government and Lord Cockfield subscribed to all the theories and good intentions involved in creating a common market, but showed reluctance when it came to the practical steps?

Mr. Channon: I agree, but I am sure that my hon. Friend will also agree that there are important reasons why we should take particular care of our sea and airports—to ensure that we do not allow criminals in and that we protect animal health. For important, overriding international reasons we should care about what goes on at our ports.

Japan (Trade Deficit)

15. **Mr. John Townend** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the United Kingdom trade deficit for 1984 with Japan; and what action the Government intend to take to rectify this position.

Mr. Tebbit: The visible trade deficit with Japan in 1984 was £2,870 million. I shall take the opportunity of my forthcoming visit to Japan to encourage measures to open Japanese markets to United Kingdom exports.

Mr. Townend: Does my right hon. Friend not find the figures extremely disturbing? Is the Japanese market now open to British goods and services to the extent that the British market is open to Japanese goods and services?

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: No, it is not.

Mr. Townend: If it is not, will my right hon. Friend tell the Japanese that the time for prevarication is over and that we want action? Will he tell them that if they do not open the market soon the pressure for retaliation by Britain will be irresistible?

Mr. Tebbit: My hon. Friend rightly points to a deep-seated problem which is also experienced by others. The Americans have a deficit on trade with Japan of $32 billion and the Federal Republic of Germany has a deficit with Japan of $3·9 billion, compared with our deficit with Japan of $3·4 billion. I shall certainly draw to the attention of my Japanese hosts the fact that they have a great interest in the open trading system and that if that system is seen not to work because of protectionist measures by any country the whole system will be threatened.

Mr. Foster: Has the Secretary of State noticed the Japanese determination to resist foreign ownership of its telecommunications industry? Does that not contrast with his policy of selling off and selling out Britain at the drop of a hat?

Mr. Tebbit: I thought that there was general applause for the concept that the Japanese economy should be made more open, not that we should try to close our economy. We are vigorous in our action when Japanese malpractice can be proved on such matters as dumping. Vigorous anti-dumping measures have been taken by the European Community in recent months.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: What about the importance of employment?

Mr. Tebbit: My hon. Friend will not have an answer to his questions if he shouts them at me from a sedentary position.

Mr. Sims: Will my right hon. Friend take the opportunity to confirm that while Japan is a specialised and complex market, a number of well-established British trading companies in Tokyo are willing and able to evaluate the suitability of British products for the Japanese market and to help with marketing?

Mr. Tebbit: Yes. British companies are succeeding in the Japanese market. It is a difficult market, not only because of restraints that may be imposed by the Japanese Government, but because of cultural attitudes in Japan. Many British business men do not speak Japanese, whereas many Japanese business men speak English. The Japanese are exceptionally good at maintaining quality and delivery times, whereas in the past that has not been a special characteristic of British manufacturers, who are perpetually hindered by the universal support for every trade dispute, however absurd, by Opposition Members.

Trade Trends

16. **Mr. Spencer** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on recent trends in British trade.

Mr. Tebbit: Underlying export volume has been rising since mid-1984. Indications are that this will continue in 1985. CBI surveys show manufacturers increasingly optimistic about export prospects.

Mr. Spencer: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the improved prospects for the engineering industry in the east midlands where some of the bigger firms now have order books extending for 15 or 18 months? Does this not augur well for exports and show that Britain really does mean business?

Mr. Tebbit: My hon. and learned Friend is right. It is not merely a matter of what is happening in Leicester, but that manufactured exports, excluding erratic items — *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not know what is going on below the Gangway, but I ask hon. Members to listen to the answers.

Mr. Tebbit: As I was saying, manufactured exports, excluding erratic items, are 12 per cent. up in volume terms in the latest three months against the equivalent three months of a year ago. That is against imports, which are only 7 per cent. up, so there is good news there.

Mr. John Smith: Does the Secretary of State think that it is good news that we now have a £4 billion deficit in the balance of trade on manufactured goods? Is that some sign of the success of the Government's policies?

Mr. Tebbit: The right hon. and learned Gentleman gets rather boring about this matter, and I shall have to be rather boring about it, too, I am afraid, and give him the elementary lesson that it is unlikely that any country can maintain a surplus on every category of trade or with every one of its trading partners. The crucial point is that for the past five years consecutively we have maintained a surplus, and that has not been done since the end of the war——

Mr. John Smith: Oil.

Mr. Tebbit: Yes, and oil is an exported item just like textiles.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Oil will run out but textiles will not.

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is very uncharacteristic of the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton). *[Interruption.]* Well, I think it is very uncharacteristic.

Mr. Wrigglesworth: Does the Secretary of State not agree that our international competitiveness is being undermined by unit labour costs in this country arising considerably faster than those of our major competitors overseas? What do the Government intend to do about that?

Mr. Tebbit: It is not a question of what the Government can do because we do not believe that it is right to run an incomes policy, because every one that has been run in the past has failed. I am interested to hear that the hon. Gentleman's party is now committed to introducing an incomes policy and to backing it with a measure to freeze wages. That will interest the electorate when it is put to it just as much as the proposals of the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) for an incomes policy will interest his colleagues in the trade union movement when they are put to them.

Multi-fibre Arrangement

18. **Mr. Madden** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement about the renewal of the multi-fibre arrangement.

Mr. Channon: The European Commission will have to express a view on behalf of member states in July in the GATT textiles committee discussion as to whether the multi-fibre arrangement should be extended, modified or discontinued. The Government are carefully considering what our policy should be.

Mr. Madden: Does the Minister appreciate that he will continue to get a rough ride from the House on this issue and that some of his hon. Friends will describe his replies as pathetic until he makes one simple statement, namely that the Government are committed to the renewal of the MFA? Will that statement be made within days, weeks or months?

Mr. Channon: It will be made at an appropriate time, and clearly it will be made before July, when the decision has to be taken.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: Will my hon. Friend bear in mind the last report of the Select Committee on Trade and Industry on Britain's export and import performance, and the importance attached in it to maintaining the MFA because of the practices of many of our competitors outside Europe, particularly in Indonesia, Singapore and Malaysia?

Mr. Channon: We shall naturally want to study what the Select Committee has said, and I shall take particular note of my hon. Friend's point.

Mr. Crowther: Will the Minster bear in mind that a large percentage—probably more than 50 per cent.—of all the textile and clothing imports to this country come from developed countries, not from the MFA countries? What are the Government proposing to do about assisting the textile industry to compete with those countries?

Mr. Channon: The hon. Gentleman has drawn attention to a very important point. It is perfectly true that a large number of imports of textiles come from developed countries that are in no way covered by the MFA. The House must address its mind to that problem, and not only to the problem relating to the MFA.

Mr. Bowen Wells: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the textile industry that is most successful is that which is not protected? Is it not able to export to Hong Kong and Japan textiles made in this country? It has benefited most, and so have the consumers benefited by that activity.

Mr. Channon: There was certainly an extremely successful exhibition, sale and sales promotion of British textiles and clothing in Hong Kong not long ago, so I agree with my hon. Friend on that point.

Industrial Development (Amble)

19. **Mr. Beith** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will bring forward new proposals to assist industrial development in Amble.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I have no plans for proposals specifically to assist industrial development in Amble, although companies there are, of course, able to take advantage of nationwide Government schemes of assistance for industry in exactly the same way as companies anywhere else, provided that they meet the relevant criteria.

Mr. Beith: As the Minister says, those forms of assistance are nationwide and available to all the competing areas with far lower levels of unemployment. Will he come and look for himself, and realise that his decision to exclude Amble from regional development status was a mistake and is something that he should rectify?

Mr. Lamont: We are not planning to review the map again so soon after we announced the decision. The hon. Gentleman has raised this matter on several occasions during Question Time and on Adjournment debates. He knows the reasons why we decided to exclude Amble. I am afraid that the matter cannot be reconsidered at the moment.

Television Licence Fee

3.31 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Leon Brittan): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I shall make a statement about the financing of the BBC.

In December 1981, the BBC was granted increases in the colour television licence fee to £46 and the black and white licence fee to £15, and was required to live within the income thus generated for the period ending 31 March this year. This it has done. The result of the way its expenditure was, as planned, phased over this period is that the cost of its service in the current year equates to a £51 licence fee. As the House knows, the corporation applied last year for an increase in the colour licence fee to £65 and in the black and white licence fee to £18, to last for a further three years.

That application has stimulated renewed discussion about the possibility and desirability of some or all of the BBC's services being financed through advertising or by means other than the licence fee. On the one hand, it is suggested that at least a proportion of the BBC's services are of a character that would not be materially affected if it was financed in whole or in part by advertising. On the other hand, it is said that the impact of advertising is bound to lead to a lowering of standards, and that if advertising were introduced in one area the pressure for it to be extended to all BBC services would be irresistible and damaging. In considering these issues, however, it is essential not just to consider the impact on the BBC of any change in its methods of financing; it is also necessary to take account of the impact of any such change on independent broadcasting, on other media supported by advertising revenue and on the Exchequer.

The issues raised are complex. In my view, they require more detailed, careful and, above all, comprehensive analysis than they have so far received before any conclusions can be reached. I am therefore appointing a committee to review all of these matters and I am glad to announce that Professor Alan Peacock, chief economic adviser to the Departments of Industry and Trade from 1973 to 1976, more recently vice-chancellor of the university of Buckingham, and now at Heriot Watt university, has agreed to chair it. I hope to announce the names of the other members of the committee before long.

The review will be required to assess the effects of the introduction of advertising or sponsorship on the BBC's home services either as an alternative or as a supplement to the income received through the licence fee and to identify a range of options with an indication of their advantages and disadvantages. One of the central questions for the committee is the possible impact the introduction of advertising would have on the character and quality of all broadcast services. It will also consider the scope for the BBC to obtain additional revenue from the consumer other than through the licence fee. I am circulating a copy of the full terms of reference in the *Official Report*, and copies are also available in the Vote Office.

I must stress that the appointment of the committee does not in any way imply that the Government have decided to make changes in the present arrangements, still less changes of any particular character. None the less, the appointment of the committee does mean that options for a change will have to be considered in the light of its report. I cannot, of course, commit the inquiry to a precise time scale, but I hope that the committee will have completed its work by the summer of next year, after which its conclusions will have to be carefully considered.

I have therefore decided that the present licence fee settlement should be for a period of two years, with the intention that any possible changes in the system of financing broadcasting should be considered in the light of the committee's report before the licence fee falls to be further renewed. But if decisions cannot be made in the light of the report within two years, or if it is decided that there should be no change to the system, this settlement will run for a third year with the licence fee continuing at the rates I am announcing today. The BBC should therefore plan its expenditure for the next three years on the basis that it must for that period live within the income equivalent to that generated by fees at the level announced today.

As to the level of the fee, my task has, as always, been to balance the interests of the licence fee payer with the need to ensure that the corporation's home services are adequately funded.

I start from the present cost of operating the BBC's services. The 1981 settlement provided the BBC with an income at the rate of £46 per colour licence until the end of March 1985. Taking account of inflation, it was clearly understood at the time that the effect of this was that the BBC would be spending at less than the rate of £46 per licence at the beginning and more at the end of the period. Currently, services are being provided at a cost of approximately £51 per colour licence.

There will no doubt be some inescapable cost increases over the next three years, and the corporation would like to improve and enhance its services in various ways. On the other hand, it is right that the BBC should strive for greater efficiency and economy, and there is a limit to what licence fee payers can reasonably be expected to afford.

In accordance with previous practice, I do not propose to give a detailed account of the way in which I have balanced these various factors and it will be for the corporation to decide how to use the money available to it. I believe, however, that the BBC could and must achieve greater productivity than it has done in the past or has so far planned for the future. The BBC already has a useful programme of activity reviews and has stressed its commitment to achieving value for money. But, in the light of the report from Peat Marwick Mitchell commissioned by the BBC with my agreement and subsequently published, I believe there is scope for the BBC to achieve greater efficiency through improved management procedures and strengthened management attitudes.

The BBC has already produced an action plan to implement all but two of the specific recommendations in the Peat Marwick report by the end of 1985-86, with three quarters of them being implemented within the next six months. The governors will also be calling for reports every six months not only on the implementation of these specific recommendations and the continuous programme of activity reviews but also on the management training programme and other steps designed to ensure that the change in emphasis in management style and approach sought by Peat is being achieved. [HON. MEMBERS: "What is the fee?"]

Taking all the various factors into account, I believe a settlement substantially below the level requested by the BBC should enable the corporation to maintain its present level and range of services. But the BBC's ability to enhance its services will depend very largely on the degree to which it achieves the improvements in efficiency that I have referred to. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): Get a move on.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that the Home Secretary is just coming to an important point.

Mr. Brittan: You have been prescient, Mr. Speaker, but characteristically so.

On that basis I have decided to increase the fee for a colour television licence—[HON. MEMBERS: "Ah!"]—from £46 to £58 and for a monochrome television licence from £15 to £18. I have laid the necessary regulations which bring the new fees into effect at midnight tonight.

I of course recognise that the licence fee represents a substantial sum for many people, particularly so when it is seen as an annual payment. There are now a number of schemes to enable those who wish to do so to spread the cost in advance over the year. In addition to the television savings stamp scheme, it is possible for people to pay towards their next licence by instalments through a direct debit from their bank account or by cash instalments over post office counters. Payments may also be made by credit card. But I am conscious that far too few people pay for their licences in any of these ways compared with the number who would find the licence fee easier to pay if they did so. I shall therefore be urgently examining with the BBC and the Post Office whether any improvements can be made in those arrangements and whether any new arrangements can be made to help people to pay the licence fee without greatly increasing costs of administration or imposing extra burdens on the taxpayer.

I appreciate that the review that I have announced will lead to a period of uncertainty, not only for the BBC but for the other media, in particular independent broadcasting. But our broadcasting system has inevitably had to develop over the years, and there is nothing new in the fact that it has to face the possibility of change now. What will not change is the Government's commitment to broadcasting services which achieve the highest standards, in quality, popularity and diversity of consumer choice.

Following are the terms of reference:

(i) To assess the effects of the introduction of advertising or sponsorship on the BBC's Home Services, either as an alternative or a supplement to the income now received through the licence fee, including
  (a) the financial and other consequences for the BBC, for independent television and independent local radio, for the prospective services of cable, independent national radio and direct broadcasting by satellite, for the press and the advertising industry and for the Exchequer; and
  (b) the impact on the range and quality of existing broadcasting services; and

(ii) to identify a range of options for the introduction, in varying amounts and on different conditions of advertising or sponsorship on some or all of the BBC's Home Services, with an assessment of the advantages and disadvantages of each option, and

(iii) to consider any proposals for securing income from the consumer other than through the licence fee.

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): The Home Secretary's statement lasted 11 minutes. It could have been limited to the three words, "I cop out."

The statement is another example of the shoddy and opportunistic approach — *[Interruption.]* — that is the biggest cheer so far today from the Conservative Benches — the shoddy and opportunistic approach which has characterised the Home Secretary's tenure of office. His reception from his own side shows that such an approach satisfies nobody.

The Government have announced an inquiry, but let me make it clear that Labour Members consider that it is the wrong inquiry. An inquiry into the finances of the BBC, and, indeed, of broadcasting in general, is one thing. An inquiry almost solely confined to the effects of the introduction of advertising and options for advertising is unacceptable. It is based on an assumption that advertising is the only alternative to the present system that is worth considering, and that is an assumption that Labour Members utterly reject.

Therefore, let me make it clear that, whatever the outcome of the inquiry, there are no circumstances in which a Labour Government will permit advertising on either BBC television or radio. Professor Peacock must take that into account in his activities——

Hon. Members: Why?

Mr. Robert Atkins (South Ribble): We do not take any notice of you; why should he?

Mr. Kaufman: Those Conservative Members who jeer will not be here when the licence fee next comes round for renewal.

Professor Peacock must take that into account in his activities as a firm statement of policy and principle.

Despite shortcomings which we could all illustrate, Britain has the highest standards of broadcasting and television in the world. Those standards are set, and they are maintained by ITV, and by the BBC as a public broadcasting organisation. It is that standard that prevails in Britain and to which ITV has to live up. Advertising would change the nature of the BBC permanently and irrevocably, and we reject it.

As the licence fee rises ever higher, it becomes ever more regressive. The lower the income, the bigger the burden. Schemes for staggering the burden over the year do not make it any less of a burden.

A Labour Government will consider how the licence cost might be taken into account in assessing the needs of those on supplementary benefit. A Labour Government will also phase out the licence so that no retirement pensioners will have to pay for a television licence. Television is one of the few pleasures available to many pensioners. We shall make sure that that pleasure is not taxed. I make that commitment clearly and firmly on behalf of the Labour party and the next Government of this country.

Mr. Brittan: The right hon. Gentleman began his observations by referring to what he called the Government's shoddy and opportunistic approach. His strictures might have carried a touch more weight if they were not applied to everyone and everything said on any occasion. Such observations have a ritualistic character that totally debases them.

The right hon. Gentleman says that it will be the wrong inquiry, relating only to advertising. He is mistaken. The inquiry does not relate only to advertising but will also

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consider sponsorship and any other proposals for securing income from the consumer other than through the licence fee, including such measures as subscription.

As for the right hon. Gentleman's ringing statement that in no circumstances will a Labour Government permit advertising, that commitment is not something that we need greatly fear. It is most unlikely ever to be put to the test.

The right hon. Gentleman referred to the highest standards of broadcasting. I do not disagree with that assessment. The question is not whether standards should be reduced but how they should be financed.

The right hon. Gentleman made another ringing statement, to the effect that pensioners would no longer have to pay the licence fee. The cost of implementing that pledge would be £325 million a year. If the right hon. Gentleman believes that that pledge has any credibility or will put him in the position in which it would be up to him to decide whether advertising should be taken, he gravely misjudges the judgment and good sense of the British people.

Mr. Mark Carlisle (Warrington, South): I totally reject the squalid electioneering of the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), and assure my right hon. Friend that I believe that, although many people will find the increase from £46 to £58 a considerable one, they will nevertheless still feel that the television licence represents some of the best value for money in this country.

While fully accepting the need for an inquiry into the future financing of the BBC, I should like to ask my right hon. and learned Friend two questions. First, can I take it that the inquiry will be allowed to consider the scope and role of the BBC today? Secondly, can I assume that the terms of reference of the inquiry will not prevent it from deciding that there should be no advertising on the BBC?

Mr. Brittan: Among many other things, the inquiry will investigate the impact of any changes on the BBC. That being so, I do not see how it can fail to look closely at what the BBC is doing today.

On the second point, I assure my right hon. and learned Friend that the inquiry would be perfectly free to come to the conclusion that he mentions.

Mr. Clement Freud (Cambridgeshire, North-East): We accept the rise in the colour television licence fee but greatly regret the more than index-linked rise in monochrome licences. It is right that the terms of reference for Professor Peacock's committee should be so wide-ranging, but will the Home Secretary assure the House that the members of the committee will reflect a wide range of expertise in public service broadcasting?

Mr. Brittan: My intention is that those who are appointed should have no preconceived notions and should be broadly based and qualified to bring judgment and wide experience to their task.

Sir Paul Bryan (Boothferry): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that, owing to the pace of change in all broadcasting, the report of any committee is almost out of date before it appears? For example, the accepted view on cable television, direct broadcasting by satellite, the fourth channel or the income of television companies one year ago would already be out of date now. We know nothing about what will happen on our screens with the invasion of satellites from other countries. We should need the wisdom of Solomon to decide on the future of the BBC's role in one committee. Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that we need a standing advisory committee on broadcasting of the highest calibre, to which the Government could turn for advice as required?

Mr. Brittan: I accept that the pace of change in the industry is extremely fast. Nevertheless, decisions have to be taken using the best information at the time. Now is the right time to set in hand an inquiry to consider the impact of financing changes, such as advertising on the BBC and its impact on other parts of the system. The inquiry might conclude that the impact is uncertain, for the reasons that my hon. Friend has given. That would be an important part of its deliberations. I see the force of what my hon. Friend says about a standing advisory committee but, for the moment at least, we should let Professor Peacock continue with his deliberations.

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): Does the Home Secretary accept that 13 million people in Britain do not regard £58 as disposable income? Does he accept that the committee has the right to consider Government subsidies? Does he also accept that the committee can examine sponsorship in sport and current advertising on the BBC such as the Canon league and the Milk Cup? Will he guarantee that the House will eventually have a vote on the matter, as otherwise my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) will be making policy without giving a ballot to the rest of us, rather like the Prime Minister does?

Mr. Brittan: I know of the hon. Gentleman's support for a remedy in the form of advertising. How he has that out with his right hon. Friend is beyond my ken. The committee is not being asked to consider Government subsidy, but sponsorship is included in its terms of reference.

Mr. Tim Brinton (Gravesham): Is my right hon. Friend aware that many people feel that he has got the answer right today? The temporary rise was necessary, but the inquiry was urgent. Will he add two things to the committee's term of reference — first, that it must consider what the licence fee should be used for in terms of services, if it continues to exist; secondly, that it should consider whether to look towards sponsored programmes but deny the BBC straight advertising as, if it advertises, there will be a question mark over whether we need a BBC?

Mr. Brittan: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I agree that examination of these matters is urgently needed and that any increase announced today should not prejudice the outcome of the examination. I hear what my hon. Friend says about sponsorship. That is within the inquiry's terms of reference. As to examining what the money is used for, in producing a range of options, which is what the inquiry will be asked to do, it is bound to consider the consequences in terms of what will be provided for any combination in that range.

Mr. Donald Stewart (Western Isles): Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman aware that the shortfall between the figure he has announced and that which the BBC

thought essential might postpone and even cancel the five-year plans for a broadcasting service in the Gaelic language? Does he recall that in the 1981 licence fee settlement there was an allocation which gave a great boost to Welsh language broadcasting? Is he now prepared to consider a similar recommendation in respect of Scotland?

Mr. Brittan: I believe that what I have announced will enable the BBC to carry on with its current plans. If it wishes to make any advances or changes, that is a matter for the corporation. I have said that the extent to which it would be able to do that will depend on the extent to which it is able to keep its costs down and to improve productivity. I have clearly indicated why I think there is scope for both.

Mr. John Stokes (Halesowen and Stourbridge): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that some Conservative Members would be more enthusiastic about an increase in the licence fee if the BBC generally showed a more patriotic stance and, for instance, did not denigrate our national heroes?

Mr. Brittan: I am aware that that is a sentiment which others, as well as my hon. Friend, share.

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): Will the Home Secretary try again to justify this inquisition into the future of public service broadcasting? Will he give the House a categoric assurance that, by the appointment of this inquisition, he is not implying that he expects it to come to his foregone conclusion that there should be advertising at least on BBC1 and BBC2?

Mr. Brittan: There is no question of it coming to my foregone conclusion, because I do not have one.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): Will my right hon. and learned Friend accept that the figure announced today will be seen as a victory for the BBC? Will he make it quite clear to the BBC that, unless it economises in the way that is necessary and accepts some limited advertising, it cannot expect such increases in the fee? It should also be encouraged to continue with its local radio services, which are at least successful.

Mr. Brittan: When yesterday I told the BBC what I would announce today, the demeanour of those emerging from my room was not that of victors.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton (Fife, Central): Does not the Home Secretary agree that the BBC is probably the best television and radio service in the world and that any attempt to change its method of financing would jeopardise that? Does he not understand that many Labour Members have great suspicion of the enormous vested interest in advertising firms among Conservative Members? More than 50 Conservative Members have private vested interests in advertising agencies. Are not these the people, along with the Prime Minister, who are urging the increased financing of the BBC by advertising, and would that not be the death knell of the BBC's present quality?

Mr. Brittan: The difference between the hon. Gentleman and Conservative Members is that he seems to be interested in the personalities——

Mr. Hamilton: Yes, we are.

Mr. Brittan: —and we are concerned about the arguments. If what the hon. Gentleman says is right, he will have ample opportunity to make that case before the Peacock committee.

Sir Anthony Kershaw (Stroud): While accepting that £325 million is too much for the rest of us to pay so that retirement pensioners like myself can have television licences, will the committee have scope to examine ways in which the extra cost can be mitigated for retirement pensioners living alone?

Mr. Brittan: No, that will not be within the committee's terms of reference.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): May I express the hope that the Home Secretary will not listen to talk of patriotism and the BBC—[HON. MEMBERS: "Why not?"]—because the most patriotic broadcasting and television system in the world comes from Moscow and we do not want that kind of thing here. Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman agree that, whatever happens about finance, there must be no Government or political control of any kind?

Mr. Brittan: I agree that the BBC should be independent, and I seek no political influence whatever over it. I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman accepts that broadcasting is moving as fast as my hon. Friend the Member for Boothferry (Sir P. Bryan) has suggested and that it is irrational to approach the matter with a closed mind, as some people have done. It is for exactly that reason that the committee is being appointed. To say, as the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) did, that in no circumstances would advertising be contemplated by the Labour party is to approach the matter with a closed mind.

Sir Dudley Smith (Warwick and Leamington): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that it is essential for the committee to look into the vast amount of free advertising on BBC radio and television day by day, which has reached almost scandalous proportions?

Mr. Brittan: Yes, I do agree.

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman agree that there are few more unpleasant, unpatriotic or obscene images in society today than that of Conservative Members slavering at the chance of picking over the bones of a dismembered great national institution?

Has not the committee been set up specifically to follow the Prime Minister's dictum that advertising should now be introduced? Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman ensure that the Committee is not as loaded as its terms of reference? Will he bear in mind that there are other ways to deal with the matter besides advertising, such as taxation and the measures suggested by my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman)?

Above all——

Mr. Speaker: Briefly, please.

Mr. Buchan: Above all, will the right hon. and learned Gentleman bear in mind that advertising is a concealed tax which hurts the poor more than the rich?

Mr. Brittan: I do not favour financing the BBC out of taxation, for the reasons advanced by the right hon.

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Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees), himself a former Home Secretary. I cannot believe that that is the way to preserve the independence of the BBC.

As for the other matters, the hon. Gentleman's suggestions about the motives behind the setting up of the committee are wholly unfounded. It is astonishing that a party which regards itself as progressive in its thinking should have such a completely closed mind on an issue.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton: We do not. We just know what you are up to.

Mr. Brittan: To refuse even to recognise the possibility of change in a constantly changing situation is an extraordinary attitude.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that this has been a week of strange birds, with cuckoos, grouse and now a peacock, and that the last is the most unnecessary of all? Does he agree that most Governments set up commissions when they know what they should do but do not want to make a public statement about it? Is it not time that we accepted that "Blankety-Blank", "The Eastenders" and sport will not be depraved by advertising? Should we not now have some limited advertising to see how we go instead of giving way to the BBC and offering it a £58 licence fee? Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that many of us would be inclined to congratulate the governor and director general of the BBC on their great victory in this respect?

Mr. Brittan: Governments who do not want to make decisions do not appoint committees with such a short time scale. My hon. Friend's view contrasts with the almost unanimous view of the Opposition that the whole thing was a plot. In fact, it is neither a means of avoiding a decision nor a way of imposing a decision. It is a way of bringing independent expertise to bear on a problem which has implications not just for the BBC but for the independent television sector and broadcasting generally, for the newspapers and for a wide variety of other interests. If my hon. Friend makes that comparison, he will find that other interests do not necessarily take the view to which he has sought to give currency.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): Having asked everyone to keep an open mind about financing, will the Minister himself keep an open mind on the question of pensioners living alone, especially those on supplementary benefit?

Secondly, although we may not wish the BBC to become a patriotic body, we expect it to be neutral, especially when dealing with terrorism. Does the Home Secretary appreciate that many taxpayers and licence fee payers take strong exception to paying a licence fee which is often used to portray terrorism? Does he agree that we should follow the example of Radio Telefis Eireann and keep terrorists off the screen?

Mr. Brittan: I understand and respect the hon. Gentleman's deeply held views about terrorism, which I think we all share.

The cost of a concession for single pensioners living alone would be about £125 million. That is a very considerable sum to add to the Exchequer.

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): I welcome the Peacock review as an eminently sensible way to proceed, but will my right hon. and learned Friend recognise that at a little more than £1 per week the licence fee is still good value and does not greatly exceed the usual cost of subscribing to a newspaper for the same period? Does he agree, however, that a Gresham's law of broadcasting has been evident since 1954—that the bad drives out the good?

Mr. Brittan: Those matters are at the very centre of the Peacock inquiry and I do not wish to prejudge that, but I know that what my hon. Friend has said represents a standard opinion.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): Has not the right hon. and learned Gentleman already closed his own mind to the plight of the pensioners? Will he consider the numerous 10-minute Bills that we have had on this, in consultation with old people's associations which have suggested methods of providing concessions for pensioners? Does he agree that it is brass neck for him to talk about the millions that this would cost, when he is a member of a Government who have just spent billions of pounds trying to destroy the National Union of Mineworkers and the trade union movement?

Mr. Brittan: I do not think that that comparison assists us. It is worth pointing out, however, that the cost of the television licence is a component in the retail price index on the basis of which increases in pensions are assessed.

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournmouth, West): Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that more than 30 per cent. of my constituents who are pensioners will welcome the Peacock inquiry but will be appalled at the 26 per cent. increase in the licence fee? Will he accept that many of them have legitimate reservations about the need for the BBC to expand its services so greatly in local radio and in the provision of breakfast television, which many of them regard as totally unnecessary? Does my right hon. and learned Friend feel that economies could be made in those areas?

Mr. Brittan: It is only fair to point out that the cost of breakfast television is £8 million per year, or just 1 per cent. of the BBC's total income. Traditionally, these have been regarded as matters for the BBC and not for the Government. It is precisely because maintaining the BBC's financing in the way that has previously obtained has led to increases that many people find it difficult to bear that we are asking the Peacock committee to examine alternative methods of financing the BBC, either in whole or in part. Until the committee has completed its work, however, it would be unrealistic to assume that we could proceed other than in a balanced way by applying the system that has existed so far.

Mr. John Ryman (Blyth Valley): The right hon. and learned Gentleman has mentioned he cost of concessionary television licences for old people. Does he recognise and deplore the anomaly in the law which compels old people to pay the full cost of the television licence unless they live in certain types of accommodation with a warden? Does he agree that that is utterly unfair because it means that some pay the full licence fee while others pay only a nominal fee? Is it not also an encouragement for all sorts of schemes with titular wardens to avoid paying the full fee? Will the Home Secretary do something about that?

Also——

Mr. Speaker: Order. One question is enough.

Mr. Ryman *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is unfair.

Mr. Ryman *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member has asked one question and that is enough.

Mr. Brittan: I accept that the hon. Gentleman has pointed out an anomaly, and I would not seek to say that the present system is exactly right. We are constantly considering that, but it is not easy to find a solution.

Mr. Albert McQuarrie (Banff and Buchan): My right hon. and learned Friend will not be surprised that his statement will be greeted with great dismay in Scotland at a time when people are facing massive rate increases because of revaluation. A 26 per cent. increase for the BBC, which is completely inefficient, cannot be justified. Why does he not dig his heels in and give the BBC only an increase in line with inflation, instead of 56 per cent.?

Mr. Brittan: When my hon. Friend talks about a 26 per cent. increase, he does not take adequate account of the time scale. The last increase was in December 1981, which must be taken into account. There may well be a case for changing the system, which is what the Peacock committee will look into, but we cannot prejudge the issue by changing it by default in advance.

Mr. John Cartwright (Woolwich): Does the Home Secretary accept that continued dependence on a flat rate poll tax system, such as the licence fee, inevitably involves hardship and some injustice, and that it is therefore perfectly sensible to have a serious examination of alternative sources of finance, including advertising? Does he also accept that the review would carry greater conviction if he had set up the inquiry last year when the problem first arose, and if he had established a tighter time scale than the two or three years implied in his statement.

Mr. Brittan: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman welcomes the inquiry. The time scale must be sufficient to allow proper examination of these matters. The impact on areas outside the BBC requires proper consideration. I do not think that the time scale that I have envisaged, but which I cannot impose, is unreasonable. The question whether to set up the inquiry last year or this year is not a fruitful area of controversy. The point is that it has been set up now.

Mr. Robert Key (Salisbury): Will my right hon. and learned Friend tell us whether the committee will be asked to look at the financing of community radio, bearing in mind the fact that some areas of the country have neither local independent radio nor local BBC radio, and that there is great uncertainty surrounding the future of community radio?

Mr. Brittan: Community radio does not exist at present. I have made a positive announcement of its introduction. I hope to report about the precise financing and regulation of community radio soon, but I am not yet in a position to do so.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is the Home Secretary aware that he has announced a bailing-out system, which flies in the face of monetarism, for the BBC, which consists of uneconomic units of production without reserves, unlike the philosophy that the Government applied to allegedly uneconomic pits? He has brought a bloke from the cloisters to organise a committee which will last until after the general election. Why did he not appoint Lord Bridge for the job — he deals with things extremely swiftly? If the Home Secretary wants to know where money for pensioners can come from, he could cancel Trident. There is plenty of money there. Then the pensioners would be on the same basis as all hon. Members who manage to see television without paying a licence fee.

Mr. Brittan: I do not believe that the licence fee and Trident are viable alternatives.

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): My right hon. and learned Friend referred to the scope for greater efficiency, but that does appear to be included in the inquiry. Does he accept that many teams of the BBC are grossly over-inflated, that there should be room for greater efficiency, and that an increase to £58 will bring great hardship to many elderly people and to the lower paid in regions such as my own?

Mr. Brittan: The fact that I am greatly worried about efficiency in the BBC is reflected in my suggestion that the Peat Marwick review should take place, my statements this afternoon about the follow up, which is of great importance, and the measures taken to deal with the specific recommendations and its more general criticisms of the Peat Marwick review. The six-monthly review of those matters is of great importance. Those matters need to be examined, and the machinery is in hand for doing so.

Mr. Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield): Is the Home Secretary aware that our public broadcasting system is the envy of people throughout the world? Is he further aware that many people are suspicious, because of the ideological drift of the Conservative party, that this is yet another committee which will attempt to undermine public broadcasting? The Government have already started with local radio and are now moving into national radio and television. Are we to be assured that the chairman, Professor Peacock, is an independent chairman, or is he another member of the Conservative party who is as Right-wing as can be found?

Mr. Brittan: The hon. Gentleman may have overlooked the fact that Professor Peacock was an adviser to the Labour Government from 1974 to 1976, although he was appointed from 1973. There is not much to be gained from such statements. Opposition Members must get their heads together and decide whether their case is that this is a subtle plot to force advertising on the BBC, or a way of seeing the problem through until after the general election. It is neither. Curiously enough this is what it says it is — an independent inquiry into the methods of financing the BBC, without any foregone conclusions attached.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that many hon. Members will be disappointed that he has been unable in the past six months to make a statement of this nature to enable us to debate the subject fully and properly before the announcement of the increase? Will he bear in mind that one of the bodies which should make representations to the

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Peacock committee is this House? Will he encourage the Leader of the House to set at least two days aside for a debate in the Chamber to allow all hon. Members to speak on the subject?

Mr. Brittan: There will be two views about whether that is the best way of giving evidence to the Committee. I will draw my hon. Friend's remarks to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House.

Mr. Ian Wrigglesworth (Stockton, South): Will the Home Secretary reconsider his reply to the question about the anomaly that some pensioners pay only 5p for a licence and others the vast new sum that he announced today? It is totally discredited and objected to by people right across the political spectrum. It is no good the Government saying that they are trying to look into that. Will the Home Secretary not submit the matter to the inquiry but do something about it long before the inquiry reports?

Mr. Brittan: I will not submit it to the inquiry, as the hon. Gentleman suggests. We are considering the matter. The right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South will agree that it is fair to say that successive Governments have examined the anomaly, and that the task of finding a solution which would not either cost vast sums to the Exchequer or deprive people of something to which they are accustomed is not easy.

Mr. John Watts (Slough): While I welcome my right hon. and learned Friend's decision to set up a committee of inquiry, can he justify the excessive level of the increase that he has announced, which, by my calculation, is 14 per cent. above the current cost of £51, to which he referred in his statement, and far ahead of any anticipated increase in inflation for the two years over which the fee is intended to run?

Mr. Brittan: My hon. Friend must bear in mind that the figure may have to stand for three years. He should also take into account that we must consider both the prospective rates of inflation and costs. Costs are affected by what the BBC has to pay. The market leader in this is not the BBC, but ITV. BBC costs are 30 per cent. below those of ITV.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must bear in mind the fact that we are operating under a timetable today. Therefore, I may be unable to call every hon. Member who wishes to speak. Nevertheless, I shall bear in mind those whom I do not call for any debate that may take place. I shall allow questions to continue for another five minutes.

Mr. Francis Maude (Warwickshire, North): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that the £6 a year increase that he has announced is almost as much as the BBC asked for to cover three years, and that that places him under very little pressure to implement the improvements in efficiency which the Peat Marwick Mitchell report identified? Does he accept that it is crucial that the result of the inquiry leads the way to breaching the principle of inviolability to which the BBC is so attached? Is it not crucial to introduce another form of finance so that the outdated licence fee system can be scrapped as soon as possible?

Mr. Brittan: The last point is a matter for the inquiry. On the first point, the BBC asked for £65.

Mr. David Maclean (Penrith and The Border): Although my right hon. and learned Friend is to be congratulated on going some way down the road which my hon. Friends have been urging, does he accept that many Conservative Members believe that the increase, which is three times above the level of expected inflation, cannot be justified and that the time scale for the inquiry is too lax? Furthermore, when we see the paranoia in the Opposition about having an inquiry into the dark corridors of the BBC and when advertising is mentioned, does he not smell a rat? Does it not make him think that Conservative Members may be right?

Mr. Brittan: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend about the paranoia of the Opposition, and I made clear my view on that in answer to questions from some Labour Members. As this matter will have implications for the rest of communications, not just for the BBC, I do not believe that the time scale is anything other than tight. As to costs, in answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Warwickshire, North (Mr. Maude), I made it clear why a straightforward comparison with inflation is misleading, because the BBC is, in many respects, a price taker, not a price maker. Anyone who knows the relationship between BBC costs and ITV costs will confirm that that is so.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): In view of the importance of the subject to millions of people, and taking into account the obvious anxiety of hon. Members on both sides of the House, does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that the time has come when a decision of such importance should be made by the House? Many of us believe that we do not need yet another committee to tell us that the BBC is thoroughly overstretched in what it is trying to do, and also overmanned.

Mr. Brittan: I do not believe that the Committee will be concerned only with the point made by my hon. Friend. It will be concerned with the impact of specific changes, the nature of which may be stated in general terms by some of my hon. Friends, but which have not been outlined specifically. Nor have we studied the impact of what hon. Members have suggested on the independent television sector, on newspapers and on the Exchequer. There is a need for an inquiry, and I defend its setting up.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that the licence fee appears on the retail price index and is taken into consideration for supplementary benefit? Will he ask the Peacock committee to consider a two-tier licence fee, with wage earners paying the normal fee, and pensioners, who are currently ineligible for the 5p licence, and the unemployed paying a substantially reduced fee?

Mr. Brittan: I confirm that the RPI includes the cost of the licence fee and that the increase in the licence fee will be reflected in all benefits that are related to the RPI. The Peacock committee will take a wide range of evidence and will be able to consider all the matters which my hon. Friend raised.

Mr. Robert B. Jones (Hertfordshire, West): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that, by granting a licence fee increase above the rate of inflation, he is encouraging the BBC to become less efficient instead of

more? Does he accept that his point about the IBA is invalid? Many Conservative Members believe that, if advertising appeared on the BBC, it would encourage the IBA to become more efficient.

Mr. Brittan: My hon. Friend's latter point is of the greatest importance. However, he must remember that that desirable process cannot take place under the present system. At present, the BBC depends, to some extent, on what the ITV companies can pay. The position might be different if we introduced changes such as those suggested by my hon. Friend and others, but we do not have that system yet.

Mr. John Townend (Bridlington): Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that many of my constituents would consider an increase of 26 per cent. as excessive? When many organisations, private and public, have had to keep down increases in costs to the level of inflation, why could not the BBC's costs have been kept down to that level since 1981? Why were manning levels excluded from the investigation by Peat Marwick Mitchell?

Mr. Brittan: The investigation by Peat Marwick Mitchell disclosed many matters. There were 30 specific recommendations, apart from the general ones. Peat Marwick Mitchell was in no way inhibited, and, in the part of my statement which was perhaps less audible, I gave a clear commitment on my part and on the part of the BBC that what Peat Marwick Mitchell recommended should be pursued vigorously.

Mr. Christopher Chope (Southampton, Itchen): Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that the most offensive aspect of the increase is the element of compulsion? Will the Peacock committee consider the idea of people who wish to opt out of receiving the BBC television signal being able to have their television sets so adapted?

Mr. Brittan: That is certainly something which the Peacock committee will be able to consider.

Mr. Robert Atkins (South Ribble): How do I explain the anomaly to my constituents who live in council-owned sheltered accommodation next to private sheltered accommodation, that those who live in the council accommodation pay only 5p for their licence fees, whereas those who live in the private accommodation, which is identical, must pay the full rate? Will my right hon. and learned Friend ask the committee to consider that ridiculous anomaly?

Mr. Brittan: That is not a matter for the Committee, but I am acutely conscious of the anomaly. In answer to previous questions, I explained the problems that we have in dealing with it.

Mr. Peter Griffiths (Portsmouth, North): Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that, although the inquiry will be widely welcomed, there is no evidence in the actions or statements by the BBC that it will ever be willing to seek economies or alternative sources of finance? Whatever the result of the inquiry, change will have to be imposed by his Department.

Mr. Brittan: When the committee reports we shall have to consider its conclusions and the alternatives that it proposes. The decision about what to do at that point will not be made by the BBC.

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend on appointing Professor Peacock to chair the inquiry. He is a distinguished man, in so far as he taught me economics at York university. I lament the fact that my right hon. and learned Friend will probably be surrounded by those who will not be anxious to publish the results of an inquiry which may be in line with what Conservative Members look forward to.

Mr. Brittan: My hon. Friend will have observed during his studies that Professor Peacock is not a man who is readily persuaded to take a view different from the one that he holds.

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. There is a general welcome in the House for the recent development of your allowing extended questions on statements so that the House can have almost a mini-debate. In the past, such important matters were sometimes dealt with by written answer, with no opportunity for debate. We must thank you for that, Mr. Speaker. However, would you consider another innovation? When we have such statements, which relate not only to political matters but to matters of interest, should not hon. Members preface their questions with a statement of interest?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman knows that there is a Register of Members' Interests. What he suggests will not be necessary.

Provision for Young People in Rural Areas

4.29 pm

Mr. David Penhaligon (Truro): I beg to move,

That leave to given to bring in a Bill to make further provision for facilities and amenities and to extend the rights of young people living in rural and remote parts of the United Kingdom.

The intention of the Bill is to help our younger constituents who live in rural areas. We live in an overwhelmingly urban country, with an urban-dominated Parliament and Civil Service. Therefore, it is not surprising that many of our laws and practices tend to reflect that fact. The solution to rural problems simply cannot be to make our rural areas urban. Therefore, the intention of my Bill is to outline a number of ways in which some of the greater disadvantages can be alleviated. The sectors to be covered are employment, transport and housing.

The real solution to rural employment problems is simply more jobs, because, sadly, unemployment is not just an urban problem. The statistics for high levels of unemployment in the travel-to-work areas show that five out of six of the worst areas can be described as more rural than urban. They are Newquay, Cardigan, Irvine, Sutherland, Skegness and Whitby. Some of the problems experienced by those in the remoter parts are unique, and Parliament could do something to alleviate them if it were to apply its mind.

For example, if a jobcentre is 10 miles from one's home, it is simply impossible to visit it every day because of the obvious problem of the cost of transport. Therefore, is it not possible for a system to be developed in rural areas whereby sub-post offices are equipped with telex machines so that information on available jobs is brought much closer to the people seeking employment?

For example, it is clear that the success or failure of the youth training scheme will depend to a large extent on quality monitoring. In urban areas, 20 trainees may work together in one factory, and that means that there is no problem in monitoring. However, in rural areas, 20 trainees may be on 20 different sites, and those sites may be miles apart. Already, YTS managers are saying that they do not have the resources satisfactorily to monitor the quality of the courses.

For those on the YTS in rural areas, travel costs of over £3 are repayable. However, even £3 represents a substantial proportion of the small allowance, and it is worth remembering that the trainees in these rural areas are usually in workplaces that do not have a subsidised work canteen in which they can eat.

Many problems revolve around transport, and even where it is available full fares apply after the age of 14. We are moving towards a point at which most will be in either full-time education or in Government-sponsored training schemes until they are 18. Therefore, this imposition seems monstrously unfair and inappropriate to the times in which we live. Very often, the effect is to keep the young from any any social life revolving round their work or education.

Recently, the Government imposed a flat rate assistance for travelling costs for those attending university. This is a typically urban solution to the problem. The nearest university to my home is 90 miles away, the second 150 and the third 180. I have not checked the matter in great detail, but I have reason to believe that Londoners may have a slightly better choice than that.

No real harm would be done if we allowed people under the age of 17 to take professional driving lessons. The available car may be only the family's spare Mini, and not everyone can afford a car, but in rural areas it is amazing how many do. Small concessions such as this would help the affected communities. The new Transport Bill may change the whole basis of transport in rural areas, but that is not the matter for this Bill.

In housing, in percentage terms the position is worse in rural areas than in urban. There is no such thing as a hard-to-let council house. The young marrieds have no chance and the single do not even ask. Without doubt, a major cause of this is the phenomenon of second homes. In my county, in a dozen parishes over a fifth of all housing is used in this way. We are aware that there are parts of Wales where the statistics are substantially worse.

This phenomenon is sustained by letting these properties by the week, fortnight or month during the summer—what are called summer lets in my area. This is a trade and business, and there is nothing wrong with that, but I do not understand why the Government will not make it subject to change of use planning consent. Such controls would put back into local hands some control over housing for the community. Uncontrolled, it is destroying communities and annihilating the hopes of the young who want to live in their district. Intolerable is the politest word that I can find to describe the housing prospects of the young in many rural areas.

I seek the support of the House for this Bill and the ideas contained in it.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. David Penhaligon, Mr. David Alton, Mr. Paddy Ashdown, Mr. A. J. Beith, Mr. Alex Carlile, Mr. Charles Kennedy, Mr. Michael Meadowcroft, Mr. Stephen Ross, Mr. David Steel, Mr. James Wallace and Mr. Ian Wrigglesworth.

PROVISION FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN RURAL AREAS

Mr. David Penhaligon accordingly presented a Bill to make further provision for facilities and amenities and to extend the rights of young people living in rural and remote parts of the United Kingdom: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 17 May and to be printed. [Bill 114.]

LOCAL GOVERNMENT BILL (ALLOCATION OF TIME)

Ordered,

That the Reports [12 March and 26 March] of the Business Committee be now considered.—*[Mr. Archie Hamilton,]*

Reports considered accordingly.

Question, That this House doth agree with the Committee in their resolutions, *put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 45 (Business Committee) and agreed to.*

Following is the report of the Business Committee [12 March]:

That—

(1) the order in which proceedings on Consideration are taken shall be new Clauses, Amendments to Clauses Nos. 1 to 4, Schedule No. 1, Clause No. 5, Schedule No. 2, Clause No. 6, Schedule No. 3, Clause No. 7, Schedules Nos. 4 and 5, Clause No. 8, Schedule No. 6, Clauses Nos. 9 and 10, Schedule No. 7, Clauses Nos. 11 to 15, Schedule No. 8, Clauses Nos. 16 to 18, Schedule No. 9, Clauses Nos. 19 to 28, Schedule No. 10, Clauses Nos. 29 to 36, Schedule No. 11, Clauses Nos. 37 and 38, Schedule No. 12, Clauses Nos. 39 to 55, Schedule No. 13, Clauses Nos. 56 to 82, Schedule No. 14, Clauses Nos. 83 to 89, Schedule No. 15, Clauses Nos. 90 to 97, Schedule No. 16 and Clauses Nos. 98 to 101, new Schedules and Amendments to Schedule No. 17;

(2) the allotted days which under the order [11th February] are given to the proceedings on Consideration and Third Reading shall be allotted in the manner shown in the Table set out below and, subject to the provisions of that Order, each part of the proceedings shall be brought to a conclusion at the time specified in the third column of that Table.

TABLE

Allotted day	*Proceedings*	*Time for conclusion of proceedings*
First day	New Clauses	10 pm
	Amendments up to the end of Schedule No. 5	Midnight
Second day	Amendments up to the end of Part III	6 pm
	Amendments up to the end of Part V	7 pm
	Remaining proceedings on Consideration	8.30 pm
	Third Reading	10 pm

Following is the report of the Business Committee [26 March]:

That the Resolution of the Committee reported to the House on 12th March be varied by substituting the following provisions for those in the Table at the end of that Resolution:—

TABLE

Allotted day	*Proceedings*	*Time for conclusion of proceedings*
First day	New Clauses	7.30 pm
	Amendments up to the end of subsection (2) of Clause 1	10.30 pm
	Amendments up to the end of Schedule 5	Midnight
Second day	Amendments up to the end of Part III	6 pm
	Amendments up to the end of Part V	7.30 pm
	Remaining Proceedings on Consideration	9 pm
	Third Reading	10 pm

Orders of the Day

Local Government Bill

[1ST ALLOTTED DAY]

Not amended in the Committee and as amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

New Clause 10

CONTROL OF LIABILITIES AFFECTING SUCCESSOR AUTHORITIES

'(1) This section applies to any agreement or arrangements entered into after 21st March 1985 under which the Greater London Council or a metropolitan county council assumes liabilities not falling to be wholly discharged before the abolition date other than—

(a) an agreement or arrangements requiring the consent of the Secretary of State under section 89 above;

(b) any transaction requiring his consent under sections 7 to 9 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act 1984 or which would require his consent under section 9 of that Act if the consideration exceeded the limit applying under that section;

(c) a contract of employment or a contract for the borrowing of money by the council.

(2) Except with the consent of the Secretary of State neither the Greater London Council nor a metropolitan county council shall after the passing of this Act enter into any agreement or arrangements to which this section applies; and if at any time since 21st March 1985 and before the passing of this Act any of those councils has done anything that would have been a contravention of the foregoing provisions if they had then been in force the same consequences shall follow as if those provisions had been contravened by that council.

(3) Any consent for the purposes of subsection (2) above may be given either in respect of any particular agreement or arrangements or in respect of agreements or arrangements of any class or description and either unconditionally or subject to conditions.

(4) No agreement or arrangements entered into in contravention of this section shall be enforceable against a successor authority.

(5) If, on an application made by a constituent council, by a local government elector for the area of a constituent council or by a successor authority other than a constituent council, it appears to the High Court that the Greater London Council or a metropolitan county council has entered into any agreement or arrangements in contravention of this section, the court may order any person responsible for authorising the agreement or arrangements who is, or was at the time of the conduct in question, a member of the council—

(a) to be disqualified for being a member of that council and to be disqualified for a specified period for being a member of any other local authority; and

(b) to pay to that council (or, in the case of an order made on or after the abolition date, to the appropriate residuary body) a sum not exceeding the cost of discharging such of the liabilities assumed by the council under the agreement or arrangements as have not been, or in the opinion of the court are likely not to be, discharged by that council before that date.

(6) No order shall be made in respect of any person under subsection (5) above if the court is satisfied that he acted in the belief that the agreement or arrangements had the consent of the Secretary of State and that any conditions attached to the consent had been complied with.

(7) In paragraph *(a)* of subsection (5) above "local authority" includes the Common Council and the Council of the Isles of Scilly; and in sections 80(1)*(e)*, 86*(b)* and 87(1)*(d)* of the principal Act references to Part III of the Local Government Finance Act 1982 shall include references to that subsection.

(8) In this section "a constituent council" means—

[Mr. David Penhaligon]

(a) in relation to the Greater London Council, a London borough council or the Common Council;

(b) in relation to a metropolitan county council, the council of any district comprised in the county;

and "a successor authority" means, in relation to the Greater London Council or a metropolitan county council, any body or person who by virtue of any provision made by or under this Act will succeed or has succeeded to any liability of that council.

(9) Any statement by or on behalf of the Secretary of State before the passing of this Act that he will after the passing of this Act give his consent, or give his consent subject to specified conditions, in respect of any agreement or arrangements to which this section applies shall be treated for the purposes of subsection (2) above as a consent, or a consent subject to those conditions, given under this section.'.—*[Mr. Kenneth Baker.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

4.35 pm

The Minister for Local Government (Mr. Kenneth Baker): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Speaker: It will be convenient to discuss at the same time the following: Amendment (a) to new clause 10, in subsection (1), leave out '21st March 1985' and insert

'the passing of this Act'.

Amendment (b) to new clause 10, in subsection (2), leave out from 'applies' to the end of line 19.

Amendment (c) to new clause 10, leave out subsection (9).

New clause 9—*Control of disposals and contracts*—

'(1) Any disposal made after 21st March 1985 in contravention of section 8 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act 1984 shall be void; and section 128(2) of the principal Act (protection of purchases etc.) shall not have effect in relation to the consent required by the said section 8 for any disposal made after that date.

(2) As respects any contract entered into after that date subsection (1) of section 9 of the said Act of 1984 shall have effect with the substitution for the reference to £250,000 and for each reference to £100,000 of a reference to £15,000.

(3) No contract entered into after the said 21st March in contravention of the said section 9 shall be enforceable against a successor authority; and accordingly subsection (5) of that section shall not apply to any contract entered into after that date.

(4) An application under section 10 of the said Act of 1984 (disqualification for membership of local authority) may be made by a successor authority and in that section "local authority" shall include the Common Council and the Council of the Isles of Scilly.

(5) Where by reason of a disposal or contract made after the said 21st March in contravention of section 8 or 9 of the said Act of 1984 the High Court has power to make an order under section 10 of that Act in respect of any person it shall also have power to order him to pay to the Greater London Council or, as the case may be, to the metropolitan county council (or, in the case of an order made on or after the abolition date, to the appropriate residuary body) a sum not exceeding—

(a) in the case of a disposal in contravention of section 8, an amount equal to the amount or value of the consideration for the disposal or, if there is no consideration or it is less than the market value of what is disposed of, an amount equal to that market value;

(b) in the case of a contract in contravention of section 9, an amount equal to the amount or value of the consideration in respect of the matters by virtue of which the contract is subject to that section.

(6) No order shall be made in respect of any person under the said section 10 or subsection (5) above if the court is satisfied that he acted in the belief that the disposal or contract had the consent of the Secretary of State and that any conditions attached to the consent had been complied with.

(7) In this section "successor authority" has the same meaning as in section *(Control of liabilities affecting successor authorities)* above.'.

Amendment (a) to new clause 9, in subsection (1), leave out '21st March 1985' and insert

'the passing of this Act'.

Amendment (b) to new clause 9, in subsection (3), leave out '21st March 1985' and insert

'the passing of this Act'.

Amendment (c) to new clause 9, in subsection (5), leave out '21st March 1985' and insert

'the passing of this Act'.

Mr. Baker: It is with some regret, but also with determination, that I have to seek the agreement today of the House to the introduction of these new temporary controls over the activities of the GLC and the metropolitan county councils.

Before I explain the nature of the limited new steps that we are proposing to take, I should point out that it might be helpful if hon. Members could bear in mind one or two key features of the situation with which we are now faced.

First, it has been an established principle of all reorganisations of local government hitherto that continuity of activity should be preserved, and the Bill perpetuates that tradition by ensuring that virtually all rights and liabilities of the outgoing authorities will pass to successor authorities. The cardinal principle of our proposals is that decisions as to whether to perpetuate the policies of the GLC and the metropolitan counties will then be taken not by the GLC and the metropolitan counties but by the boroughs and districts at the genuinely local level. Therefore, these measures, together with those that are already in the Bill, will avoid any pre-emption in policy by the metropolitan counties and the GLC.

The new factors in the current reorganisation are not merely the refusal of the outgoing authorities to accept, even at this advanced stage, that abolition will take place, but, beyond that, their expressed determination to frustrate the objective. I see the chairman-elect of the GLC, the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), nodding his approval of that course of action. It is to be hoped, in the interests of ratepayers and those whom they purport to serve, that reason will prevail, but the threats of action which are designed to frustrate, even after Royal Assent, the will of Parliament continue unabated. Such threats are not restricted to abolition, but that is not what we are debating today.

Secondly, I must remind hon. Members that when the Government's proposals in the paving Bill to establish interim councils, which would have secured the smooth transition which we are seeking, were rejected in another place, their Lordships nevertheless accepted that in consequence of their rejection certain broad precautionary controls would be desirable. Those broad precautionary controls were over land disposals, major contracts and, in the last year of the council's office, the section 137 "2p rate" expenditure. However, even in the few days between the announcement of those provisions in 1984 and Royal Assent it became clear that the controls might not be sufficient. The unprecedented avalanche of business undertaken in county hall and elsewhere in that period demonstrated starkly the cynicism and opportunism of the councillors concerned towards Parliament's wishes.

Our objective in proposing these new provisions is accordingly quite simple. It is to ensure, so far as we can in the face of obstruction and lack of co-operation, that abolition takes place smoothly on 1 April 1986, with as much continuity as possible. These new and strengthened controls do not even begin to approach a takeover by

Whitehall of the outgoing authorities' functions or decisions in their last year in office. In recognition of their Lordships' wishes, the Greater London council and the metropolitan county councils will remain in most respects entirely free to determine how much they should spend, and on what, in their last year in office and to continue with their existing policies until they are abolished, however much the Government and my hon. Friends may disagree with those policies. To the extent that my right hon. Friend will exercise control over specific activities of authorities, he will in effect do so on behalf of the successor authorities—that is, the London boroughs and the district councils outside London.

The House may ask what kind of activities are potentially so damaging to successor authorities and their ratepayers. The paving Act controls already in existence and those in clause 89 of the Bill will be strengthened and extended by these amendments with a view to preventing, where necessary, three broad kinds of obstruction: first, "life after death" arrangements, whereby the GLC and the metropolitan county councils will exploit the provisions in the Bill which will ensure continuity by creating long-term liabilities which the successor authorities will be obliged to meet.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): On the "life after death" arrangements, will my right hon. Friend confirm that the Greater London Enterprise Board will not have life after death?

Mr. Baker: The Greater London Enterprise Board has asked my right hon. Friend for a grant, under section 137, of about £21 million. There are certain contractual obligations towards the GLEB which the GLC has to meet. This led my right hon. Friend to agree a sum—I draw it from memory — of about £4·9 million, and the Government have approved that expenditure. This of course will be expenditure by the GLC, but we have made it clear that we shall want to monitor how the money is spent. We shall not be prepared to consider further requests from the GLEB, or from the GLC on behalf of the GLEB, unless it is specific about the future of the GLEB after the abolition of the GLC.

Mr. Marlow: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that if the Government permit the expenditure of £4·9 million and other moneys by the GLEB there will be a condition that there is to be no enforced trade union membership in any of the organisations which receive the money?

Mr. Baker: I shall have to look into that question. I am not entirely sure what obligations there may be under certain contracts with the Greater London Enterprise Board. However, the GLEB is a private company, limited by guarantee. A great deal of money has been switched to it by the GLC. It has built up a substantial property portfolio as well as giving support to various commercial and industrial undertakings in the Greater London area. Because it is a company limited by guarantee, it cannot be covered by the provisions of the Bill. However, it is absolutely clear that the flow of money to the GLEB from the GLC will cease on 31 March 1986. We have said that additional money will not be forthcoming until we know exactly what the proposals are for the GLEB's operations after 31 March 1986.

4.45 pm

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): I should be grateful if the right hon. Gentleman would clarify the confusion that exists in my mind. He said that the purpose of these amendments was to implement the Government's general policy of preventing "life after death" arrangements being made by the Greater London council, among others. In those circumstances, how can the GLC make any sensible comments about what is to happen to the Greater London Enterprise Board after the GLC has ceased to exist?

Mr. Baker: I can clarify that matter quite precisely. At a meeting with Mr. Livingstone, I asked him precisely what the proposals were and he said that he was considering them. All I have said is that I should like to know what his proposals are. No doubt they will emerge during the course of the next few weeks and months.

Before the intervention of my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow), I was giving examples of the activities which we are trying to prevent by means of the measures with which I am dealing. The first example is "life after death" arrangements. The second is "scorched earth" policies, designed to remove from the successor authorities, often at great expense to ratepayers, the property necessary for the proper exercise of functions—that is, asset stripping. The third example is "local government in exile"—arrangements whereby the GLC or the metropolitan county councils could fund sympathetic external bodies to act as agents of the authorities long after abolition. I find it intriguing that Mr. Livingstone should talk of "life after death", thus assuming that death will actually take place and that the abolition Bill will find its way on to the statute book.

There is clear evidence that, while the current leaders of the GLC may be disunited in their tactics over rate capping, they are totally united in their determination to asset — strip the GLC. In a broadcast on 11 March, following the meeting of the GLC which was disastrous for his leadership, Mr. Livingstone said:

"We will now try and deliver the party's second policy . . . that you go for a deficit budget."

The question of course arises: how does one finance this? A council which has 12 months to go could find all sorts of ways to finance overspending, and because it knows that on 31 March 1986 it will come to an end it could do this in a completely irresponsible way.

Secondly, in the very long apologia published fairly extensively last Friday in the *New Statesman* following his defeat in the GLC, Mr. Livingstone referred to the letter which he had received on 1 October 1984 from Mr. John McDonnell, his deputy, who is the chairman of the finance committee, in which Mr. McDonnell discusses tactics over rate capping. In his letter he says:

"In the meantime I want to push as much money out of the building as possible. You should note that this also inevitably ups the stakes on compliance or non-compliance in terms of the level of cuts demanded by the Government."

Mr. McDonnell has certainly lived up to his expressed intention of wanting to push as much money as possible out of the building. Three weeks ago there was a great spending spree at county hall, in which an extra expenditure of £17 million was agreed in a matter of a few hours. There can be no doubt, from what both Mr. Livingstone and Mr. McDonnell have said, that the GLC is determined to spend as much as it possibly can during the course of its last year.

[Mr. Baker]

The GLC is not alone in that determination. The hon. Member for Newham, North-West is on record as saying in the House:

"I assure the Secretary of State that I shall do everything that I can to frustrate what he is doing."—[*Official Report*, 22 May 1984; Vol. 60, c. 920.]

The hon. Gentleman pursued that policy in Committee and I am sure that he will continue to do so during the last 12 months of the life of the GLC.

In November 1984 there were reports in the *Evening Standard*, *The Guardian* and *The Times* of a meeting which Mr. Livingstone addressed at which he set out plan A, which was to defeat the abolition Bill—that plan will not succeed—and Plan B, which was to set up "a Government in exile" to represent the GLC until such time as a Labour Government were elected, pledged to restore it in full. Like many Governments in exile, it will have to wait a very long time to do that. When asked where the money would come from, Mr. Livingstone said that my right hon. Friend was not able to keep an eye on spending projects of less than £100,000, and that funding would have to come out of next year's budget. We must take these measures to ensure that that does not happen.

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): We are aware of the Government's paranoia about the GLC and Mr. Livingstone, but there are six metropolitan counties as well as the GLC. What justification is there for taking such draconian powers over the spending policies of the metropolitan counties when there is no evidence that they intend to take any of the actions which the Minister accuses the GLC of wanting to take? The powers that he is taking over capital expenditure on Merseyside will damage not only the county council but the whole of the private sector and the construction industry.

Mr. Baker: I shall deal later with whether the proposals will damage the private sector. I do not think that they will damage bona fide projects, but I am glad that the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) accepts my arguments about the GLC.

Several metropolitan authorities do not have obstruction in mind, but the West Yorkshire county council, when the press notice was issued on Thursday, immediately agreed a set of measures to move substantial funds to a trust. I have no doubt that the council had already prepared to take that action, since it had only to approve the minutes of a meeting to agree that move.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): The Minister must be grateful to the GLC for its openness in explaining future plans. It is a pity that the Government were not so open with the House about the 2,000 submissions which they received on "Streamlining the Cities". If the Government were half as open as the GLC, the GLC would be twice as honest.

Mr. Baker: The GLC's openness extends almost to vacuity. I have benefited enormously from the frank statements by Mr. Livingstone, Mr. McDonnell and the hon. Member for Newham, North-West. They do not agree with the legislation, but they do not disguise their intentions. They have said that they will take all measures available to oppose and obstruct the legislation and to create financial obligations extending beyond the time when the GLC is abolished.

I have described the main activities which the existing and proposed consent provisions are designed to prevent. These provisions do not in any sense amount to a takeover by Whitehall of the entirety of the authorities' functions. They require the Secretary of State's consent to be obtained to the following: first, the disposal of any interest in land, as already contained in section 8 of the paving Act; and, secondly, major contracts for the purposes specified in section 9 of the paving Act. By virtue of this proposed amendment, consent will be required after 21 March 1985 to any such contracts in excess of £15,000 in value. The paving Act control was £100,000 in value.

We have heard about a surprising number of contracts involving £95,000 or £99,000. One such contract concerned a scandalous advertising campaign. The GLC took whole pages in five or six major national newspapers to advertise a television debate between Mr. Livingstone and myself. I was glad that the GLC found the audience, because it was able to see the devastating defeat of Mr. Livingstone in that debate. I am all in favour of audiences being drummed up for my performances, but £99,000 for a political advertisement is a scandalous waste of ratepayers' money.

The creation, after 21 March 1985, of any liability which is capable of surviving abolition under an agreement or arrangement as set out in the new clause must have the Secretary of State's consent. In all such cases our amendments now provide a sanction of disqualification and surcharge for a failure to obtain consent after 21 March 1985. In addition, from that date disposals of land will be void, and contracts and other liabilities will not be enforceable against a successor authority contrary to its wishes unless such contracts and arrangements have had the approval of the Secretary of State.

We recognise that the Inner London education authority is in a different position from other abolition authorities in relation to our proposals for successor arrangements. Accordingly, we are considering the issue of fairly broad general consents for activities undertaken by the GLC acting as ILEA, subject to our being satisfied that such activity is not obstructive and that no scope is created for the misuse of consents. I have already said that such consents might include commitments to voluntary schools and grants to individual students. We have invited comments on that from ILEA and others. We look forward to receiving their view.

Mr. Marlow: May we have an idea of the scale of money involved and the scale of risk? Can my right hon. Friend remind the House of what the cost of the GLC was in its last Conservative year and what it is now? What is the difference in real terms, and what money is at risk? Will my right hon. Friend give an undertaking that he will not prevent the GLC spending money on conducting another public opinion poll on whether the citizens of London want to abolish the GLC, because I think that the result would be positive?

Mr. Baker: We are all waiting for the findings of the latest round of opinion polls. Perhaps the chairman-elect of the GLC will tell us the result later. In Committee we managed to tease out of the chairman-elect the fact that opinion polls taken some months ago showed that "74 per cent. say No" was a lie. We were told that the opinion polls had been interrupted by the Westminster council's action against the GLC to stop it spending money on advertising.

The opinion polls which were stifled by the GLC show that between 55 and 65 per cent. are against abolition. Then we heard that the GLC intended to conduct another opinion poll. That contract has been let, so it cannot be affected by these proposals.

The scale of money involved is enormous. In the last three years Mr. Livingstone has increased the GLC's spend from between £450 million and £500 million to nearly £1,000 million. That is an enormous increase. He has doubled the GLC's spend over three years—and doubled the rate precept.

Many of our measures are directed to ensure that the GLC's considerable property assets are not stripped from the GLC and handed to bodies which favour Mr. Livingstone and his friends and their political views. We want to ensure that such assets are transferred to the residuary body on 31 March 1986. If they are disposed of, the proceeds will be returned to the ratepayers, who paid for them originally.

Mr. Tony Banks: The Minister should not continue to use the phrase "asset stripping". There is an enormous difference between the GLC redistributing wealth round existing local authorities and his hon. Friends who go in for asset stripping on a big scale and transfer their money to offshore funds.

5 pm

Mr. Baker: That is a rather raw nerve. The hon. Gentleman is quite happy to use the words "asset stripping" against my hon. Friends, but assets might well be disposed of in an irregular way, and I could quote various phrases from Mr. Livingstone, who has said that he has it in mind to do so. That is asset stripping. I want to act to protect the interests of the successor authorities and of the ratepayers in London.

I should like to refer to the administrative arrangements. We shall seek to reduce the effects of the new provisions on all concerned by the issue of broad general consents, provided that by doing so no scope is created for activity that is prejudicial to abolition or to successor authorities and their ratepayers. Indeed, I think that many of the metropolitan county councils do not have the motivation that is evident in the GLC, and much of the activities and work of a capital nature which they undertake will be covered by such broad general consents.

Our record in exercising the broader paving Act controls to date is exemplary and, indeed, has been acknowledged as such by some of the authorities concerned. We were told when the measures were introduced that we would be overwhelmed by a mass of administrative detail. In fact, while we have not been willing to issue consents to some proposals pending further justification, by judicious use of general consents we have kept the administrative burdens to manageable levels. Over 4,000 applications have been considered by the Department using a very small nucleus of staff, and of them over 95 per cent. have been dealt with within four weeks, with many urgent requests cleared within 24 hours. We have not yet heard of any case in which the requirement to obtain consent has been demonstrated clearly to have prejudiced innocent third parties.

There are clear reasons and evidence on the record to show why we have had to act in this way. Experience with the paving Bill controls which were announced on 12 July to take effect on Royal Assent clearly demonstrated that we could not afford to make that same mistake again. In the intervening period between the announcement and the Act coming into effect authorities disposed of land and let contracts worth millions of pounds at enormous expense to ratepayers. However, I wish to make it clear to the House that the new and extended provisions will have no effect on anything done before the date of announcement. That would be quite wrong. We have taken steps to ensure that the authorities were aware of the new proposals on the day that they were announced.

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): I refer to the new limit of £15,000 which the new clause enshrines, and general consents, to which the right hon. Gentleman referred. Is he prepared to give a general consent to ILEA over the purchase of basic education equipment, because the £15,000 limit will catch virtually every single order of supply for pens, pencils, furniture, blackboards and so on which ILEA undertakes? Obviously it would be nonsense for the right hon. Gentleman to have every such contract under his scrutiny.

Mr. Baker: I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman was in the House when I mentioned ILEA, but I said that we would envisage giving broad general consents to ILEA, or the GLC acting on behalf of ILEA, because that is a continuing authority. It is not the intention to impose such control over the continuing function of a body providing education to inner London.

I was referring to the announcement last Thursday. In normal circumstances it might have been preferable to bring the new provisions into effect on Royal Assent. However, these are not normal circumstances. Despite increasing misgivings, we stayed our hand until the Bill had been accepted on Second Reading and considered in Committee. Now that the House has accepted the reality and the principle of abolition, we can no longer do so. It would be irresponsible to delay further, and to postpone the effect of the provisions until Royal Assent would have led—this is the thrust of the amendments—without any shred of doubt to a final bout of asset stripping the like of which has never been seen before. The successor authorities' cupboard would have been bare and ratepayers would have had to foot the bill. For those reasons we have been forced to seek Parliament's approval to the new provisions taking effect on the day following my announcement to the House on Thursday last. For the same reasons, we cannot accept the Oppositions's amendments.

Those who are proposing to purchase an interest in land from the GLC or metropolitan counties, or to rely on a contract or other enforceable arrangement that extends beyond abolition—that is the important point—must be aware of the impending abolition of the authorities. It is wrong that where consent is not obtained successor authorities and ratepayers should be legally obliged to foot the bill for the misdemeanours of irresponsible councillors. For that reason, and because we consider that disqualification may not prove to be an effective deterrent to unlawful actions in the face of the continuing threats that are being made, we are proposing not only that councillors should face a penalty of surcharge, but that those who collude with them in such actions should not profit by their activities. Accordingly, where the consent of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is not obtained, the disposal of land will be invalid and the contract or other arrangement will not be enforceable against successor authorities.

[Mr. Baker]

I recognise that there remains a risk that some third or fourth party will be prejudiced. That is why we are taking steps to publicise the effects of the new provisions widely among the professional and specialist groups concerned with property transfer and contracts. The granting of consent to, for example, a long-term contract will minimise the risk that a successor authority might attempt to renege on the arrangement on the ground that it was contrary to its policies. These proposals will therefore help to create certainty for contractors and others in a climate of increasing uncertainty created by the attitude of outgoing authorities.

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Baker: If the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, I shall not give way again as I have already given way a great deal. No doubt I shall have to reply towards the end of the debate.

I have given the House examples of the obstruction that we are facing. Only last week readers of the *Labour Herald* were urged to set up an alternative council to organise and propagate the struggle. Setting up an alternative council now, according to the paper, will help to make it clear that only the involvement of the working class and the whole community can achieve a victory.

The action that we are taking today is fully justified in view of the expressed intentions of the leading Labour members of the GLC to subvert the purposes and effects of abolition. They speak of a GLC in exile, of life after death, and of pushing as much money outside the building as possible. All that could involve asset stripping on a huge scale. We are simply not prepared just to sit idly by and let that happen. We have a responsibility to the ratepayers in London and the London boroughs. We shall not let the GLC go on a spree and leave the bill either for the Government or for the London boroughs to pick up from the overturned table.

Mr. Straw: The two new clauses are a constitutional disgrace. They involve retrospective legislation. They give further centralised power over county halls to Marsham street and Whitehall with no justification whatsoever. They are a further illustration of the arrogance and contempt for democracy that has characterised so many of the Government's actions in respect of local authorities and in many other policies.

The Minister of State talked about the need to preserve the continuity of activity by the successor authorities. Of course we have always believed in that as a principle of local government reorganisation, but when the Government set out on the path of reorganisation they made no attempt to build the foundations upon which that continuity could be maintained. There can be no continuity of government without a basic consensus and agreement on the need for reorganisation. This is the only local government reorganisation this century in which the case for reorganisation has been wholly disputed and a matter of partisan disagreement, in which there was no proper public discussion and no inquiry before it became a manifesto commitment, and in which the so-called consultation that was allowed after the manifesto commitment was announced has been treated with utter disdain. Virtually none of the 2,000 bodies making representations to the Government have had their views taken into account.

At other times the Minister of State has claimed to be a member of the real Conservative party—the moderate Conservative party; the Conservative party that has not been hijacked by Right wingers. He should be ashamed of himself for putting his name to the measures. He says that the new clauses do not begin to amount to a takeover. He knows that that is utter humbug because he then read out a list of activities that would be subject to control by the Government. The disposal of land, major contracts—indeed, any contract in excess of £15,000—and many other matters will be the subject of consent by the Secretary of State. The Minister revealed himself when he said that the whole purpose was to prevent authorities from being obstructive. I must explain to the Minister that democracy involves giving rights not to those with whom one agrees but to those with whom one does not agree. There can be no democracy without that.

What the Minister may interpret as obstruction is, in almost every case, an entirely legitimate action of opposition. The Bill to abolish the metropolitan counties and the GLC is not yet law. The Minister—like the Prime Minister—may nurse the idea of dispensing with tedious procedures when the views and consent of Members of Parliament have to be taken into account before something becomes law, and instead want a position—which now operates within the Cabinet—whereby the Prime Minister's edict is the rule.

However, under the present constitution, laws are not laws until they are passed by both Houses of Parliament. It is entirely reasonable for hon. Members on both sides of the House and for institutions outside the House to say that they will act according to the present law. It is not for anyone to anticipate the possible outcome of the Bill. After all, this time last year we were told that there was no question but that the GLC and the metropolitan counties would be abolished from 31 March 1985. The Minister may not remember this because he was not then the Secretary of State's minder, but we all remember how utterly confident the Government were that the paving Bill would go through Parliament unamended. After all, they had majorities in both this House and another place. But they were wrong. Whatever arrogant bluster the Minister displays—and I congratulate him on the way in which he has sought to argue the unarguable during the past six months—the reality is that as the debates proceeded in Committee, the majorities there dropped—in no small part thanks to the Minister's advocacy. The Government, with an overall Committee majority of 11, on one occasion could manage only a majority of three on a key matter of principle.

Last December the Government's majority of 140 over all other parties fell to 23 in what was a devastating moral defeat for them. Who knows what will happen in another place? I believe that it will not be happy with the fact that the Bill was guillotined, although the Minister had accepted that there was no filibustering in Committee. The Government will not be happy until London becomes the only capital city in the free world without a proper voice. Nor will they be happy about the fact that because, in a wholly doctrinaire way, the Government have decided to force their views through in an exercise of elective dictatorship there will be enormous disruptions of major services in the metropolitan counties.

Mr. John Maples (Lewisham, West): The hon. Gentleman said that the new clauses were an attempt to prevent the GLC and other authorities from performing reasonable and democratic functions. Would it be a reasonable exercise of its power if the GLC pre-financed a GLC in exile?

5.15 pm

Mr. Straw: I have seen no proposals for that. When we were discussing placing within the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Bill a proposal that the Secretary of State should be required to act reasonably in the exercise of his functions, he said that that was wholly unnecessary because

"the requirement to exercise statutory powers reasonably is already a well-established principle of the law. There is no need to spell that out in the Bill. That action would only invite spurious legal challenge."—[*Official Report*, 30 July 1984; Vol. 65, c. 163.]

The requirement reasonably to exercise statutory powers falls on local authorities just as much as it falls on the Secretary of State. Local authorities are entirely the creatures of statute. The courts have rightly been careful about how local authorities should exercise their powers. Were any local authority—even the GLC—to attempt to set up some institution in exile, which is plainly fanciful and would be outside the spirit and letter of its powers, that would be the subject of challenge in the divisional court, and I have no doubt that that court would find against such a proposal.

Mr. Tony Banks: I could not agree with my hon. Friend more. I suggest that the Minister stops reading the *Labour Herald*; it is not doing a great deal for his blood pressure. He has read a series of articles about future thinking as being the reality of decisions made in the GLC. Does my hon. Friend not agree that at county hall everything must be pushed through with a majority of four —not 140—and that there is no question of the GLC, either now or in future, acting illegally? It cannot do so.

Mr. Straw: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. The GLC's track record on observing the law is exemplary, and a great deal better than that of the Secretary of State who has two previous convictions. One was for breaking the law on the Greater London development plan and the other was for acting unlawfully in respect of Lambeth and Lewisham area health authority. We do not need any lectures from the Secretary of State about the need to observe the law.

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): Will my hon. Friend address himself to the question posed by my hon. Friend the Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts), which was not answered by the Minister, although he promised him an answer? My hon. Friend has concentrated on answering charges levelled against the GLC, and that is right and proper. He has said nothing about the metropolitan county councils because no charges have been made against them. Does he agree that it is a gross contempt for the Minister to include the Greater Manchester council and others in the new clause without any attempt to justify that action?

Mr. Straw: There is not a shred of justification for including the metropolitan counties in this move. It is possible that one or two people on the GLC said things in their anger that they knew would be translated into action. Indeed, that is the Minister's prima facie evidence. But that does not apply to the metropolitan counties, so there is no justification for the Minister attempting to include them in the proposals.

Mr. Allan Roberts: Does my hon. Friend agree that the new clause is an attempt to circumvent the decisions of another place when it voted out proposals in the paving Bill? The Government are trying to reintroduce paving Bill proposals that the other place rejected and to take complete control of the metropolitan counties and the GLC before the abolition Bill is on the statute book.

Mr. Straw: As usual, my hon. Friend steals my best line. That was exactly what I had written in my notes and what I was about to say. It is a good point. The Secretary of State, much to his chagrin, last year suffered a major reverse in another place. While the Government have had to put up with that defeat, they have never accepted the principle of it. The Minister was uncharacteristically ungenerous when he spoke of that defeat. He said that the other place had rejected the proposals for interim councils to provide for a smooth transition to the new councils. The Government have never accepted the principle and, having failed to take control and change the political control of these authorities by the front door, they are now attempting to take control by the back door.

When I began I said that what Ministers fail to appreciate is that democracy is about giving rights to people with whom one profoundly disagrees. The Government now show little or no respect for the will of local electorates. These councils still have a mandate to act. They were democratically elected. We wished their mandate to be renewed this May. The Government have denied them that mandate, but they continue to have the consent of the people who elected them to act reasonably, subject to the law and supervision of the courts. The Government are denying them that right to speak on behalf of their electorate. We understand why they are doing that.

The Secretary of State revealed himself about a year ago when he was asked why he did not have faith in the local electorates to hold their local councils in check. "Ah", he said, "we've tried that, but it's not working very well". It was working pretty badly this time last year but, by God, the local democratic process is working even worse now because throughout the country the Conservative party is suffering the most significant political defeats that it has suffered for 10 years. The Conservatives have been running centralised control of local government in Scotland for four years. The result is that there is utter chaos in local government, so much so that the Prime Minister is calling a panic meeting this Sunday to which she has summoned the English Minister with responsibility for local government to try to sort out the mess. Perhaps the Minister would like to tell us how it will go down in Scotland when a Sassenach has to move in to sort out its rates mess. So much chaos has been caused there that the Conservatives have even lost a seat in Troon. Troon is golfing country, solid Conservative country, and the Conservatives lost the seat to Labour.

I am afraid to say that the disease of democracy has come south because in the last 23 council by-elections, held in February, in which there were three-cornered contests—and I will happily give the results of the two-cornered contests, because they were even worse for the Conservatives—the Conservative vote has completely slumped. I will give the results: Conservative, 25·1 per

[Mr. Straw]

cent., alliance, 32·9 per cent. and Labour 40·4 per cent. In those contests where there were two two-cornered fights, the results were even worse: Conservative, 23·2 per cent., Liberal/SDP, 30 per cent. and Labour 42·4 per cent. With every turn of the centralised screw, the Government lose support not only in our areas but also in theirs.

When the Minister of State replies to the debate, will he say why he decided upon this ludicrously small sum of £15,000? Last year the Secretary of State, in what was an unexceptionable statement as far as it went, said:

"The level at which to pitch the threshold . . . must be a matter of judgment. We want it to be sufficiently high to eliminate the need to refer many small contracts to the Government."—[*Official Report*, 30 July 1984; Vol. 65, c. 167.]

We did not agree with what he was saying, but at least the £100,000 figure was relatively high. What is the case for including contracts of £15,000? The Minister has to spell out why such a tiny sum was seized upon.

The last point that I wish to raise concerns retrospection. The two new clauses are retrospective in effect. They cannot become law at least until June or July, but they take effect as from two weeks ago. We do not say, and nobody says, that all retrospective legislation is bad.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Most of it is.

Mr. Straw: Indeed, most of it is, and that was my next line. We accept that tax changes have to come into effect on the day on which they are announced. We also accept, as the House accepts, that there is no objection to retrospective legislation which makes lawful that which has previously been unlawful—in other words, improves the rights of the citizens whom we represent. But the House has always, and rightly, thoroughly opposed legislation which is retrospective in effect and which makes unlawful that which was previously lawful.

Indeed, it is now enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights that

"No-one shall be held guilty of any criminal offence on account of any act or omission which did not constitute a criminal offence, under national or international law, at the time when it was committed."

We are not making criminal law, but, by God, the clauses that the Minister of State is proposing are criminal in their effect. Indeed, the power to fine and to penalise councillors and former councillors is unlimited: it is as great as that possessed by any criminal court, and as dire in its effects.

I quote not only the European Convention on Human Rights on the effects of retrospective legislation, but a former Back Bencher speaking in the debate on the War Damage Bill. He said:

"I feel proud to be able to take part in this debate, as I feel that this is the House of Commons at its best, challenging the power of the Executive, which has for long been our traditional role. That is what we are here for, and one could not have a better battleground than this Bill. I regard this as a very nasty little Bill . . . It was conceived, if I may say so, in dishonour and it ought to have been strangled at birth. I hope that this evening we will strangle it."

He continued:

"I think that it was Disraeli who said that nothing that is morally wrong can be politically right. If we throw out this Bill tonight I can imagine that wily old Jew looking out of his window in Heaven with pleasure and with approval in his eyes, smiling down on us and saying 'Well done'."—[*Official Report*, 3 February 1965; Vol. 705, c. 1178-84.]

He finished his set of speeches on the offence of retrospective legislation which made unlawful that which was previously lawful by saying:

"If it is still legitimate to quote Virgil in this House, *facilis descensus Averni* which can be roughly, but inaccurately, translated as 'Retrospective legislation is a damned slippery slope'. Let the House dig its heels in and say that it will have no more of it."—[*Official Report*, 2 March 1965; Vol. 707, c. 1264.]

Those were the fine words of the then hon. Member for Wanstead and Woodford, now the Secretary of State for the Environment. He was right then. We are right now. I urge the House to throw out the clauses.

Mr. Marlow: The hon. Member for Blackburn, (Mr. Straw) sought to draw the attention of the other place to the majorities that the Bill was attracting in its passage through the House. I think that he sought to draw the attention of the other place to the majorities that we had earlier in Committee of the whole House and then later in Standing Committee. The hon. Gentleman I am sure will agree with me that, as time goes on and as the arguments are rehearsed and lobbyists and outside interests get involved, so hon. Members become more aware of the real issues involved in the Bill.

I am sure that I will get his agreement when I suggest that he takes account of the majority that the Government will secure for their amendments today and tomorrow, rushes up to the other end of the building, goes to see all his friends in the other place and tells them precisely what has happened here today and what will happen here tomorrow because I have no doubt that they will be very interested.

Mr. Tony Banks: They can read.

5.30 pm

Mr. Marlow: Yes, I know that they can read, and I am sure that the hon. Member for Blackburn knows that. Nevertheless, he has sought to draw this point to their attention. I am sure that he will be only too pleased to draw the additional point that I am making to their attention as well.

The hon. Gentleman brought before the House the novel Labour party contention that democracy is about giving power to those with whom one profoundly disagrees. I do not recall the hon. Gentleman fighting his way to the Dispatch Box and television screen during the coal dispute to say that there should be a ballot. Nor do I recall him fighting his way to the Dispatch Box to make strong and persistent speeches against the violence that was being applied by one section of Mr. Scargill's supporters against those miners who wished to work. That is a novel creed and I am sure that we all welcome it.

Mr. Cormack: Is it not an old and honourable creed that the Conservative party is the true guardian of the constitution? Why allow the hon. Member for Blackburn, with the shabby record to which my hon. Friend has just referred, to steal the clothes of the Tory party?

Mr. Marlow: The hon. Member for Blackburn has not stolen the clothes of the Conservative party; he has walked past a hook and put them on and as he walks out of the door he will hang them up again.

The hon. Gentleman asked what was the case for the reorganisation in which we are now involved. Part of the case for the reorganisation is that it was in our manifesto. The hon. Gentleman referred to that. He is concerned

about many of the things being done at the moment and he says that the authorities should be allowed to continue those policies because they were in their manifestos.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Order. The hon. Gentleman should discuss the new clause that is before the House and not make a speech such as he would make on Second Reading.

Mr. Marlow: I apologise if I was out of order, but I was only replying to the hon. Gentleman's points.

Mr. Allan Roberts: Where, in the Conservative manifesto, was there a commitment to take control of existing democratically elected councils to the extent of requiring the Secretary of State's approval for any contract over £15,000 in advance of abolition?

Mr. Marlow: I shall come to that later. If the hon. Gentleman will be patient, I shall be happy to answer that point and I intend to do so.

The hon. Member for Blackburn asked why we are concerned to introduce the new clause. He will be aware that there has been a sea of change in local government. There was a time when local authorities were there to provide services for the people who elected them. From time to time the political control of local authorities would change, but there was a basic consensus about the provision of services. There might have been a slight difference between a Labour and Conservative local authority, but there was a consensus about the provision of services. Recently, sadly, there has been a great, grave and damaging change.

Some local authorities and some parties in local authority areas have looked upon victory in local government as an opportunity for political posturing, for using ratepayers' money to provide jobs for their own people, political groupings and activists, and for providing organisations with funds for minority interests, which the vast majority of people who voted in the local election were not in favour of.

My right hon. Friend the Minister said that the GLC is likely to spend £900 million this year. Three years ago it spent some £450 million. Allow for inflation an increased cost each year of £50 million, and against the £450 million that London spent three years ago, perhaps, in exceptional circumstances, one could justify an expenditure of £600 million for the provision of adequate services. But no, the GLC seeks to spend £900 million. That leaves £300 million of ratepayers' money available for expenditure on mean, obscure and extravagant little schemes, of which the Labour party in London seems to be so much in favour.

Of course my right hon. Friend must bring the Bill before the House—*[Interruption.]* I think that I heard the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) say that there has been an election. I come back to his earlier point.

Mr. Allan Roberts: Will the hon. Gentleman give way? He has got it wrong.

Mr. Marlow: If the hon. Gentleman will allow me to answer his first point, I might have a chance to listen to his second point.

The hon. Gentleman's first point was about democracy. He asked whether it was in the Conservative party's manifesto that we intended to control these relatively small amounts of money. At the time of the manifesto some of the appalling consequences of the extravagance of the GLC, even in our wildest nightmares, could not have been thought of. The need is there and action must be taken.

I think that the hon. Gentleman used the words "manifesto", "democracy" and "mandate". The GLC's mandate ends in a month's time. Therefore, is it right that it should continue to spend money in such a political way?

Mr. Allan Roberts: Surely the whole point is that if the Government had not intervened there would have been an election in May and the so-called hard-pressed ratepayers, the electorates of Greater London, Merseyside and elsewhere, could have had their democratic say about the issues that the hon. Gentleman is now raising. The Government have cancelled the elections because the views that the hon. Gentleman expressed about the GLC's expenditure would not have been shared by the electorate and Labour would have won the election.

Mr. Marlow: As the hon. Gentleman well knows, since the Government came to power it has been the intention to abolish one layer of local government to bring local government closer to the people and to cut the cost of it to the people. It has taken just over three years to do so——

Mr. Tony Banks *rose*——

Mr. Marlow: If I keep giving way, the hon. Gentleman will not have time to speak.

There is obviously a transition period. During that time, is there any sense in allowing those whose mandate has expired to continue, given Mr. Livingstone's commitment and that of the Lord Mayor elect to spend money in ways which I am sure the House would not support?

Mr. Tony Banks: If the Bill is about getting rid of one tier of local government and taking it closer to the people, why not abolish the shire counties?

Mr. Marlow: The hon. Gentleman knows that the nature of the shire counties and the districts within them is completely different from the metropolitan authorities. He will also be aware that the shire counties have a much longer history and are much more a part of our national life.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My hon. Friend is once again reverting to a Second Reading speech and is not referring to the new clause. I appreciate that my hon. Friend is late in coming into the debate and has not been involved before. I know that he has been a member of the Committee, but he has not been substantially involved in earlier discussions. Therefore, would it be in order to remind my hon. Friend that he should stick to the new clause or conclude his speech?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sure that no hon. Gentleman needs to be reminded to stick to the new clause.

Mr. Marlow: As far as I can remember, over the last four or five minutes I have been responding to interventions from Opposition Members. I am sure that the interventions were in order and that my replies have therefore also been in order.

My right hon. Friend is embarking upon a vital and valid task. If I may give him one piece of advice, I hope that he will not be unduly modest in his application of the new clause.

Mr. John Cartwright (Woolwich): In view of the appalling pressure of time, I propose to concentrate on the issues involved in the new clauses. I endorse everything said by the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) about the unattractive nature of these measures. They are another example of something of which we have had far too much in recent years—enabling legislation for the Secretary of State. The new clauses enable the Secretary of State to forbid spending and to prohibit transactions which are in themselves perfectly legal but of which he may disapprove on a variety of grounds.

The Minister for Local Government may be able to justify to himself what is being done on the ground of what he regards as a special problem, but he will find it difficult to justify the measures on a wider basis.

As the hon. Member for Blackburn said, the timing of the coming into effect of the new clauses assumes that the Bill will go through Parliament in its present form and that the remaining stages of the parliamentary process will be a rubber stamp operation. I find that assumption unappealing.

How effective will such financial control be? Subsection (2) of the new clause 9 reduces to £15,000 the limit on the size of the contracts that the GLC or the metropolitan councils may enter into without the Secretary of State's permission. That is an incredibly small figure. The subsection represents a considerable strengthening of the stranglehold created by the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act.

Will such control be effective? Under section 137 of the paving Act the Secretary of State was given responsibility for approving all grants by the GLC. In the event, the Secretary of State has been forced to give a blanket general approval to all grants under the sum of £15,000. Interestingly, among those grants are many to which Ministers and Conservative Members have taken considerable exception.

The grants approved by the Secretary of State under his blanket approach include, for example, a grant to Chile Democratico GB, which will receive £6,473 in the coming financial year. Gay Legal Advice will receive about £3,300. The Abyssinian Society — apparently a West Indian social club—receives £9,156, with the Secretary of State's approval.

What is perhaps most surprising is that the present Secretary of State should have given approval to the Jewish Socialist Group, which is to receive £8,050 in the coming year. The London Gay Campaign Group is to receive £10,576. Hall Carpenter Memorial Archives Ltd —apparently a collection of records about lesbians and gay men—is to receive almost £15,000.

Mr. Tony Banks *rose*——

Mr. Cartwright: We are told that the draconian measures in the new clauses are necessary to stop the spending that right hon. and hon. Gentlemen on the Tory Benches regard as irresponsible, unreasonable and against the ratepayers' interests. In fact, however, much of the spending to which hon. Gentlemen object is receiving the approval of the Secretary of State because of the ineffectiveness of such bureaucratic control.

5.45 pm

Mr. Tony Banks: I disagree with the hon. Gentleman. Those grants have been passed not because of the ineffectiveness of the controls operated by the Department of the Environment, but because they are for perfectly laudable and admirable organisations. When the Secretary of State sees where the grants are going, he entirely agrees with the GLC and approves them. We should not inflame the prejudice and bigotry of the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow).

Mr. Cartwright: I know that it is nearly Easter, but if the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) believes that, he must believe in the Easter bunny and the tooth fairy, too.

As the chairman-elect of the GLC knows, grants of less than £15,000 are given blanket approval because the civil servants are so bogged down with plodding through miles and miles of perfectly reasonable and praiseworthy larger contracts that they do not have time to scrutinise the smaller ones, which include many of the grants to which the Conservatives object.

Mr. Allan Roberts: The hon. Gentleman points out the irony of the situation. When the Secretary of State took powers to approve or disapprove of grants, he undertook to disapprove not of who was to receive the grants, but only whether they were illegal. He did so despite the prejudiced protestations of his hon. Friends, such as the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow). I congratulate the Secretary of State on sticking to his undertaking, giving grants to many worthy organisations and refusing to accept the prejudiced views of his hon. Friends.

Mr. Cartwright: An interesting coalition is being formed on this issue.

The controls that would operate under the new clauses would not affect spending of the type to which Conservative Members are so violently opposed. They are a constitutional absurdity and a bureaucratic nightmare. I suggest, on the basis of the examples that I have given, that they will be ineffective, too. We shall certainly vote against them today.

Mr. Cormack: When the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) read out his somewhat bizarre list, I was tempted to quote another Latin tag—de gustibus non est disputandum. There is certainly no accounting for the taste of my right hon. Friend if he has indulged in such extraordinary beneficence.

We are currently debating a very important and central principle. This seems to be the latest chapter in a sorry saga. I have become increasingly depressed as I have watched the Government fall deeper and deeper into the morass during the passage of the Bill. It gives me no pleasure to say that. I have always had the highest regard for my right hon. Friends the Minister for Local Government and the Secretary of State, but they have done the Tory party no service by championing this measure.

I fully understand the sense of annoyance, aggravation and anger provoked by some of the stranger activities of councils throughout the land. However, as the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) reminded us, those councils were democratically elected. Uncomfortable, inconvenient and thoroughly objectionable as we may find some of their more profligate decisions, we must accept the fact that they were democratically elected.

I do not like the measures that we are discussing now any more than I like the general premise on which the Bill is built. I have made my opposition to the Bill reasonably plain on a number of occasions.

Mr. Dykes: My hon. Friend has correctly described the constitutional slippery slope on which the Government have recklessly embarked in bringing forward the Bill. Does my hon. Friend agree that what makes the situation even worse is the fact that the objectionable spending—the central point of the original initiative—amounts at most to 5 per cent. of the total GLC budget, or the same proportion as when the GLC was under Conservative control?

Mr. Cormack: That is a good point. I am worried because I can foresee the Bill becoming the Tory party's devolution, and I do not want that to happen. I agree that only a small percentage of expenditure is involved. This is a classic case of a constitutional sledgehammer being used to crack a few nuts.

My objection to new clause 10, like my objection to the Bill, is based on what I consider to be several impeccable Tory grounds. The Conservative party has always, and with full justice, been able to demonstrate that it is a champion of the constitution. The constitution is in need of championing at the moment because, although they might not be in the Chamber, there are many on the militant Left of the Labour party who would bring down the whole edifice that sustains our freedom to achieve their political objectives. To steal even the smallest paragraph from the smallest page of that book is an extremely dangerous thing for the Conservative party to do.

The Conservative party has always eschewed centralism and repudiated, when possible, the doctrine immortalised in the words that the gentleman in Whitehall knows best. However, time and again in this Parliament and in the previous one, Ministers have endorsed that gentleman in Whitehall knows best doctrine. I have found it exceptionally painful to listen to that endorsement as it smacks of an arrogant attitude towards power, which is not in the true Tory tradition. When in power, even with a substantial majority, and especially when elected with a minority vote in the country, we must behave with humility and understanding such as is not always present in doctrines enunciated from the Dispatch Box.

As to new clause 10, I ask my robust and hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) to ponder longer than perhaps he has hitherto, as it is an anticipation of the will of Parliament. We have a bicameral legislature and the Bill has not even left the Commons. Nevertheless, the new clause anticipates that Parliament will pass the Bill without amendment. Perhaps it will. I hope that it will not and that the Lords will exercise their discretion firmly and properly, as they did with the paving legislation. If they do, my hon. Friend will feel a little dismayed. He can avoid that feeling by not supporting new clause 10. It makes me exceptionally sad that a man of his taste, discernment and understanding of the Tory philosophy should allow himself to be party to a measure that is inimical to true Toryism as I understand it and as I thought he understood it.

Mr. Marlow: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who we all know is a great constitutionalist, for giving way. He said that the authorities with which we might have disagreements have a mandate and are therefore entitled —indeed, are duty bound — to carry through their mandate although it is about to expire. My hon. Friend will know that this matter was a central part of the Conservative party manifesto on which we fought the 1983 general election. As my hon. Friend is an hon. Friend, perhaps he would like to take this opportunity to tell the House that he told the electorate that he opposed such a proposal during the election campaign, because I am sure——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. If the hon. Gentleman pursues that intervention he will be getting away from the new clause under consideration.

Mr. Cormack: Perhaps you will allow me to respond briefly to my hon. Friend's intervention, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have made it plain, as I did just before Christmas, that my election address did not mention this wretched business at all. I believe that we are elected individually by our constituents. When questioned at election meetings I made my views quite plain. I said that there was a need for reform in London but there was also a need for an elected body to oversee the affairs of this great capital city. I am much more in sympathy with the Government's views about the metropolitan county councils.

When, more than ever in its history, the constitution needs a true and doughty guardian, it is extremely dangerous for a party which can truly claim to be its guardian to be tempted by the deviationist tactics of reprehensible local authorities into endorsing a principle that is utterly unconservative, non-Tory and unconstitutional.

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): As is usual, the evidence presented by the Minister today was insubstantial and prejudiced. Yet again, his argument related almost entirely to the GLC.

The hon. Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) said that he made his stance on the GLC quite clear in his election campaign. I accept what he says, but he said that he did not make much of an argument about the metropolitan counties. I suspect that the metropolitan counties have got caught up in the coat tails of the GLC and the prejudice in some sections of the Conservative party against the GLC, especially a Labour-controlled GLC. Time and again in Committee the Government have had an opportunity to make a case against the metropolitan counties, but none has been made, because there is none. New clause 10 is another sign that the Government do not have a case to make against them.

The new clause implies criticism of how councillors will behave, so it is incumbent upon the Minister to make clear his accusations against the metropolitan councils. If he has none, he should make that clear, and make it clear that he is not criticising councils or councillors.

The hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) read out a list of organisations and continued, as it is a populist thing to do, to draw certain conclusions and say that the Secretary of State had approved of those organisations and allowed grants to be made to them. The real issue is not whether the Secretary of State approves of those organisations, but whether he should have the power to make a judgment about them. Surely that power should reside not in Whitehall or in the Department of the Environment, but with elected councillors, who are sensitive to local needs.

[Mr. Derek Fatchett]

The hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) displayed his prejudices with great vigour in Committee, and he did so again today, although it was not one of his most prejudiced performances. He should think quietly about the principles that he is supporting. He may not agree with certain organisations, and he may want the Secretary of State to say, "No grants or payments to those organisations." However, as the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South has pointed out, there is a real danger in that view, because there could well be a change in political power, as a result of which a different Secretary of State might take a totally different decision.

6 pm

The essence of the argument against this legislation is that it makes a judgment in anticipation of what this Chamber and the other Chamber will do. That is a dangerous position for this or any subsequent Government to find themselves in in their relations with local government as well as in a general political sense.

Conservative Members should take a step back and think about the more general arguments rather than their own positions of prejudice in relation to particular policies. This is an important new clause, not for what it does, but for what it stands for. Those hon. Members who vote against it will support the constitution and the basic principles which have been essential to democratic politics.

Dr. Ian Twinn (Edmonton): I understand the stance which the Opposition have adopted, because they want to retain their empire after the abolition of the GLC and the metropolitan counties. They also want to have their interests protected. I fully understand their argument that they should be able to transfer large sums of money from democratically elected bodies to bodies which are answerable to no one except the Labour party and its supporters.

Conservative Members want to see abolition. It is worth pointing out that at the last general election Conservative Members in London were specifically elected on a manifesto which proposed the abolition of the GLC. A majority of Conservative Members in London were elected on that manifesto. In my own constituency, it has been proved that that is what my constituents want.

The House has already debated the paving Act. This Bill has received a Second Reading and has gone through Standing Committee. The views of the House are clear, and I hope that the other place takes careful note of those views and of the fact that the Bill was not substantially changed in Committee.

These new clauses are necessary. It is necessary that the Secretary of State should have sanctions over these contracts if we are to avoid the problem of asset stripping in London and the metropolitan counties. It may be that the GLC and the metropolitan counties will behave according to the will of Parliament and recognise that it would be wrong to act prematurely when Parliament's will is already known. However, we have every reason to believe that these councils will not hold fire and that they will try to pre-empt what the House intends.

The GLC is particularly opposed to the Bill. That is its right. The Labour party is in control at county hall and believes that it has a mandate to oppose the legislation. No Conservative Member would question the Labour party's right to do that, although we may question its reasons for doing so. However, obstructing the will of Parliament is another matter.

Mr. Dykes: How does my hon. Friend feel about the fact that only two Conservatives at county hall agree with this proposal, whereas the rest are dead against it?

Mr. Terry Dicks (Hayes and Harlington): The rest are incompetent.

Dr. Twinn: I shall not be tempted by the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks), who suggests that my colleagues at county hall are incompetent. I would merely point out that at the general election this was a major issue in London, and it received wide support both in London and the metropolitan counties. My Conservative colleagues on the GLC should consider what the electors have said since they were elected.

We have every reason to believe that the GLC will obstruct Parliament. It is already obstructing the will of Parliament by not responding to requests for information under the paving Act. My own authority in Enfield has requested information on various functions, including waste disposal, which I am sure we shall discuss later. That information has been denied. The London borough of Enfield is unable to discover details of a function which it wishes to take over after abolition.

Far from being sinister, the new clauses are necessary if ratepayers are to be protected. We must act now and make provision to protect the ratepayers of the London area.

The GLC is keen to spend a lot of money. Its rates proposals for this year were very high indeed, and would have been higher had the Labour party not been split. Had Labour's budget proposals gone through, the ratepayers of London would have paid through the nose. As it is, they are already paying substantial sums for the new rate precept.

Mr. Tony Banks: The hon. Gentleman must surely know that the maximum precept which could have been made at county hall was the legal one set by the Secretary of State, and no other.

Dr. Twinn: That is correct, but the hon. Gentleman will appreciate that there was considerable discussion among the Labour group on the GLC about whether it would set a higher precept or none at all. That would have left the authority with no money, and it would have become illegal. Although the hon. Gentleman's point is correct, behind it is hidden a devious approach to rate setting by the GLC.

We had to step in to protect London's ratepayers from paying even more. We must protect their assets. After all, ratepayers' money was responsible for the accumulation of assets in the first place, and it is wrong that these assets should now be transferred to other bodies which are not accountable to the ratepayers. I welcome the new clauses and hope that the whole House will support them.

Mr. Tony Banks: It is quite clear that the GLC still has the power to frighten the Government to death. The Prime Minister sits in her bunker reading copies of the *Daily Mail* and foaming at the mouth, and the Minister for Local Government reads an article by Ken Livingstone in *Labour Herald*, rushes to the House and tables a new clause.

New clauses 9 and 10 are retrospective in their intent and draconian in their aims. Why should the GLC co-operate with a measure based on party political spite which has not yet reached the statute book? At no stage has the GLC acted illegally. It has been dragged through the courts more times than I care to recollect. The courts are open to any Conservative Member or ratepayer to challenge any action by the GLC, yet not one Conservative Member can claim that the GLC has acted illegally.

The Minister has introduced a new clause based on a series of articles and political statements by members of the GLC, but not on any declared policy of the GLC. I agree that the metropolitan county councils have been dragged into this because of the paranoia of the Prime Minister and various Conservative Members over the GLC and activities at county hall.

It is amazing that Conservative Members who prate about democracy and freedom can support this sort of retrospective legislation, which is what new clauses 9 and 10 are all about.

We have got used to Ministers coming to the House to legalise their own illegalities. No one at county hall or in the metropolitan councils has broken the law, but with the health authority cuts the Secretary of State for the Environment broke his own law and had to bring in retrospective legislation. The Secretary of State for Transport was caught with his fingers in the till and was found by a high court judge to have acted improperly, so he used this place to legalise his illegality. We do not need lectures from Conservatives about obeying the law when we see so many law breakers looking at us across the Dispatch Box. Ministers have the great advantage that with the elected tyranny that they operate they can push through whatever laws they need to legalise their actions.

Mr. Marlow: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Banks: No, the hon. Gentleman has had a good crack of the whip. I have only a couple of minutes.

Mr. Marlow: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not think that the hon. Gentleman has given way.

Mr. Marlow: I am pleased to see that the hon. Gentleman has now given way. I ask him to make rather improbable use of his imagination. If he were a Minister in a Labour Government and a Conservative authority had a vast amount of money in a slush fund which it intended to apply for the perpetuation of Conservative interests, what action would he take?

Mr. Banks: I have never regarded the hon. Gentleman as one of the more imaginative Members of the House. The most improbable aspect of his flight of fancy is not the prospect of a Labour Government but the idea of my being a Minister. I find that unimaginable. However, I am sure that if those circumstances arose recourse could be had to the courts. That is precisely my point. If the GLC or any authority is acting illegally, the courts can be used. But the GLC and the metropolitan authorities have never acted illegally, nor could they do so, so the new clause is unnecessary.

I wish to put some specific questions to the Minister. Why is the figure £15,000? Does the Minister think that that will stop the GLC's advertising campaign? If so, I have some bad news for him. It is too late. That has already been assured. All that he will achieve is to overload his already overworked Department. Perhaps he will tell us how many additional civil servants he will need to deal with all these matters.

Mr. Kenneth Baker *rose*——

Mr. Banks: I have one more question and then the Minister can come in. Does he know how many transactions the GLC is involved in with contracts of £15,000 or more?

Mr. Baker: The hon. Gentleman said that he had good news for the House——

Mr. Banks: No, it is bad news for the Government.

Mr. Baker: It is bad news for the ratepayers of London. He said that the GLC had already approved its expenditure on propaganda in anticipation of these moves. Will the hon. Gentleman tell us how much expenditure has been approved?

Mr. Banks: Yes. I believe that something over £1 million is to be spent in the next 12 months informing Londoners of the undemocratic nature of the Government's proposals. That is not propaganda. It is information. We cannot get information out of the Government and we certainly shall not get it from the Tory newspapers. It is therefore incumbent on the GLC, which is democratically elected and accountable to the ratepayers of London, to explain to Londoners why local democracy and services are under so much threat from the Government's actions.

I have a couple more questions for the Minister. I hope that he will tell us how many civil servants he will need to take on and how many contracts above £15,000 he thinks that the GLC is involved in. In addition, perhaps he will tell us when and how the GLC was informed about the proposed clause. Was a messenger sent over from the Department of the Environment with a letter stuck in a twig? The clause became operable at midnight on Thursday, but the GLC did not know about it until late on Friday. In an organisation the size of the GLC and ILEA, with an annual turnover of about £3,000 million, it is highly likely that contracts of more than £15,000 were agreed. That is the invidious nature of the new clause.

6.15 pm

The Government's proposals will make it impossible for the GLC to conduct its business properly. The purpose of new clauses 9 and 10 is to get around the amendments passed by the House of Lords. The aim is to get around the existing legislation. Once again, it is clear that the Government have no great respect for the law or for Parliament, which they use and manipulate to serve their own party political interests. That is what it is all about, and that is what new clauses 9 and 10 are all about.

Mr. Maples: The powers sought by the Government are undoubtedly unusual, but we are dealing with very unusual circumstances. The subject of abuse of democracy and democratic rights has been much paraded in the debate, but the GLC itself is responsible for considerable abuses. We have just heard of one from the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), who said that a contract had been let to beat the deadline. My hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) and others make much of the constitutional aspect, but much depends on people behaving reasonably. The GLC does not behave reasonably——

Mr. Dykes *rose*——

Mr. Maples: Perhaps my hon. Friend will allow me to get a little further. Some of my hon. Friends seem not to realise what we are up against. The GLC has no regard for constitutional niceties. There have been appalling misuses of public money. Sometimes I think that those of my hon. Friends who oppose the Government's proposals simply do not appreciate what we are dealing with.

I should like to refer to just a few of the organisations which have received money from the GLC. I do not intend to tell horror stories about gay amusement centres and the like. I am referring to activities with constitutional implications. A great many of the GLC's activities are overtly party political, and public money is overtly used to finance party political activities.

The Local Government Campaign Unit—a euphemism for an organisation whose sole purpose is to put out anti-Government propaganda about local government legislation—has a staff of 10 and is funded partly by the GLC. The GLC has spent £50,000 on that. It is a Labour party political organisation paid for, among others, by the ratepayers of London. Another organisation, Capital, is run by a former Labour Member of Parliament and funded by the GLC. Its sole activity is to tell lies about London Regional Transport. That, too, is an overtly party political activity. Yet another organisation, Traffic, is funded largely by the GLC—to the tune of about £260,000 in the past few months. That organisation is paid to tell lies about the proposals for London's roads. As the south circular runs through my constituency, I have to deal with those lies almost every day.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West cannot, even in his wildest, most fantastical moments, believe that a £10 million advertising campaign is really informing the ratepayers of London. That is certainly not what the court concluded in the case of ILEA, which involved much the same kind of propaganda. A total of £10 million is a sizeable sum of money. The hon. Member talks about £1 million as though it were small change. That is how the GLC regards London ratepayers' money. That is not respect for constitutional niceties.

I take just one more example. The proposed nuclear power plant at Sizewell has nothing whatever to do with London, but one of the groups opposing it was funded largely by the GLC. Is that a constitutional use of London ratepayers' money?

One of the activities which the GLC got up to in its opposition to the Bill was to encourage its suppliers to write to their Members of Parliament, almost threatening to withdraw their contracts if they did not support the GLC line. *[Interruption.]* We have seen the letters that went round.

Many of my hon. Friends who oppose the Government do not understand what we are up against. They think that we are dealing with an old style Labour council which respects the same constitutional conventions and niceties as we do. It does not. The ruling group on the GLC is interested, not in the government of London, but in political power. Chaos and propaganda are political tools in their political armoury.

Mr. Dykes *rose*——

Mr. Maples: I shall give way in one moment. It is not reasonable to ask my right hon. Friend to fight this battle with one hand tied behind his back.

Mr. Dykes: Conservative Members are specially worried about the wrong use of money by the present leaders of the GLC. Even £1 million is only 0·1 per cent. of its total budget. That is not a reason for the Government recklessly to embark on a proposal to abolish the GLC. It is an argument to take additional powers in local government legislation. We established the GLC 20 years ago to curb those excessive spending activities. Why does my hon. Friend not give a correct and balanced picture?

Mr. Maples: I was not dealing with the general abolition argument. That has been debated at length. The clauses are designed for a specific circumstance — to protect the lengthy series of abuses which have occurred, but perhaps my hon. Friend is not interested in that. He should reflect on the fact that chaos and propaganda are simply political tools in the GLC's armoury. To ask my right hon. Friend and his colleagues to see this element of Government policy through without these clauses is asking them to fight with one hand tied behind their back. It is like going into the boxing ring wearing gloves and saying, "This is a Queensberry rules fight," when the other fellow is wearing knuckledusters and has a couple of thugs round the back of his opponent's corner.

The GLC could strip, and has stripped, assets. It has sold assets at substantial discounts to friendly local borough authorities in London. It would do so on a massive scale, and would almost certainly fund itself in exile. It will almost certainly set up a GLC in exile. If it could, it would finance the future of its propaganda battle and create as much chaos as possible in London. That is its objective in this whole sorry saga. If anything is unconstitutional, that is.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): The hon. Member for Lewisham, West (Mr. Maples) seems to wish to apply one set of rules to local government and another to central Government. They are both, by their nature, about the exercise of power and both can be governed by rules. As interventions during his speech made clear, the place for setting down general rules for local government is not at this stage in the Bill.

The two new clauses are evidence of the Government's muddle. When we began this series of pieces of legislation, with the famous line in the general election manifesto that the authorities would be abolished, we were given a Local Government (Interim Provisions) Bill. There were no clauses like these clauses in that Bill. The Bill went to the other place, returned, and in July last year, at short notice, two clauses like these clauses were inserted into that measure. The Secretary of State was asked to raise the limits for contracts to £1,000,000 or £500,000. The right hon. Gentleman said that the selected figures were not plucked from the air, that the Government fixed those levels as a matter of judgment, and that they wanted them to be sufficiently high to eliminate the need to refer small contracts to the Government, but not so high that many substantial contracts were passed.

At that time the Government could, if they had wished, have dealt with small contracts. They knew with whom they were dealing and what the evidence was, but they did not take any action. They did not do that then, nor when this Bill was introduced. Some clauses in the Bill deal with matters such as those with which we are dealing today. Clause 89 is an obvious example. However, the Government did not choose to intervene. At the last

moment, in the last days of a curtailed debate—perhaps the shortest Report stage of any Local Government Bill which has passed through the House this century—the Government tabled two new clauses. They could have foreseen that all the time. They seek to insert these two new clauses now because of their rush and misjudgment in the first place.

My second objection is that through the new clauses the Government seek to control what is handed on to successor authorities. There are two constitutional objections to that. The first is that many of the successor authorities are far less democratic than the authorities which they are intent on curbing — elected councils. Second, and more important, it is a novel proposition of constitutional government that one should be able to intervene in the right of successors to do what they like. Every day Governments provide for things that will affect their successors. The Budget is an example of that. To suggest that one should not be able to plan ahead is ludicrous.

My third objection is that the Government assume that no one has heard of their proposal to abolish the GLC. They are laying down laws that will govern the contracts that are entered into, when anyone in his right mind, negotiating with the GLC, is aware of the legal position and can take advice on how to deal with the situation. If the Government think that their proposals have not been noticed they are deceiving themselves, and it contradicts all that they have said in the past.

My fourth objection is over the delay. Although it may be relatively small, every time a contract, proposed sale or liability is entered into, right down to the ludicrously low level of £15,000, it must be vetted by a Government Department. That will produce further delay before action can happen, and a further element of uncertainty. That is not in the interests of efficient government, but is a consequence of the Government trying to intervene more and more.

The fifth, most ludicrous and unacceptable proposition, about which Conservative Back-Bench Members are also unhappy, is that the legislation introduces retrospective law. Although the Bill may not succeed in getting on to the statute book for months to come, irrespective of what may happen in the law-making process—we know what happened last year in the other place—this legislation will apply from the first day of spring this year.

The Government must be worried. I read in today's newspaper that the Prime Minister is contemplating making more peers in a week or two. That happened during the first part of this century. To ensure the passage of legislation, a substantial number of additional peers were created. Hon. Members who have read the article will know that not even a balanced number of peers are to be created. The Government will ensure that their already large majority is increased by a relatively disproportionate number of Conservative peers. Perhaps it is because the Government are even more worried this year that the other place, which does not have guillotines and does not have to do what the Government say, may give them an even harder time than it did 12 months ago.

Mr. Cormack: If the hon. Gentleman considers himself to be the defender of Asquith and Lloyd George, he is on dangerous ground.

Mr. Hughes: I am aware of the historical precedent, but, as the hon. Gentleman would also argue, just because something has been done by somebody in the past, it does not make righteous and holy someone doing the same thing at a later date.

The metropolitan counties have every reason to feel that the Government are being unfair to them. The only examples cited have affected London. That shows the folly of rushing into this sort of legislation, generalising powers, and seeking to say that the same rules should apply to Newcastle upon Tyne as to Lambeth, and to Merseyside as to Southwark. It is a ludicrous way to legislate, and yet another example of how the Government, at the last moment, seek to persuade the House to act.

Many people are unhappy, not only about the constitutional principles, but about the implications of the measure. Can the Minister assure the House that if this proposal and these new clauses are passed, whatever else may happen, no voluntary body or grants to voluntary bodies will be covered by the definitions of contracts or agreements in either of these new clauses? They must be sure that they will not be affected by the provisions.

I hope that the House will reject the new clauses. They are unconstitutional and dishonourable. If they are a problem to the House, they are a problem of the Government's making.

6.30 pm

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I am aware that the House wishes to move quickly to the next new clause, so I shall reply briefly to the debate.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) mentioned voluntary bodies. The fact is that the £15,000 level required for consent under section 137, for which we were chided by the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright), covers the bulk of grants to voluntary bodies. I was asked about the £15,000 level generally. In view of the record of apparent avoidance of the £100,000 level in the existing legislation, clearly we had to decide upon a significantly lower figure. As £15,000 was the figure mentioned in section 137, we believed it to be appropriate.

However, I emphasise that we shall be issuing general consents to ensure that many normal transactions can go through. It is not our intention to interfere with those normal transactions. We have introduced these measures because we fear abnormal arrangements and contracts. We had good evidence of that when I intervened in the speech of the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), who said that the GLC had already taken some action to approve contracts for propaganda worth £1 million. That is probably on the verge of illegality, because the authorities are supposed to come to us with contracts of £100,000. The district auditor may decide to take the GLC to court on that issue.

My hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) said that he wished to protect the constitution. He is not alone in that regard on the Government side. I hope that we all wish to protect the constitution. Let me give him some examples of the ways in which we have tried to protect the constitutions of some successor authorities. My hon. Friend rightly recognised the activities of the militant Left, and he would no more support them than would any Conservative Member, but it is a little naive for him to wring his hands after the event and say, "I deplore the activities of the militant Left in spending money in this way," when by sensible and

[Mr. Kenneth Baker]

rational anticipatory action some of those consequences can be avoided. When I was asked for examples, I gave the example from West Yorkshire of action taken last Thursday afternoon. Incidentally, the director general of the GLC had a letter delivered to him by hand on Thursday afternoon, as did the chief executives of the county councils——

Mr. Tony Banks: I have a copy of a letter which the director general sent to *The Times*, which makes it clear that he was not advised until 9.20 am on Friday.

Mr. Baker: That may be due to the internal arrangements of the GLC. I assure the hon. Gentleman that letters were taken by hand not only to the director general's office but to the offices of the chief executives of all the metropolitan county councils on Thursday afternoon.

The successor authorities of Greater Manchester—at least the Conservative boroughs—have made it clear to the Government that they are alarmed about the plans of Greater Manchester county council, first, to exhaust reserves; secondly, to make contracts for pet development projects which the districts will be obliged to fulfil after abolition; and, thirdly, to agree major contracts in the weeks before abolition. The successor authorities ask me, "What will you do about our constitutional position?" They say, "The county councils should consult us, because after 1 April 1986 we shall have to pay the bills." I must protect their constitutional position. There are two sides to the matter

Mr. Cormack: I accept that completely, as my right hon. Friend will know, but he also knows that, like the Irishman, I would not have started from this point. I would have left this matter to the ballot box and the will of the electorate. Far from being a folk hero, Mr. Livingstone would have been seen into oblivion by the electorate if we had attacked him on these matters as we should have done.

Mr. Baker: That may or may not be the case. I appreciate my hon. Friend's position on the abolition legislation, but I must act to protect the interests of the successor authorities and their ratepayers. Enormous obligations could have been undertaken by the GLC and the metropolitan counties between now and abolition, which would have imposed enormous financial burdens on the metropolitan districts and the London boroughs. If I did nothing about that, I should be failing in my duty.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, West (Mr. Maples) said, in this battle it is no good fighting with one hand tied behind one's back. But that would be the result if we did not take these measures. There is clear evidence from statements by Mr. Livingstone and other members of the GLC that they wish to create an opportunity for life after death, a GLC in exile, or, as my hon. Friend the Member for Edmonton (Dr. Twinn) said, empires preserved after abolition. That is clearly not the intention of the House, which gave a Second Reading to the Bill. It would subvert the will of Parliament and might impose enormous financial abligations on successor authorities.

Mr. Vivian Bendall (Ilford, North): Can my right hon. Friend confirm that the cases that he has mentioned of asset stripping and agreeing large contracts will not be challengeable in the courts by the successor authorities?

Mr. Baker: Almost all actions of the Secretary of State or of local authorities are subject to judicial review in one way or another, but in many cases it would be difficult to prove that the contract should not have been made.

The tradition of local government is one of consent and reasonableness, which many militant councils are not prepared to accept. Local government is changing, as I have said repeatedly. I introduce these measures with much regret, but I believe that they will protect the interests of the ratepayers in the metropolitan areas and in Greater London, and the financial interests of the successor councils. I hope that the clauses will be added to the Bill.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 324, Noes 189.

Division No. 167] **[8.38 pm**

AYES

Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Hon Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(N Luton)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(S Antrim)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Griffiths, E. *(B'y St Edm'ds)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John

Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(SW N'folk)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(W Herts)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Gregory *(Derby N)*
Knight, Mrs Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Richard
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
McCusker, Harold
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, J.
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parris, Matthew
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rifkind, Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev W. M. *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spence, John
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(N Hertf'dshire)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, J.
Sumberg, David
Taylor, Rt Hon John David
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Carol Mather and
Mr. Robert Boscawen.

NOES

Abse, Leo
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Rt Hon J.
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Cartwright, John
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Concannon, Rt Hon J. D.
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Cormack, Patrick
Cowans, Harry
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Dykes, Hugh
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Ellis, Raymond
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
Garrett, W. E.
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, John
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Central Fife)*
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr. Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hume, John
Janner, Hon Greville
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald

Kennedy, Charles
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Edward
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKelvey, William
Mackenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Park, George
Pendry, Tom
Penhaligon, David
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Redmond, M.
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ryman, John
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'kl'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wainwright, R.
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
White, James
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Allen McKay and
Mr. Robin Corbett.

Question accordingly agreed to.
Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New clause 9

CONTROL OF DISPOSALS AND CONTRACTS

'(1) Any disposal made after 21st March 1985 in contravention of section 8 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act 1984 shall be void; and section 128(2) of the principal Act (protection of purchases etc.) shall not have effect in relation to the consent required by the said section 8 for any disposal made after that date.

(2) As respects any contract entered into after that date subsection (1) of section 9 of the said Act of 1984 shall have effect with the substitution for the reference to £250,000 and for each reference to £100,000 of a reference to £15,000.

(3) No contract entered into after the said 21st March in contravention of the said section 9 shall be enforceable against a successor authority; and accordingly subsection (5) of that section shall not apply to any contract entered into after that date.

(4) An application under section 10 of the said Act of 1984 (disqualification for membership of local authority) may be made by a successor authority and in that section "local authority" shall include the Common Council and the Council of the Isles of Scilly.

(5) Where by reason of a disposal or contract made after the said 21st March in contravention of section 8 or 9 of the said Act of 1984 the High Court has power to make an order under section 10 of that Act in respect of any person it shall also have power to order him to pay to the Greater London Council or, as the case may be, to the metropolitan county council (or, in the case of an order made on or after the abolition date, to the appropriate residuary body) a sum not exceeding—

(a) in the case of a disposal in contravention of section 8, an amount equal to the amount or value of the consideration for the disposal or, if there is no consideration or it is less than the market value of what is disposed of, an amount equal to that market value;

(b) in the case of a contract in contravention of section 9, an amount equal to the amount or value of the consideration in respect of the matters by virtue of which the contract is subject to that section.

(6) No order shall be made in respect of any person under the said section 10 or subsection (5) above if the court is satisfied that he acted in the belief that the disposal or contract had the consent of the Secretary of State and that any conditions attached to the consent had been complied with.

(7) In this section "successor authority" has the same meaning as in section *(Control of liabilities affecting successor authorities)* above.'.—*[Mr. Kenneth Baker.]*

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

Mr. Tony Banks: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I believe that the right hon. Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker) may inadvertently have misled the House when he said during the discussion on new clauses 9 and 10 that the Greater London council was advised on Thursday afternoon. This particular clause came into effect at midnight on Thursday, and my information is that the director general of the GLC did not receive a letter until 9.20 on Friday morning. It was time-stamped when it came into his office. Since the Minister said that the letter was delivered directly to the director general's office, I cannot believe that it would have been sitting around in county hall during the course of the afternoon. Will the Minister double check with his civil servants about when the letter was delivered, because this is a serious matter?

Mr Kenneth Baker: Of course, I shall assist the House and the hon. Gentleman. The advice that I have received —I have already double-checked it, but I shall check it again—is that letters were taken by hand to each of the county councils and to the offices of the director general and of the chief executive. I shall find out what happened. We certainly did our part in delivering the letter to the various authorities.

New clause 8

GRANTS TO VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS

'(1) A scheme for the making of grants to eligible voluntary organisations may be made for Greater London or a metropolitan county by the constituent councils, that is to say—

(a) in relation to Greater London, the London borough councils and the Common Council; and

(b) in relation to a metropolitan county, the councils of the metropolitan districts comprised in the county.

(2) Any such scheme shall provide—

(a) for the grants to be made by one of the constituent councils designated for that purpose by the scheme; and

(b) for the other constituent councils to contribute as provided by subsection (3) below to the expenditure incurred by the designated council in making the grants or otherwise in discharging its functions under the scheme.

(3) The constituent councils shall be required to contribute to any expenditure of the designated council which has been incurred with the approval of at least two-thirds of the constituent councils; and the amounts of the contributions shall be determined so that the expenditure in respect of which they are payable is borne by the constituent councils in proportion to the populations of their respective areas.

(4) For the purposes of subsection (3) above the population of any area shall be taken to be the number estimated by the

Registrar General and certified by him to the Secretary of State by reference to such date as the Secretary of State may from time to time determine.

(5) The total expenditure incurred under a scheme by a designated council in Greater London or a metropolitan county in any financial year (including the amounts recoverable under the scheme from other councils) shall not exceed such amount as is for the time being prescribed for that area by an order made by the Secretary of State.

(6) A scheme shall not provide for the making of grants before the beginning of the financial year after that in which the scheme is made and shall continue in force until the end of at least two financial years after that in which it is made.

(7) A scheme may, in the absence of agreement between all the constituent councils, be made by a majority of those councils so as to be binding on all of them; but a council shall not be designated by a scheme except with its consent.

(8) A scheme may contain such supplementary provisions as the councils making the scheme think necessary or expedient and, subject to subsection (6) above, may be revoked by those councils (or, in the absence of agreement between all of them, by a majority of those councils) with effect from the end of any financial year after that in which the decisions to revoke the scheme is made.

(9) The council designated by a scheme may by giving not less than twelve months notice to the other constituent councils withdraw its consent to act as designated council with effect from the end of any financial year not earlier than the second financial year after that in which the scheme was made; and in that event the scheme shall terminate when the withdrawal takes effect.

(10) In this section "voluntary organisation" means a body the activities of which are carried on otherwise than for profit but does not include any public or local authority and "eligible voluntary organisation" means, in relation to Greater London or a metropolitan county, a voluntary organisation whose activities will directly or indirectly benefit either the whole of Greater London or that county or any part of it extending beyond the area of any particular constituent council.

(11) The powers conferred by this section shall not be regarded as restricting those conferred by section 137 of the principal Act (power to incur expenditure for purposes not authorised by any other enactment) and accordingly the reference to any other enactment in subsection (1) of that section shall not include a reference to this section.

(12) As respect expenditure incurred before the abolition date subsection (3) shall have effect with the substitution for the reference to two-thirds of the constituent councils of a reference to a majority of those councils.'.

Brought up, and read the First time.—[Sir George Young.]

The Parliamntary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Sir George Young): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss the following amendments to the proposed new clause:

(a), in subsection (1), after 'by', insert

'the regional economic and social councils established by subsections (2A) and (2B) below, and'.

(b), in subsection (1)*(a)*, after first 'London', insert

'the Greater London Regional Economic and Social Council'.

(c), in subsection (1)*(b)*, after 'county', insert

'each metropolitan county regional social and economic council'.

(d), at end of subsection (1)*(b)*, insert—

'(1A) *(a)* There shall be established for Greater London and for each metropolitan county a body corporate which shall be known in the case of each body corporate for Greater London as the Greater London Regional Economic and Social Council and in the case of a metropolitan county by the name of that county with the addition of the words "Regional Economic and Social Council."

(b) The Regional Economic and Social Council shall consist of members elected by the local government electors of Greater London, or as the case may be, of the appropriate metropolitan county, in accordance with this Act and of Representation of the People Act 1983.

(1B) In addition to the function mentioned in subsection (1) above a Regional Economic and Social Council shall have the powers and duties set out in Schedule ( ) (Functions of Regional economic and Social Councils) and in carrying out its functions under subsection (1) above a Regional Economic and Social Council shall have regard to its duties under that Schedule.

(e), after '(2)', insert 'as respects constituent councils,'.

(f), in subsection (6), after 'scheme', insert 'made by a constituent council'.

(g), leave out subsection (7).

(h), in subsection (8), after 'scheme', insert 'made by a constituent council'.

(i), leave out subsection (12).

New clause 1—*Support for voluntary organisations*—

'The Government shall provide transitional support under the London Government (Social Needs) Act 1969 for expenditure by London boroughs or metropolitan district councils, acting under the powers conferred by section 46 above or under any other of their powers, on revenue support to voluntary organisations benefiting their areas which are funded in the year before the abolition date wholly or partly by the Greater London Council or a metropolitan county council; and such transitional support shall be provided annually for the four years after the abolition date up to an amount comparable in real terms to spending by the Greater London Council and the metropolitan county councils on grants to voluntary organisations in the year before the abolition date.'.

Government amendment 18.

Amendment No. 107, new schedule—*'Functions of Regional Economic and Social Councils*—

1. Each Regional Economic and Social Council shall

(a) develop, coordinate and annually review a regional strategy to improve the welfare of their area and its inhabitants which shall cover and take account of the social, economic, environmental, recreational and cultural, and, where appropriate, the housing needs of the area and that strategy shall include measures to combat the problems of homelessness, drug abuse, and alcoholism and action to combat racial disadvantage, to promote equal opportunities and the needs of black and ethnic minority communities, services for ex-offenders, people with disabilities, disadvantaged families and children and elderly people, services for women, advice and counselling services, community transport and leisure services.

(b) have the power to make grants to voluntary organisations.

(c) highlight new and emerging needs, develop programmes to inform public opinion and attitudes and promote innovative and experimental projects and services.

2.—(1) Each Regional Economic and Social Council shall publish an annual statement of its intentions with regard to policy development and grant aid, giving details of the criteria and policy proposed to be adopted by that council, and make that statement widely available to members of the public, and to voluntary and community organisations and other interested and relevant bodies.

(2) In preparing the statement mentioned in 2(1) above, each Regional Economic and Social Council shall consult with voluntary and community organisations, the councils of London boroughs and metropolitan districts (as the case may be) and other interested and relevant bodies and members of the public.

3. Each Regional Economic and Social Council shall—

(a) conduct or assist in the conducting of investigations into, and the collection of information relating to any matter concerning the social, economic, environmental, cultural, recreational and welfare of the inhabitants of its area;

(b) make, or assist in making arrangements whereby any such information and the results of any such investigation are made available to any other local authority concerned with local government in its area, any Government department, any voluntary or community organisation or the public.

[Mr. Speaker]

4. The powers conferred by this Schedule and Section 47 above shall not be regarded as restricting in any way the powers and duties of the councils of London boroughs or districts in metropolitan counties.'.

Sir George Young: New clause 8 would replace clause 47 which is deleted by amendment 18. It deals with the arrangement for collective funding of voluntary bodies which provide a countywide or Londonwide service. The Government have always been determined to provide districts and boroughs with the means to work together to fund these bodies. However, there was a feeling at the Committee stage, voiced most persuasively by my hon. Friend the Member for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock), but also by other hon. Members, that the proposals in the original Bill could be improved. My hon. Friend pointed out that there was a need to strengthen the arrangements by providing for a lead borough or district to run an agreed scheme of grant funding. Our new proposal will make more stable collective funding for London and countywide organisations and will also provide a single point to which they can apply for grants. It will also allow a proper grants unit to be set up to consider needs across the whole area and to advise local councillors on a coherent approach to grant giving.

From the many letters which I have received from voluntary bodies in London, it appears that they were concerned that there should be one single focal point to which they could apply, a focal point which in turn could provide a coherent policy for voluntary giving in London. I was also able to respond at that time to the view of many voluntary bodies that the limits which we had originally proposed to set on funding under the scheme — £10 million in London and £3 million for the metropolitan counties—were too low. As I said in Committee, those figures have been withdrawn for reconsideration.

We have consulted the voluntary organisations at all stages and we continue to do so. Last week I met representatives of the metropolitan councils for voluntary service with my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt) and next week I shall be seeing the London voluntary bodies. Taken together, the two developments which I have just mentioned have been welcomed by the voluntary sector. The chairman of the National Council for Voluntary Organisations wrote to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State saying this:

"I am glad that George Young was able to announce some improvements on 26 February and warmly welcome his repeated assurances that the Government's mind is open and that the representations made in Committee and elsewhere about the level of transitional finance and other matters will be listened to with care."

I would not pretend that we have convinced all of the organisations that all their anxieties will be relieved. On this subject, may I quote what the chairman of the London Voluntary Service Council has said in a letter that he has written to me:

"I and colleagues in the voluntary sector in London welcome these proposals as an indication of your concern for the problems we shall face, but must stress that they fall short of allaying the deep anxieties that exist among voluntary organisations in a number of respects."

Of course I understand those anxieties and I take the point, but I cannot accept that it is entirely within the power of central Government to provide a complete answer. The only full assurance which can be given for the future funding of local groups has to come from the local authorities themselves. If one believes in devolving decisions to local government that must be right. Whatever Parliament provides, it is for the district and borough councils to decide at the end of the day the support that is to go to their local voluntary organisations.

This makes it especially welcome that the London boroughs, under the leadership of David Cobbold, have already made good progress in preparing for grant-giving in 1986. At a local level, I noticed in last week's edition of the *Ealing Gazette* that the London borough of Ealing has already advertised, asking local organisations currently funded by the GLC to get in touch with it by the end of May. But there has been promising progress on the boroughs' collective grant scheme. I understand that the boroughs will be advertising the post of head of the grants unit very shortly. They have already interviewed management consultants who will advise quickly on the best way of constituting the unit and its terms of reference. Progress has been particularly good on housing grants where the London Boroughs Association has decided that 61 organisations providing for the single homeless should be invited to apply for a grant and that this will apply to a number of co-ordinating bodies, organisations providing day centres for the single homeless and all women's aid hostels in London. In short, a scheme in London is already well under way.

Recently the director of SHAC wrote to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. He said:

"We have received a copy of the London Boroughs Association report on the funding of housing organisations under the London-wide arrangements. The report, and indeed its approval by the LBA, is most heartening, as for the first time we have been given an indication that we may expect continuing financial support at a level which will allow us broadly to maintain our current level of services. Obviously there are still hurdles to be crossed before this is translated into a firm decision, supported by the necessary majority of London boroughs, but it is nevertheless a considerable advance on the position prior to our discussion early in December."

Therefore the arrangements in London are encouraging. However, I was disappointed to see that the Association of Labour Authorities in London has apparently boycotted the new measures that are being introduced to ensure continuity of funding for London's voluntary bodies. I very much hope that it will review the rather negative posture that it appears to have adopted. The picture in the metropolitan councils is not at this stage quite so good. As yet, the district councils have been slow to respond to the request of voluntary bodies to make preparations for 1986. I shall do all I can to get things going. Indeed, I am about to write to all the metropolitan districts to ask them what arrangements they are making and to encourage them to prepare in good time. Some districts may be reluctant at the moment to acknowledge publicly that the county councils will be abolished, but I think that once the political principle is settled they will fund worthwhile voluntary bodies. When they do so they will find the powers in this clause are ready to be used.

7 pm

Briefly, the new clause provides that a simple majority of boroughs or districts may set up a scheme of collective grant-giving and appoint one of their number as the lead borough or district to run it. The provision of a 51 per cent. majority for setting up a scheme is to simplify and expedite the task of getting these arrangements going both in London and in the metropolitan counties, given the very tight timetable if new grant schemes are to be fully

operational by 1 April 1986. It is part of the package of changes which we provided in response to the wish of voluntary bodies to make collective grant-giving more stable and workable.

Mr. Colin Moynihan (Lewisham, East): I welcome the idea that lead boroughs should be appointed to run the schemes, but many voluntary organisations in Lewisham, which have made representations to me to pass on to the Government, are worried about the transitional arrangements and the amount of money available under those arrangements. Can the Minister offer some ray of hope to such voluntary organisations?

Sir George Young: I understand my hon. Friend's anxiety. I shall deal with transitional funding later.

Mr. Tim Yeo (Suffolk, South): I would stress that we should not be put off by the small number of lunatic voluntary organisations to which well-publicised, but relatively small, grants have been made. The many legitimate voluntrary organisations which are doing valuable work are worried about the level of funding during the transitional period.

Sir George Young: The Government have said that the majority of grants which the GLC gives are to worth while voluntary organisations which will be supported by Londoners and hon. Members of all parties representing London constituencies. I understand the anxieties and I shall deal shortly with the arrangements for transitional funding.

Under the new clause it will be for the local authorities to decide the details of the scheme, but certain elements are provided in the clause itself. Expenditure on grants must receive two thirds support from the districts or boroughs. The same majority is needed to pay for any other expenditure incurred, including administrative expenses. Once two thirds agree, all the councils will be required to contribute a share calculated in relation to the size of their population.

Having a statutory scheme and a lead borough will make collective grant-giving more workable. To provide greater stability we are also requiring a period of notice before a scheme can be ended, or a lead borough can resign or be removed. This will protect both the financial position of the lead borough and its staff and give reasonable assurance to the bodies relying on local authority grants and to the other boroughs and districts.

Again, as a protection to those councils which do not approve grants, but are nevertheless required to pay, we are retaining the power for the Secretary of State to set a ceiling on collective grant-giving. We have withdrawn the original figure we floated, but the need for a power remains.

As with clause 47, the whole of the scheme involves a new grant-giving power outside section 137 expenditure, the restrictions of which cause concern to the hon. Member for Tyne Bridge (Mr. Cowans). But the new arrangements differ from clause 47 in recognising through subsection (12) of the new clause that the administrative expenses incurred before abolition day should require only a simple majority for approval. The Opposition have sought to remove this provision, but I hope that they will not press their amendment when I assure them that this is another change directed to getting the arrangements off the ground as quickly as possible. This must be in the interests of those voluntary bodies which are concerned about whether the schemes will be worked up in time for April 1986. I should like it to be clear that this does not permit grants to be given on a simple majority. Only the setting up costs, the processing of applications, and so on, before 1 April 1986 will be covered by this provision. It is sensible for the majority to be 51 per cent. because these financial decisions stem directly from the agreement to set up a scheme and to get it going in the first year—which will also need only 51 per cent. agreement.

Mr. Moynihan: May I urge my hon. Friend to answer my question about the transitional arrangements and the money that will be available to voluntary organisations?

Sir George Young: I shall now deal with the transitional support arrangements and with new clause 1. Our original proposals for the future funding of voluntary bodies, published in September 1984, suggested that the Government would pay 75 per cent. grant on up to £5 million worth of voluntary projects. That was to help the local groups, working within a single district or borough, such as Lewisham, which would not be eligible for support under the collective scheme that I have described. Since the proposals were published we have been holding meetings with voluntary bodies and listening to their views. Anxieties have been expressed today by some of my hon. Friends.

I have always made it clear that most of the grants after abolition will come from existing resources released by the abolition of the upper tier council and its precepts. We offered £5 million of extra money to ease transitional problems, but it was never our intention that only £5 million worth of projects should continue.

In the light of the further evidence now available and of the anxieties expressed by voluntary organisations and by some of my hon. Friends, I am happy to say that we have decided to give grant on up to £10 million worth of projects for four years after abolition rather than the £5 million originally proposed. That is double the amount proposed before and it will enable more projects to be supported. It will make the transition after abolition smoother.

Representations from the voluntary organisations make it clear that the concern and uncertainty is greatest about what will happen in the first year after the GLC and the metropolitan counties are abolished. To meet that concern, in 1986-87 central Government will provide 75 per cent. of the support—that is £7·5 million instead of £3·75 million—twice that which was originally proposed. That will make it easier for local authorities to continue supporting worthwhile schemes in the crucial first year after abolition.

In each of the subsequent three years the £10 million worth of schemes will continue to be grant-aided, but the proportion of grant coming from central Government will be tapered to 50 per cent. in the second and third years and to 75 per cent. in the fourth. In the fifth year the transition will be complete and responsibility for grant aid will rest with the local authorities.

Mr. Fred Silvester (Manchester, Withington): My hon. Friend said that the earlier scheme was devised to support voluntary bodies within one district. Will the new enlarged scheme cover bodies operating in more than one district?

Sir George Young: The schemes which cover more than one district come under the collective scheme set out in new clause 8. The transitional funding is for schemes which operate within one borough but which are funded at present either by the GLC or the metropolitan councils. The increase from £5 million to £10 million worth of projects applies to borough-based or district-based schemes.

We need detailed information about GLC grant-giving to help plan for grants to voluntary bodies after abolition. When the LBA asked, it was told that GLC officers were too busy to provide the information. It is several weeks since the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) suggested that the GLC grant print-out should be tabled. It is four weeks since we issued a section 5 notice requesting the information. We still do not have that information, although I know that an up-to-date and comprehensive print-out exists at county hall.

All that the GLC has done so far is to give us polite excuses. The GLC is being less helpful than it should be. Perhaps it would rather voluntary organisations suffered than recognise that abolition will come and that sensible preparations must be made. I ask the GLC to come off its high horse and to look, as we have, to positive arrangements to safeguard the future of voluntary organisations, and to prove, by co-operating fully with us, that it puts the interests of voluntary groups first.

The arrangements that I have outlined provide additional assurances for the voluntary sector. The essence of new clause 8 is that it meets our commitment to provide for stable and equitable funding arrangements for bodies serving a wide area of London or the metropolitan counties. The increase in transitional grants that I have announced will reassure the more local groups. We have built on clause 46 as it was presented to the Standing Committee and we have taken account of the misgivings expressed there. I believe that we now have a proposal that will work well. I commend it to the House.

Mr. Harry Cowans (Tyne Bridge): If the Minister is saying what the new clause would do, several people would welcome it. He quoted in his favour a letter—I do not know who it was from—which said that the Government had listened with care. It was hardly wildly enthusiastic about the new proposals.

I congratulate the Government on recognising, after much prompting in Committee, that there is a problem. Unfortunately the remedy, if anything, makes the matter slightly worse. The Minister is on record as saying that he wants a grant unit, but the new clause does not provide for it. Local authorities might set up a lead authority, but there is nothing in the legislation that suggests how voluntary organisations will be protected if the local authorities decide not to set up a lead authority. There will be no common unit. Our amendment (d) takes care of that because it grasps the nettle that the Government are not prepared to grasp. They go halfway there by saying that there should be an overall body to look after the voluntary service; then they step back from the action by saying, "We shall do that if a local authority supplies a lead authority." We believe that one cannot step back from the problem. We accept that there should be one unit. We go forward into the battle and appoint that unit in amendment (d). The Minister steps back and opts out.

There is nothing to protect a voluntary body if a lead authority is not set up. That may or may not happen. The Minister cannot tell whether a lead authority will be set up. He says that in London the scheme is well under way. I remind every hon. Member in the House that much of the debate today has been about the GLC, but there are also six metropolitan districts in which there are numerous voluntary bodies. It is not good enough for the Minister for Local Government and the Parliamentary Under-Secretary to refer only to the GLC. The legislation covers the metropolitan counties. The quicker Ministers recognise that, the better. Every time they quote anything in aid—there is little that they can quote in aid—they refer to the GLC. On the Tory Benches there has been little mention of the metropolitan counties. Everything that has been quoted has been about the GLC, and people in metropolitan districts are getting very tired of that. We are all involved in the legislation, for which the Government are responsible.

Sir George Young: I must make it clear that new clause 8 applies to the metropolitan districts as well as to the GLC.

Mr. Cowans: The point that I am making is that the whole legislation applies to the metropolitan districts, yet Tory Members refer only to the GLC. That cannot be denied, and *Hansard* will show that fact.

The £10 million for the voluntary organisations is far too little, and the Minister knows it. It is nowhere near what is required. It is not as much as is being spent now, so it is completely wrong to say that the new clause will protect the voluntary organisations. Patently it will do nothing of the sort, and, what is more, the voluntary organisations know it.

It is a fact that £14 million is currently being spent. The Minister goes further in the urban programme and talks about an extra amount of money for that programme. Again, it falls far short of what is required just to maintain voluntary organisations at their present level. The Minister understands that, and he should be open enough to say that, while he has done something, he can give no assurance to the voluntary organisations that this new clause or any other, without our amendment, will do anything for them.

The Minister accepts, under pressure, that the two thirds majority is a bad thing, but he accepts it only because he knows that the Government are making a hotchpotch of trying to operate the transitional period. If it is good enough for the open scheme to have a simple majority, that should be good enough overall. In that way, the local voluntary organisations would not spend all that time lobbying five or six districts to try to get the two thirds majority. It is an absolute nonsense. The Minister has looked at, but certainly has not grasped, the nettle.

I hope that the Minister will take back the new clause and think about what will happen if there is no lead authority. Is the Minister prepared to put the matter to one of the new bodies? Alternatively, is he prepared to do nothing and to wash his hands of it? If there is no lead authority, voluntary organisations may go to the wall. Is the Minister prepared to look at the amount of money that is currently being spent and at least try to match it over a period? Is he also prepared not to spend so much time telling people how to withdraw after two years? Will he go back to the drawing board and reconsider the transitional arrangements, because the nonsense in the new clause will not cover them?

7.15 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes: I shall be brief because we have such a ludicrously short time to deal with the matter. As the hon. Member for Tyne Bridge (Mr. Cowans) said, to set out a two thirds criterion for deciding which bodies get money and then decide that a scheme can be set up with a simple majority of 50 per cent. plus one is ludicrous, biased and weighted. The Government are doing it only because they know that they will be able to retain more political control through it. That is one of the points of our objection, and it is one reason why we have tabled new clause 1.

The voluntary sector is the vital third element in our national support for a whole range of activities. At the moment it is funded by a multiplicity of agencies. Elsewhere the Government have undertaken that no one will be worse off as a result of abolition. They should apply the same rule to the voluntary sector. It is not good enough to give as little as they think they can get away with, to make an announcement in Committee that they will give £5 million, then realise that many of their own right hon. and hon. Friends as well as Opposition Members think that that is not enough, and come to the House with a second compromise saying that they will give £10 million. The Government should accept what is in new clause 1, whereby the voluntary sector has the same amount of funds as before abolition. That is vital. People across a range of services depend on the voluntary sector.

I should like to add two other simple and straightforward points. First, one of the reasons why we must continue supporting the voluntary sector to this extent is that in many places local authorities, such as the borough of Southwark, are spending up to their limit. Southwark is one of the places where an authority is spending within a few percentage points of what it can raise by other means. It is therefore ludicrous to say that, just because in some cases spending up to the limit of what can be raised by the 2p rate does not happen, there will be no other money. That money is vital, and rate capping makes the matter worse.

Secondly, the voluntary sector is all about bringing more people into participating in decisions, activities and power. The voluntary sector, whether concerning pensioners, ethnic minorities, the handicapped, or others, is all about helping people to help themselves. The Government have declared that they are in favour of that. What they are trying to do falls lamentably short. I sincerely hope that the other place—if this place cannot force the Government to do it—will make sure that it does not let the Government get away with their niggardly compromise, which is unacceptable to me and all my alliance colleagues.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): By common consent among those who concern themselves with the facts, many worthwhile voluntary organisations will face ruin if the six metropolitan councils and the GLC disappear. These seven important councils now fund voluntary effort to the tune of £60 million a year. Without their help, many successful voluntary bodies would have already collapsed under the weight of the heavy new VAT burden imposed upon them by the Government.

Voluntary organisations, large and small, are in danger, and there is now an urgent need for the House as a whole to recognise what is at stake in terms of reducing help for the elderly, disabled and other vulnerable groups if this Bill, even as amended, becomes law.

While the councils now threatened with extinction by the Government have been giving enormous help to voluntary organisations, the Government have been filching millions of pounds from the voluntary sector in VAT. That is the background to any judgment we make about the Government and their new clause.

The Spastics Society lost no less than £507,000 in tax to the Chancellor in the year 1983-84 alone. Dr. Barnardo's had to pay even more, and both the Royal National Institute for the Blind and the Royal National Institute for the Deaf were heavy losers. Instead of mugging the good Samaritans in this way, the Government must now be made to face up to the consequences of abolition for the voluntary sector in this country.

I wish to quote a letter sent to me this week by Sir John Cox, the director of the Spastics Society, who rightly enjoys the respect of both sides of this House. He said:

"The Budget has hit us hard. There were no concessions on VAT and in fact we shall now have to find £30,000 more to cover VAT for advertising. As you know, most of our advertising is educational to help the transition of handicapped people back into the community. We will either have to find that sum of money or cut back . . . We particularly asked that VAT on bringing fire requirements up to date should be exempt. I think it is obscene that we should pay £30,000 in 1984-85 to bring the standard up to Government regulations."

Newspaper advertising is vital to charities. They are not allowed to advertise on television for fund-raising purposes, and they rely on advertising in newspapers not only to raise money but also to increase public awareness of the important work that they do.

One voluntary organisation after another has been in touch with me to insist that the resources now made available to them from the six metropolitan counties and the GLC should be protected by this House. I have been contacted by the Greater Manchester Council for Voluntary Service, which feels strongly that the very existence of some important voluntary organisations is at stake. I hope that the House will take the message and that right hon. and hon. Members on both sides will recognise how deeply important this debate is for the future of voluntaryism in this country.

Mr. Lawler: I welcome the changes that my hon. Friend the Minister has announced today, and I believe that they will be welcomed by the vast majority of voluntary organisations in the GLC and metropolitan county areas. It is highly appropriate that the needs of charity and voluntary organisations should be decided at local level because it is at that level that people best know the needs and are best able to value the work done by those organisations. It is nonsense to claim that the county knows best when most of the work is carried out at district level.

I am especially concerned about youth voluntary organisations. In 1982-83, 78 out of 96 local authorities did not spend their grant-related expenditure assessment on youth service. Therefore, £22 million which should have been spent on the needs of young people and the youth service was not spent.

Certain councils—predominantly Socialist—spend the vast proportion of their funds on the statutory youth service and only a minimal amount on the voluntary organisations. For example, Doncaster spent as little as 0·7 per cent. on youth service voluntary organisations. I hope that

[Mr. Lawler]

Ministers will do what they can to correct that and that local councillors and voluntary organisations will press the councils to honour their obligations towards the voluntary sector.

I am also concerned about ethnic minorities. A great deal of misplaced lobbying has suggested that ethnic minority organisations will go without grant. It is at the local level that councils recognise the needs of those groups, not at county level. Across a county or across the GLC there are many different types of ethnic minority groups. For example, in the city of Bradford £720,000 is being spent on 32 ethnic minority related projects. West Yorkshire spends £64,000 on its community programme, none of which goes to projects directly related to the needs of ethnic minorities. That proves that the needs of the ethnic minority organisations can be best met at district level.

Another area of concern is the funding of the regional headquarters of youth organisations. I hope that Ministers will ensure that responsible districts will take up the funding of regional headquarters to ensure their continued development across counties.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time.

Amendment proposed, (d) in line 6 at end insert—

'(1A) *(a)* There shall be established for Greater London and for each metropolitan county a body corporate which shall be known in the case of each body corporate for Greater London as the Greater London Regional Economic and Social Council and in the case of a metropolitan county by the name of that county with the addition of the words "Regional Economic and Social Council."

(b) The Regional Economic and Social Councils shall consist of members elected by the local government electors of Greater London, or as the case may be, of the appropriate metropolitan county, in accordance with this Act and of Representation of the People Act 1983.

(1B) In addition to the function mentioned in subsection (1) above a Regional Economic and Social Council shall have the powers and duties set out in Schedule ( ) (Functions of Regional Economic and Social Councils) and in carrying out its functions under subsection (1) above a Regional Economic and Social Council shall have regard to its duties under that Schedule.— *[Mr. Straw.]*

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 184, Noes 325.

Division No. 168] **[7.30 pm**

AYES

Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Concannon, Rt Hon J. D.
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cowans, Harry
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Ellis, Raymond
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freud, Clement
Garrett, W. E.
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, John
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Central Fife)*
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr. Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
Mackenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Park, George
Pendry, Tom
Penhaligon, David
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Redmond, M.
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ryman, John
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R.*(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'kl'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wainwright, R.
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
White, James
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John Cartwright and
Mr. John McWilliam.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*

Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Hon Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(N Luton)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(S Antrim)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Griffiths, E. *(B'y St Edm'ds)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Hill, James
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(W Herts)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Gregory *(Derby N)*
Knight, Mrs Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter. *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
McCusker, Harold
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, J.
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parris, Matthew
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rifkind, Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev W. M. *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spence, John
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(N Hertf'dshire)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, J.
Sumberg, David
Taylor, Rt Hon John David
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Raymond
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Carol Mather and
Mr. Robert Boscawen.

Question accordingly negatived.
Clause added to the Bill.

Clause 1

ABOLITION OF GLC AND METROPOLITAN COUNTY COUNCILS

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): I beg to move amendment No. 68, in page 1, line 15, leave out '1st April 1986' and insert

'such day as the Secretary of State may by order appoint after he has laid an order before both Houses of Parliament—

(a) for the Residuary Bodies established under this section 55(1) of this Act to have a membership directly elected in accordance with the Representation of The People Act 1983 and this Act and that Section 55 and schedule 13 of this Act be consequentially modified; and

(b) for the name of the Residuary Bodies to be changed in consequence of the implementation of proposals of this sub-section; and

(c) providing for the transfer to the Residuary Bodies of such functions, not being functions which are transferred by this Act solely to individual London boroughs or metropolitan district councils as appropriate, as shall be determined by Parliament on the recommendation of a Select Committee.'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With this it will be convenient to take the following amendments:

No. 6, in page 1, line 15, at end insert—

'(3) Within three months of the date of the Royal Assent to this Act the Secretary of State shall lay an order before both Houses of Parliament—

(a) for the London Residuary Body established under section 55(1)*(a)* of this Act to have a membership directly elected in accordance with the Representation of the people Act 1983 and this Act and that section 55 and Schedule 13 of this Act be consequentially modified; and

(b) for the name of the London Residuary Body to be changed in consequence of the implementation of proposals of this sub-section; and

(c) for section 65 of this Act to cease to have effect as respects the London Residuary Body; and

(d) providing for the transfer to the London Residuary Body of such functions, not being functions which are transferred by this Act solely to individual London boroughs, as shall be determined by Parliament on the recommendation of a Select Committee of the House of Commons.'.

No. 72, in clause 3, page 2, line 10, after '(1)', insert 'Subject to subsections (6) and (6A) below,'.

No. 71, in clause 3, page 2, line 20, at end insert—

'(1A) Nothing in this Act shall prevent the constitution of a directly elected body in Greater London and in each of the metropolitan counties with functions including responsibility as allowed before the passage of this Act by the Greater London Council and metropolitan county councils of strategic land use and transport planning, conservation, listed buildings, major roads and traffic management, and economic development.'.

No. 73, in clause 3, page 3, line 3, at end insert—

'(6) This section shall not come into force until the Secretary of State has laid before Parliament a report on the establishment within each metropolitan county or Greater London, as the case may be, of an authority to carry out the following functions: —

(a) to keep under review matters which may be expected to affect the planning and development of the area of the metropolitan county or Greater London, as the case may be and, if it thinks fit, to institute a survey or surveys for examining those matters;

(b) to prepare and submit to the Secretary of State for his approval a strategic plan for that area which shall include the matters described in subsection (6A) below; and

(c) to keep any strategic plan for that area under review and to submit to the Secretary of State proposals for such alterations to that plan as from time to time appear expedient.

(6A) The strategic plan for the area of a metropolitan county or Greater London, as the case may be, shall be prepared following consultation with the local planning authorities in that area, the highway authorities in that area, the metropolitan county passenger transport authority, or the London Regional Transport Authority, as the case may be, and such other local planning authorities, bodies and individuals as the authority considers appropriate; and shall contain a written statement formulating general policies and guidance in respect of the development and other use of land in that area, including general policies and guidance relating to:—

(a) the general level of provision for housing development in that area indicating the provision to be made by each local planning authority;

(b) major transport proposals, and the principles to be adopted in the management of traffic, especially where such proposals and principles involve routes which cross local authority boundaries;

(c) the general level of provision and locations for major commercial or industrial development and strategic centres;

(d) the need to regenerate and improve urban areas and the priorities to be adopted in that regeneration and improvement;

(e) green belt, agricultural land, countryside, minerals extraction, waste disposal, and such other matters as the authority thinks appropriate.'.

No. 21, in clause 55, page 37, line 34, leave out subsections (3) and (4) and insert—

'(3A) Each of these bodies shall consist of members elected by the local government electors of Greater London or the metropolitan county, as the case may be.

(3B) Each appropriate residuary body shall consist of the number of members set out in Schedule (Number of members of Residuary Body) hereto. That Schedule shall specify the number of members to be elected from each electoral division.

(3C) At any election of members of the residuary body, the election shall be according to the principles of proportional representation, each elector having one transferable vote as defined in subsection (3D) of this section.

(3D) The expression "transferable vote" means a vote—

(a) capable of being given so as to indicate the voter's preference for the candidates in order; and

(b) capable of being transferred to the next choice—

(i) when the vote is not required to give a prior choice the necessary quota of votes, or

(ii) when owing to the deficiency in the number of votes given for a prior choice, that choice is eliminated from the list of candidates.'.

No. 69, in page 43, line 36, leave out Clause 63.

No. 70, in page 44, line 27, leave out Clause 65.

No. 43, new schedule — *Number of Members of Residuary Bodies*—

PART I
GREATER LONDON

Ward	*Number of Members of Residuary Body*
City of London, Westminster, Camden, Kensington and Chelsea, Hammersmith and Fulham	4
Wandsworth, Richmond, Kingston, Merton	4
Sutton, Croydon, Lambeth, Southwark	4
Lewisham, Greenwich, Bromley, Bexley	4
Tower Hamlets, Newham, Hackney, Islington	4
Waltham Forest, Redbridge, Havering, Barking and Dagenham	4
Hounslow, Hillingdon, Ealing, Brent	4
Enfield, Haringey, Barnet, Harrow	4

PART II
GREATER MANCHESTER

Ward	*Number of Members of Residuary Body*
Bolton	3
Bury	2
Manchester	5
Oldham	3
Rochdale	2
Salford	3
Stockport	3
Thameside	3
Trafford	3
Wigan	3

PART III
MERSEYSIDE

Ward	*Number of Members of Residuary Body*
Knowsley	2
Liverpool	6
St. Helens	2
Sefton	4
Wirral	4

PART IV
SOUTH YORKSHIRE

Ward	*Number of Members of Residuary Body*
Barnsley	2
Doncaster	3
Rotherham	2
Sheffield	5

PART V
TYNE AND WEAR

Ward	*Number of Members of Residuary Body*
Gateshead	3
Newcastle upon Tyne	4
North Tyneside	2
South Tyneside	2
Sunderland	4

PART VI
WEST MIDLANDS

Ward	Number of Members of Residuary Body
Birmingham	10
Coventry	3
Dudley	3
Sandwell	3
Solihull	2
Walsall	3
Wolverhampton	3

PART VII
WEST YORKSHIRE

Ward	Number of Members of Residuary Body
Bradford	5
Calderdale	2
Kirklees	4
Leeds	8
Wakefield	3

Dr. Cunningham: Amendment No. 68 and, in particular, amendment No. 6 go to the heart of the issue of whether local services should be under some kind of elected local democratic control. That, in a nutshell, is the issue. Since the introduction of the Bill that has been a major issue in the House, between the parties and within the Conservative party. Many Conservative Members, to their credit, have opposed these proposals and the preceding legislation, the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act 1984, on the principle that local services should be under democratically elected control.

The present proposals not only suggest a plethora of joint boards, quangos and ad hoc organisations, but, in addition, are less likely to secure what the Government say are their aims—greater accountability in the response to the public and the use of public resources, and more efficient use of those precious public resources. Whatever else the Government may say about the Bill they cannot and never have been able to claim, and certainly cannot claim at this late stage, that they have adduced in Committee or elsewhere any credible evidence or argument to overcome the fundamental criticisms of their proposals.

The Bill rests upon an undesirable mixture of the inefficient and the undemocratic. The underlying philosophy of joint working between district councils, in the formal context of joint boards, the informal structure of a joint committee, or the objectionable imposition of majority decisions and charges on dissenting authorities, does not provide a sound basis for the good administration of local services. Indeed, the proposals contain the seeds of their own destruction.

Against that background it is not surprising that considerable concern has been expressed across a wide spectrum of opinion, including the business community throughout the United Kingdom. Certainly the Government have few friends outside the House as a result of the way in which they are approaching this re-organisation. The Government were so embarrassed by the response to their White Paper "Streamlining the Cities" that they are still withholding the evidence which the White Paper called for and which was submitted to it.

7.45 pm

There is a curious contradiction in the Government's stance on these matters. When the Rates Bill 1984 was before the House we were told that the principal issues were accountability, the relationship between local authorities' income from the rates and votes. In that legislation the Secretary of State's argument was, and I understand remains, one of the need for strengthened accountability, and he took authoritarian central powers to control what local authorities were doing. He did that in the name of safeguarding the interests of ratepayers and improving accountability.

Under this Bill the control of finance is removed altogether from directly elected authorities. It is vested in either indirectly elected bodies or boards or quangos of the kind to which I have been referring. In this case central powers are being taken and vested in the Secretary of State which will reduce accountability. The Government want to have it both ways. In the Rates Act they took the powers that they did because they said that to do so would improve accountability and the use of public resources. In this Bill they are doing exactly the reverse. They cannot have it both ways. Both stances cannot be right.

In November, *The Times* said:

"The abolition bill can be examined in vain for any expression of a general philosophy of the role of Government in society, a doctrine of fiscal limits. It is a document lacking any sense of future . . . It is a document lacking coherent principles for local administration".

That was true then and it remains true today.

The reality is that many of the questions and issues, not just about the democratic principle but about the coherence of the Government's position or lack of it, about the lack of credibility in the proposals, many of which are still not finalised, and about the recipe for duplication, waste and the inefficient use of resources, remain unanswered. It would have been far better for the Government to have had a proper, wide-ranging, on-the-record inquiry into all the issues before they produced their legislation. They chose not to follow that course.

Mr. Martin Stevens (Fulham): Had such an inquiry been held, as has been done many times in the past, can

the hon. Gentleman guarantee that, at least in the case of the GLC, members of the Labour party theron would have participated?

Dr. Cunningham: The Labour party as a whole would have participated in the inquiry, just as we intend to involve ourselves in the Widdicombe inquiry and just as we would like to be involved in the behind closed doors inquiry which is now going on into the needed changes in local government finance. We are not afraid to address ourselves to the issues and the arguments. On the contrary, the Government have been doing that in proposing major constitutional changes after deliberations behind-closed-doors and often at short notice.

The reality is that the Government will opt for any set of proposals except the ballot box; except letting the people decide. What they are doing in the Bill is taking power away from people; taking away the right of people to participate in democratic elections; preventing people in our capital city and major conurbations from having an authority which will reflect their hopes, aspirations and needs, some of which are desperate.

The Labour party remains committed to the proposition that whatever might emerge from the Bill, which is widely criticised and condemned, there should be an elected body of some kind.

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): Does not the hon. Gentleman realise that the voice of Leeds and the interests of that community have often been in conflict with those of the metropolitan county and Bradford and the other ingredients that make up the extraordinary creations of 1974? That is why most local city Labour parties, whether in Leeds, Birmingham or elsewhere, always used to advocate their abolition.

Dr. Cunningham: I accept the first part of the hon. Gentleman's intervention, but I do not accept that he is qualified to speak for the Labour party in Leeds, Birmingham, Newcastle upon Tyne or anywhere else, so I reject that part of what he said.

Of course the hon. Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) is absolutely right. There is no point in disguising — I have never attempted to do so for a moment—the fact that there are tensions and differences of view and opinion on policy matters between upper and lower tier authorities. That is just as true in the shire county areas as in the areas of the metropolitan authorities, but no one suggests that because that is so the shire counties should be abolished and there should be one level of local government in the shires. An entirely different stance is adopted by the present Administration on that point. The hon. Gentleman must know full well that there are plenty of Tories in local government who not only fundamentally oppose the Government's proposals but do not like the situation in the shires either.

We are committed to the idea of democratically elected authorities. For some of the bodies that have urged the retention of services county-wide, democratic representation has not been the major issue that it has been for local government academics, practitioners and politicians. Some people have been prepared to accept the creation of nominated bodies as the price for keeping county-wide services. The Opposition do not accept their arguments, which correspond with the Government's general stance.

Concepts such as co-opted specialists, nominated joint boards and so on are not new to local government but cannot be regarded as a satisfactory alternative to democratically elected councils. The consequence of any further reorganisation of local government should be to improve accountability and performance, not to diminish them, but there is no evidence anywhere in the records of the Committee sittings or of the Minister's speeches that will convince my right hon. and hon. Friends and me that the Government's proposals have any hope of doing that. The very claim that they can do so is false.

We know of the deep disquiet that many Conservative Members feel and that many have voiced in the Chamber and elsewhere. It is not too late for them to stop the Government forcing through this hotch-potch of inadequate and ill-considered proposals, which will have appalling consequences for good administration in our capital city and also in the metropolitan areas. It is in order to give hon. Gentlemen a further opportunity to express their opposition to the contents of the Bill that we have moved the amendment.

We have moved similar amendments before. Hon. Gentlemen might say that they have heard my arguments before. They would be right. I make no apology for repeating those arguments tonight. Whatever else hon. Gentlemen may think about the need to support their Goverment, they cannot disguise from themselves what has been said in their own party about the consequences of the Government's sustained assault on local authorities and the democratic principles embodied in their election. I urge right hon. and hon. Gentlemen on the Conservative Benches to reject this aspect of the Bill before it is too late.

Mr. Patrick Ground (Feltham and Heston): I rise to speak to amendment No. 6, which would transform the residuary body created by clause 55 into a permanent elected London-wide body, and which provides for Parliament—acting on the advice of a Select Committee of the House—to transfer to the elected London-wide body functions not transferred by the Bill to individual London boroughs. I shall ask for a separate vote to be taken on amendment No. 6 immediately after the vote on amendment No. 68.

Amendment No. 6 is not inconsistent with the manifesto commitment to abolish the GLC which the Conservative party put before the electorate in June 1983. The amendment accepts that all the functions transferred by the Bill to the individual London boroughs should remain transferred, but gives Parliament the opportunity to provide that the remaining functions not so dealt with, or any combination of them, should be transferred to an elected London-wide body.

If the amendment is accepted, leading to the creation of a London-wide body with limited powers, that body will be completely different in character from the present GLC, and will have the functions that Parliament wishes it to have.

The hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) spoke to amendment No. 68, which bears in form a distinct resemblance to amendment No. 6. Lest any of my right hon. or hon. Friends should think that the protagonists of amendment No. 6 have copied amendment No. 68, I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would be the first to agree that amendment No. 6 came first in time.

There is a strong and logical case for a democratically elected body in the metropolitan counties at least to fulfil the functions that under the Bill are to be fulfilled by joint boards. During the debates in Committee a strong case was

[Mr. Patrick Ground]

made for adding trading standards to those functions. However, whatever may be the strength of the case for elected bodies in the metropolitan counties, I suggest that there is a much more substantial case in London. There is a case for a democratically elected county-wide body wherever a substantial body of services has to be administered on a county-wide basis, but the case for such a body is overwhelming where the county is a capital city and corresponds with the built-up area of the city. Every one of the major towns in the metropolitan counties, even after the Bill is passed, will have an elected authority that covers the built-up area of that town. To London alone is reserved the fate of being cut up administratively into 33 separate slices.

During the debate on clause 1, and also on Second Reading, the Secretary of State and the Ministers asked what functions should be exercised by a London-wide body. First, the Secretary of State should consider the powers that he will exercise under the Bill. He is taking over sole responsibility for the strategic planning of London. The first function that an elected London-wide body should fulfil is as a voice for London in strategic planning for London.

The Government have confirmed that strategic planning remains fundamentally important in their thinking on how towns and cities should be planned. In the Bill, neither London as a whole nor the London boroughs will have any say in the formulation of the strategic guidance that would be the basis for unitary development plans in London. An elected body should prepare strategic plans for London which should be considered by the Secretary of State before strategic guidance is given to the boroughs. That is a fundamental task which the Select Committee and Parliament should consider allocating to the elected London-wide body that my amendment would set up.

8 pm

London should have a say in the planning of the major roads of London. The Bill gives my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport unparalleled powers to trunk roads without any form of public inquiry. It is all very well for my right hon. Friend to say that any subsequent improvements will be subject to planning applications, but once the status of the road is changed a fundamental change of character has occurred and the right of the citizen to object is substantially pre-empted. One of the functions of the London-wide body would be to present a plan for the roads of London as part of the strategic plan for London. That addition to the planning process would go a long way to render unnecessary the Bill's draconian powers of trunking.

Dr. Hampson: Does my hon. and learned Friend agree that, in the metropolitan counties, all the present procedures will be applicable in future? Proposals will go to public consultation, there will be participation exercises, lines will be produced, objections will come in and public inquiries will be held. There will be no change in the participation of the public as a result of the Bill.

Mr. Ground: That is not right. The Bill gives the Secretary of State powers to trunk roads without any public inquiry. He already has powers to trunk roads with a public inquiry. The people of London will have no means of challenging the thinking behind the trunking of roads. If my hon. Friend compares his status as an objector at a subsequent planning inquiry with that which he would have had at an inquiry into the trunking proposals, he will see that there is a fundamental and important constitutional and practical difference.

Mr. Cormack: Will my hon. and learned Friend emphasise that those of us who are known to be less than enthusiastic about the Bill have been inundated with letters from people in Greater London who are extremely exercised on this issue?

Mr. Ground: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. If he has had letters, I ask him to imagine how many I have had from Richmond, Clapham and many parts of south London.

The Bill recognises that fire and civil defence can be run only on a London-wide basis. If there were an elected authority, it would be sensible for those functions to remain with it.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): My hon. and learned Friend mentioned fire. Surely what people want from a fire brigade is not democracy but efficiency.

Mr. Ground: My hon friend is right but I think that he will agree, as his constituency is near an airport, that there is considerable anxiety about the fire service and people are much happier to have an elected body responsible for these matters. That has been the case for many years.

Mr. John Wheeler (Westminster, North): Surely my hon. and learned Friend accepts that fire cover and the standards set for the fire brigade in London and elsewhere are governed by the Home Office and the chief inspector of the fire service. Locally elected councillors do not decide what service there will be.

Mr. Ground: My hon. Friend is correct and I dissociate myself from any propaganda which suggests that the fire service will be cut after reorganisation, but the fact remains that the service has been under democratic control for many years. It is an important part of our system that democratic bodies take responsibility for such matters.

Mr. Tony Banks Is the hon. Gentleman aware—[HON. MEMBERS: "He has made it to the Front Bench."] I am merely a lodger here for a few moments.

The Labour GLC restored cuts made by the previous Conservative GLC in the fire brigade, including providing another appliance in the hon and learned Gentleman's constituency.

Mr. Ground: I can only say that it took a very long time to do it.

My right hon. FrieZnd theZ SeZcreZtary of State asked what functions should be exercised by an elected London-wide body. Mineral planning is of great importance to London. If my right hon. Friend reads any report produced for his Department on the subject in the past 15 years he will find that they all say that mineral planning should be the responsibility of a county-wide body. He will have the guidance on that subject necessary to make a judgment.

The picture is similar with refuse disposal, especially with making satisfactory arrangements for sites. In clause 9, my right hon. Friend is taking powers to do that himself wheZn difficultieZs ariseZ. HeZ could beZ saveZd that

difficult task as theZ job is preZ-eZmineZntly one for a London-wide body, as an elected body might be able to solve more easily the many problems which are likely to arise in the immediate future.

I shall deal with the Southbank. The Royal Festival Hall, the Queen Elizabeth Hall, the National Theatre and the National Film Theatre were dealt with by the Committee in one brisk morning. The Committee approved their transfer to a national quango in the form of the Arts Council. If there is to be an elected London-wide body those buildings and the GLC's role in connection with theZm should sureZly beZ within its functions.

Many of theZ GLC's functions areZ locateZd in boroughs but cost much moreZ than a borough is willing to speZnd. TheZy areZ of greZat London-wideZ importanceZ. HampsteZad heZath is an eZxampleZ. It costs £1·25 million a year to maintain predominantly in a borough which does not wish to be responsible for it after the abolition of the GLC.

Sir Hugh Rossi (Hornsey and Wood GreZn): Could not Hampstead heath well be looked after as a royal park—such parks are dealt with effectively and efficiently—thereby overcoming the problem of splitting the heath between three separate boroughs?

Mr. Ground: My hon. Friend is quite right, and I am sure that he is right when he suggests that that would be a more acceptable solution to those who live in the area. However, that is not the proposal in the Bill. If we compare the proposals in the Bill with the possibility of the heath continuing to be administered by a London-wide body, there is no doubt that it would be preferable if it were run by such a body. TheZ SeZleZct Committee which the amendment envisages could advise on these and many other functions, and all the functions that I have mentioned would be candidates for consideration.

Several hon. Members have asked whether the amendment would create a mini GLC which in time would turn into another fully fledged GLC. My answer is twofold. First, if the GLC has played a wider role than Parliament intended, that is, at least in part, the fault of Parliament for giving the GLC powers that were too wide and too ill-defined. Secondly, if Parliament wished to create an elected London-wide body with limited powers, it could do so and could eZnsureZ that the powers were limited. It would be thoroughly feeble of the Government and my right hon. and hon. Friends to conclude that it was impossible, and that they were unable, by legislation, to create a body with limited powers. That would be an abdication of their role, both as Government and as legislators.

I strongly support the amendment and hope that my hon. Friends and Opposition Members will do so as well.

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Patrick Jenkin): I intervene at this stage, because, as I think the House recognises, this debate deals with one of the crucial issues in the Bill. Indeed, amendment No. 6, to which my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Feltham and Heston (Mr. Ground) referred, would, if carried, defeat one of the main aims of the Bill. It would, therefore, be helpful if the Government's view is clearly restated and the reasons for it clearly spelt out. My right hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government will reply at the end of the debate and deal with any points which are made after I sit down.

Before I come to the arguments attractively advanced by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Feltham and Heston, I must make it clear that amendment No. 68, moved by the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), must be rejected outright. Throughout the proceedings on this Bill the Labour party has steadfastly and rightly refused to give any pledge to restore the six metropolitan county councils. No doubt the hon. Gentleman came under strong pressure from a number of sources. Amendment No. 68 seeks to restore those county councils under some other guise by converting the residuary bodies into upper-tier elected authorities. What has happened to the firm resolve of the hon. Member for Copeland? Is it just a sop to his critics, or has the hon. Gentleman now changed his mind about the metropolitan counties?

The hon. Gentleman will know that any suggestion that the metropolitan counties should be restored at a later date would be bitterly opposed by many Labour Members and district councils and by virtually every Conservative Member for whom the return to single-tier government in the metropolitan counties has been an ambition for some years. I therefore reject that amendment and ask the House to do so.

8.15 pm

The argument advanced by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Feltham and Heston has been advanced both on the Floor of the House and in Committee. He argued that London is different. It has been said that London has a history of two-tier local government and of a London-wide body of some sort. On that basis, my hon. and learned Friend argues that there should be an elected successor to the GLC.

Most of those who advance that argument—from the way my hon. and learned Friend spoke, I am sure that he would accept this view—would acknowledge that the GLC, which we have had for the last 21 years, has not worked and that in any event there must be changes. The Conservative leader at county hall, Councillor Alan Greengross, has been very firm in his view that the GLC, as we know it today, must be abolished, but replaced by another directly-elected London-wide authority.

As the House knows, the leaders in the majority of London boroughs, supported by their councils, have argued consistently not only for the abolition of the GLC but for no replacement body. Until a few years ago, that was the view espoused by Mr. Livingstone himself, when he said:

"I do not conceive of the GLC as local in any sense. I feel that the boroughs are the major instruments of local government in London. I very much regret that Mr. Cutler has not been the really ruthless Tory that he likes to project and come forward with the biggest axe of all and axed the whole appalling show."

I should also draw the attention of my hon. Friends to a resolution passed at a recent well attended meeting of the Conservative Greater London area council, which stated:

"That this Area Council supports the abolition of the Greater London Council and in conformity with the expressed views of the leaders of Conservative-controlled London boroughs would not wish to see that principle weakened by any elected forum for Greater London imposed over the structure of borough government".

That resolution was passed by an overwhelming majority of that well attended meeting.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): May I remind my right hon. Friend of the resolution moved by Ruislip-Northwood Conservative Association at the

[Mr. John Wilkinson]

Greater London area CPC conference last year at the time of the debate on "Streamlining the Cities," which called for a directly-elected London-wide body? That was overwhelmingly carried by a majority of five to one. Surely London is different. Newcastle, Leeds, Bradford, Birmingham and the other big cities in the metropolitan counties will continue to have city-wide elected government, whereas London will be denied it and will have only borough representation.

Mr. Jenkin: I should point out that the motion to which I referred was carried by the fully representative body of the Conservative party in London only last week. That indicates that perhaps the Government are winning the argument.

A number of my hon. Friends who represent constituencies outside London should perhaps have some regard to the expression of view by those of our party representing the 84 constituencies in London.

Mr. Dykes: Bearing in mind the total membership in London, how many people were at that annual general meeting?

Mr. Jenkin: About 180, and the motion was carried by a majority of more than 10 to one, so I think that it was an effective expression of opinion on behalf of the Conservative party in London.

Dr. Cunningham: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Jenkin: No, I will not give way. I should like to develop my argument.

This is not a new argument stirred up in the past year or two. The 1963 Act purported to be a new deal for London, but it must now be seen against the long history of dispute as to the kind of local government that London should have.

The history of local government in London for the past century or more has been a ceaseless struggle between those who have sought more powers for a so-called London-wide body and those who wanted power for the boroughs. The establishment of the London county council in 1889 was a clear victory for the centralisers. Ten years later, Lord Salisbury sought to establish a counterpoise for the boroughs—at that time, the inner London boroughs only.

Dr. Cunningham: The right hon. Gentleman has stressed that the argument has been flowing to and fro. Why does he not concede that only a few years ago he was on the other side of the argument? When he gave evidence to the Marshall inquiry into the government of London, both he and his right hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government made a formidable case in support of a strategic authority for London. What has changed?

Mr. Jenkin: We now have more experience of how the Greater London council has operated.

In the following decades, since the beginning of the century, three county boroughs were established outside inner London—Croydon, East Ham and West Ham. All were all-purpose authorities. The Herbert commission also noted that in Middlesex at least 10 authorities had a good claim to county borough status.

Herein lies the paradox. It was the Herbert commission which established the GLC, but it was also the Herbert commission which recognised the full claims of the London boroughs and, for the first time in London's history — I stress that point — established the comprehensive pattern of most-purpose boroughs that we have today. Apart from inner London, where education remains with the ILEA, all London boroughs — inner and outer—are now most-purpose authorities. They are responsible for the overwhelming majority of services in those areas, they spend the overwhelming preponderance of ratepayers' money on local authority services and they are now the true focus of local government in London.

By contrast, the GLC, set up by the same Act, was from the outset a pale shadow of its predecessor, the LCC. It had all the panoply and trappings of power, but very few of the services that would justify that power. The GLC has had status without a role. The 1964 reforms shifted the balance decisively in favour of the London boroughs, and from that there can be no turning back. The seeds of the GLC's demise were planted at the very moment of its birth.

The past 20 years have seen the consequences of trying to run a two-tier local government system in London with almost all the services and almost all the powers at the lower level but with conflicting and overlapping powers at the upper level. Each tier claims a mandate from the electorate for its policies and each tier is determined to impose its will on the other. We can now see that this was and is bound to be a recipe for conflict and confusion. In terms of services, I do not believe that the case for a separate, directly elected upper tier of local government in London stands up.

We all agree that housing should be a borough function and that, apart from the trunk road network, highways construction and maintenance are borough functions. We all agree that in outer London education should remain a borough function and we all agree now that transport is rightly under LRT and outside local government altogether. [HON. MEMBERS: "We do not agree."] Well, on this side we all agree.

In terms of services, we are left with fire and civil defence. I do not see how it can be argued that we need a directly elected authority to run those two services. A joint authority made up of borough members can do the job just as well at less expense.

Mr. Straw *rose*——

Mr. Jenkin: No, I shall not give way.

Those who argue for a London-wide body claim, as my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Feltham and Heston did with customary force, that there is a crucial role for such a body in highways and land use planning. But is it not clear, after 21 years' experience of the GLC, that the Greater London area is an artificial basis for planning and policy? Is it not clear that London, the capital city of the nation, is the focus for government, business, commerce, shopping, the arts, the theatre and many other services appropriate to such a city and that its influence stretches far beyond the outer boundaries of the GLC area?

Mr. Tony Banks: Let us have a bigger GLC then.

Mr. Jenkin: Is it not clear that all the major planning and transport decisions fall inevitably not to the GLC but to the Government and to the House? [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] I invite the Opposition to consider this. Where does London begin and end? [HON. MEMBERS: "In Marsham Street."]

The M25 motorway is almost entirely outside the GLC boundaries, but that was arguably one of the most far-reaching transport decisions affecting the capital. Let us consider airports. I do not want to get involved in the decision about London's third airport, but would anyone seriously argue that that decision could or should be taken by whoever is in charge at county hall? London's highway network does not begin or end at the Greater London boundary. London is the heart of a national network of highways stretching from the south-west, the west country and Wales, the west midlands, the east midlands, East Anglia and Kent right into the heart of London. How can that be the subject of planning by the GLC?

Let us consider planning within London. Has the GLC scored any notable successes in the past 20 years—for instance, in the revival of London's docklands, the rebuilding of the south bank or the planning of London's traffic?

Mr. Tony Banks *rose*——

Mr. Jenkin: No, I shall not give way.

What happens when the GLC decides that traffic management must serve the interests of Londoners without heed to those coming into London? Many of my hon. Friends protested vigorously about the arrogant decision to introduce a right turn at Talgarth road in Hammersmith. The traffic jams stretched right back into the heart of Berkshire.

There is a need for planning, transport and traffic to be considered over a wider area, but they are not matters on which a directly elected authority for the Greater London area can play a worthwhile role.

Mr. Straw *rose*——

Mr. Jenkin: No, I shall not give way.

Other mechanisms — for example, the standing conference—recognise London's role as a capital city and its impact on the south-east, and those mechanisms are essential, but the problems will not be solved by the re-creation, in however skeletal a form, of a GLC mark II.

I therefore ask my hon. Friends again what it is that they want a London-wide body to do. Caught, as it would be, between the pincers of the comprehensive all-purpose powers of the boroughs and the wider planning and highways role that properly falls to the Government and to the House, where can there be a worthwhile role for a London-wide body? Indeed, if there is no worthwhile role, who will serve on it? Do not my hon. Friends realise that, whatever my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Feltham and Heston says to the contrary, that proposal will re-create a body which, just like the GLC, invents for itself functions in order to justify its existence?

I have read, re-read and discussed endlessly the proposals put forward by Councillor Greengross and other members of the GLC. I have to say that I cannot understand the argument which says, "Yes, the GLC must be abolished, but in its place we must establish a new elected body with most of its functions retained."

Those who have seen the booklet of Mr. Greengross will know that he listed no fewer than 27 separate functions, which he argued should be the responsibility of the successor body. How could that conceivably be different from what we have at present, and which we all recognise has not worked? Therefore, I say in all candour to my hon. Friends that I do not believe that the case for an elected London-wide body has been made.

8.30 pm

My hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham (Sir P. Goodhart), who has apologised for his absence, put forward proposals to involve the House either through a Select Committee or through a Grand Committee or both to take a closer interest in those wider aspects of government as they affect London. Any such decision must be a matter not for this Bill, but for the House of Commons, to be discussed through the usual channels. I would say only this. Any such London Select Committee would sit uneasily alongside the pattern of departmental Select Committees which were set up after 1979. I feel sure that my hon. Friend will wish to pursue his proposal through the appropriate channels. It is clearly not for me to give him a "yea" or "nay" this evening.

Others of my hon. Friends may well argue that there is a role for the London Boroughs Association in speaking for the London borough as a whole. That could be so. There is nothing in the Bill which precludes the boroughs building on the existing machinery, and, indeed, it could well grow in importance when it is not overshadowed by a GLC.

I must end by making it abundantly clear to the House that the Government are firmly opposed to replacing the GLC with an elected body, a body with executive functions, or a body capable of precepting on the boroughs. We see no need for such a body. We see no role for such a body. If amendment No. 6 is pressed to a Division, I must ask my hon. Friends to join me in the Lobby to oppose it.

Mr. Simon Hughes: If the Secretary of State thought that his early intervention would be helpful in persuading his right hon. and hon. Friends of his view, he was sadly deceiving himself. He argued in circles from the position in which he has placed himself. His case tonight was slightly different from previously. It was that matters must now be considered on a regional basis wider than London, yet the solution to who would be that regional authority was himself and his Department.

No Conservative Members can honestly believe, whatever the arguments about the right sort of local government, that we want local government to be replaced by this Secretary of State or any future Secretary of State. As the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) pointed out, for many years the Secretary of State has taken a line opposite to that which he now argues. He is the representative of undemocratic government. I notice that he wears the tie of the London Docklands Development Corporation—a quango set up in the last few years. He comes to the House as Mr. Central Government. Ranged against him are these amendments and people whom I have asked him to recognise are not the extremists against democracy, but extremists for democracy, among whom not many years ago he would have wished to be numbered.

In London, a poster shows the picture of two of the Secretary of State's right hon. Friends, underneath which it says:

"Not all the critics of ratecapping are Left-wing extremists?"

One amendment in this group is in the names of the right hon. and learned Member for Hexham (Mr. Rippon), the right hon. Member for Chesham and Amersham (Sir I. Gilmour), the hon. Member for Milton Keynes (Mr.

[Mr. Simon Hughes]

Benyon), the hon. and learned Member for Feltham and Heston (Mr. Ground), and two of their hon. Friends. They are hardly a group of extremists.

Other amendments in the group are in the names of the right hon. Members for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock), and for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), and the hon. Members for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) and for Blackburn (Mr. Straw). Even their own party would hardly regard them as extremists. Finally, two of the amendments are in the names of my right hon. Friends the Members for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen), and for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel), and my hon. Friends the Members for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright), for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Hancock), for Leeds, West (Mr. Meadowcroft) and myself. We are hardly regarded as the most extreme of politicians.

Ranged against the Secretary of State and his Cabinet colleagues is that amazing coalition of people, until now respected for being central in their parties and in their parties' thinking. They have argued abundantly clearly and consistently for democracy.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): It is interesting to hear the hon. Gentleman list all those right hon. and hon. Gentlemen. Perhaps he will tell me where they are this evening while this important debate is taking place?

Mr. Hughes: The hon. Gentleman need not be worried for a moment. They will be present in substantial numbers to show that the Government have far from overwhelming support for their position.

I ask the Secretary of State to take this opportunity to get himself and his party out of the mess of their own hasty making. There are three questions before the House. First, should we provide an elected successor authority for London — that amendment has been tabled by Conservative Members — or should we provide a successor authority for London and the Metropolitan counties — the amendments tabled by Opposition Members. Secondly, should there be an elected successor body, whether it is called a residual body or something else? Thirdly, if so, what should it do?

The first question reveals the view that, as London is a capital city, it has a stronger case than the metropolitan counties. That is a view that I share with many others. This argument bears repeating, because it is so self-evident. If the Government go ahead with their proposal, we shall be the only capital city in western Europe without a governing authority.

The Government's announcement that to accept these proposals would defeat the main aims of the Bill because they would prevent there being a single-tier government in London is wrong on three counts. First, it is untrue to say that as a result of the Government's proposals there will be no single-tier government. The Secretary of State knows that we will have many tiers of government— joint boards, quangos, himself and local boroughs. That is not single-tier government and, therefore, this premise is fundamentally false.

Secondly, this premise is inconsistent. The right hon. Gentleman knows that there will not be single-tier government in the shire counties of England after the Bill is passed. There is no principle that is so fundamental that it says that there must inevitably be single-tier government in a metropolitan area, especially when boundaries are unclear, and at the same time that in all other areas, some of which were proposed by Royal Commissions, such as the Hampshire area around Southampton, there should be two tiers of government.

Thirdly, is it justified? The answer to that is no, because the opinion of most professionals, be they officers of authorities or experts, given to all those who have considered this matter in Committee and elsewhere in the House, is clearly that there are many strong arguments for services being run on a county-wide basis. In Committee the Government were challenged time after time to tell us who supported their case, to say which royal institutions, chartered surveyors, town planners or associations of architects supported them. The answer time after time was no one. The Government have been given an opportunity tonight to introduce a system of deliberations during which a group of parliamentarians can take evidence from people who know what they are talking about, free from the political prejudice which inevitably affects all of us in this place. The Government have been given the chance to ensure that the people of this capital city and, if necessary, of the metropolitan counties can have local government with the right level of services.

Several hon. Members have listed the services which the public clearly do not want the Government to remove from democratically elected local authorities. Airports, transport and trunking are obvious places to start. There is an obvious case for those services not to be subject to centrally imposed decisions. Planning, fire services, civil defence and the police are also obvious cases. I understand that the Minister for Local Government, having talked to the leaders of the Tory boroughs, is extremely worried about the proposals for waste disposal——

Mr. Kenneth Baker: No.

Mr. Hughes: Yes. The present strategic plan for waste disposal in London might well blow up in the face of the right hon. Gentleman and his departmental colleagues. At meetings in his Department he has expressed concern that joint boards are probably unsuitable for waste disposal services in London, and that a single level authority would be equally unacceptable. If there are, as he anticipates, deaths because people pour one chemical into a pit where others are present, because of a lack of a co-ordinated strategy, he knows that he will be responsible for the fatal deterioration of an excellent service.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Perhaps I could correct the information which the hon. Gentleman has heard at second hand. Our first debate tomorrow will relate to waste disposal, and I shall introduce proposals which the Conservative borough leaders put to me and found satisfactory for waste disposal in the Greater London area.

Mr. Hughes: That shows yet again that the Government are thinking on the hoof. There is no co-ordination at all. Although there may be piecemeal improvement, it would be much better to follow the suggestions made by Conservative Back-Bench Members or by the alliance that there should be wholesale consideration of planning for the future after the GLC.

We could have had many arguments tonight on a Bill which has been rushed through the House. The Bill, which deals with arts, sport, the police, law and order, housing and the environment, has been guillotined, but the Government know that that will not be the case in the

House of Lords. Would it not be better to think again? Should hon. Members not say, "Let us have the opportunity of listening to expert argument and advice"? If we cannot win the simple argument, because the Government have set their face against it, for continuing the present authorities in a similar form—I realise that no one can defend every jot and tittle of what they do—let us at least have the opportunity to argue logically, quietly, intelligently and consistently, freed from timetables and the harassment of the present position, for what we believe is a necessary tier of strategic government in the regions and in London.

I end with this warning. The Government have been told repeatedly that if they abolish the seven counties in haste, politically, democratically, and in terms of services to our people, they will repent that abolition at their leisure.

Sir Ian Gilmour (Chesham and Amersham): I wish to make a few comments on the speech of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. We all have great respect for him, and great sympathy for him over the Bill, but he did not meet the case for the amendment at any point in his speech. He did not meet the case in one fundamental way, because he did not explain why London should be different from almost every other major capital city and be deprived of a directly elected authority. As far as I know, he did not mention the point at all.

8.45 pm

It is astonishing—this is a serious matter that touches not only the government of London but deep springs of Conservative philosophy—that the Government cannot answer the fundamental criticism that, instead of their local authority legislation decentralising services, it is centralising them. We must know what is so unique about London that it is not allowed to have a directly elected authority.

Mr. Patrick Jenkin: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for giving way, and I shall try not to intervene in his speech too often. I said that, as can be found in other capital cities that have indirectly nominated bodies to represent the entire city, the London Boroughs Association, not overshadowed by the GLC, could achieve greater importance and could represent what my right hon. Friend is seeking in his rather emotional arguments. No doubt he will come to this point, but I must ask him what such a body would do.

Sir Ian Gilmour: It is not an emotional argument at all; it is a fundamental argument. The idea that a quango or an association such as the LBA could be a substitute for a proper directly elected authority is extraordinary. I differ fundamentally from my right hon. Friend on that point.

Mr. Wilkinson: Does my right hon. Friend realise that the London Boroughs Association has a built-in Socialist majority, which may not be a good thing? Does he also realise that, interestingly, 11 Socialist boroughs have seceded from it?

Sir Ian Gilmour: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is taking an admirably non-party view on these matters, which my hon. Friend and I are unable to take.

My right hon. Friend said that during the past 100 years there had been a great history of conflict between centralisers and localisers. As far as I know, that is a complete myth. The suggestion has no historical basis. My right hon. Friend referred to what Lord Salisbury said in 1899, but he omitted to say that Lord Salisbury had set up the London county council in 1888. Most of those who have studied the history of local government during the past 100 years do not accept that there has been a great conflict between centralisers and localisers, and my right hon. Friend, who has good eyes, should see it too.

My right hon. Friend said that it was wrong to have a directly elected authority because it was difficult to ascertain the boundaries of London. That is not a serious argument. Every capital city has a similar problem, because no capital city is built on an island. They all have many districts. That argument applies not only to London but to any local authority. The difficulty of defining boundaries is no argument against having a directly elected authority. With great respect to my right hon. Friend, I cannot believe that that was a serious argument.

We return to the question of why London is different. My right hon. Friend's other argument—it seemed to be his only argument—was that if we had a directly elected authority we would have Mr. Ken Livingstone back. He seemed to believe that, however strictly the statute was drawn, somehow Mr. Ken Livingstone would rear his ugly head again. With great respect, that is a confession of impotence by my right hon. Friend, who is extremely skilled at drafting legislation. The idea that he cannot draft legislation without bringing back Mr. Livingstone is absurd.

We have not had a single serious argument to explain why the thoroughly Conservative idea of not giving great powers to the Secretary of State has not been followed. As I have said before, the Bill specifies 123 powers for my right hon. Friend—hardly a particularly Conservative thing to do—and is hardly a great measure for local government. The Bill concentrates power in the hands of the Secretary of State and gives great powers not to the boroughs but to collections of boroughs, which are not local bodies.

I do not think, although my right hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government might be able to produce an argument, that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is serious in his arguments. I cannot help feeling that he must have great sympathy with the amendment. One of the faults of this Government, if they have a fault, is that they sometimes confuse obstinacy with strength. I can see no reason for the Government not giving way to this amendment. It is in tune with the history of the country and of Conservative ideas, and with practicality. The Government will bequeath the most appalling problems to London government if they do not give way on this amendment. I hope that, unless we are given a serious argument on this matter, my hon. Friends will support the amendment.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): I shall not go back to Lord Salisbury for my quote, nor to 1898. I start by quoting from 1971, when a right hon. Member said about a Bill to reform local government:

"When the Bill reaches the Statute Book and the new authorities come into operation, we shall have ended the uncertainty which has bedevilled local government since the war. We shall have strengthened local democratic institutions so that they operate more successfully and efficiently and have a greater impact on their localities."—[*Official Report*, 16 November 1971; Vol. 826, c. 249.]

Those are the words of the present Secretary of State for Energy, who was then the Secretary of State for the Environment and responsible for the local government reorganisation that established the metropolitan counties.

The Secretary of State for the Environment chided my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) about the Labour party's policy towards the metropolitan counties, let alone to the Greater London council. I remind him that the reform being referred to in my quote came about as the result of continuing inquiry. As the then Secretary of State for the Environment said, this problem had bedevilled Governments since the war. After 1945, there were many inquiries, which culminated in the Redcliffe-Maud report of 1969.

In February 1970, the then Labour Government published a White Paper. That Government lost power in the following June, but in 1971, the Conservative Government published another White Paper. The Secretary of State for the Environment was a member of that Government and was telling people that they should learn to clean their teeth in the dark. Redcliffe-Maud and the two White Papers had one thing in common. They all agreed that there should be metropolitan counties to deal with the overspill problems and many other services required in Greater Manchester, Merseyside and the west midlands.

The Secretary of State for the Environment has not changed his mind. Although he tells the House that he wishes to diversify the functions of local government to the more local district level, the Bill ensures that 67 per cent. of expenditure by the metropolitan counties will go not to borough or district councils but to joint boards. No less than 76 per cent. of the expenditure of Merseyside is to go to a joint board.

The Secretary of State talks about the inevitable recipe for conflict and controversy resulting from the two-tier structure, of the GLC arguing with the London boroughs, and the Merseyside county council arguing with the district councils. Can one conceive of a situation in which Councillor Hatton in Liverpool and Councillor Ron Watson in Sefton will join hands across the joint boards for passenger transport, the police or fire service on Merseyside and be real buddies? The Secretary of State's proposal is a recipe for conflict, and not even a democratic one.

The electors require a clear decision so that they can understand who is responsible. They want to know that they have played a part in determining who is responsible for services. That is why residuary bodies, although I dislike both the term and the reality, will have to be elected by the people in their area, and should be responsible for the services that the Government, even at this late stage, have not determined should be the function of any particular authority.

For example, for the arts on Merseyside, we still do not know who is to be responsible for giving assistance to the Empire and Playhouse theatres, or what is to happen to the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic orchestra, let alone the Philharmonic hall. I am sure that Councillor Hatton, who had to close the St. Georges hall, will not be able to find the funds, after the Government have finished with Liverpool, to maintain the Philharmonic hall.

We have not heard which body is to be responsible for economic development on Merseyside. I am still the chairman of the Merseyside economic development corporation. This body has generated 8,000 new jobs on Merseyside—a drop in the ocean when compared with the 100,000 jobs that have been lost since May 1979 when the daughter of darkness entered No. 10 Downing street. We do not know, and the Secretary of State should tell the House and the business community on Merseyside, what is to happen to the county help for active small enterprise scheme after his changes. Who is to make the decisions about the help to be given to small businesses on Merseyside? I do not believe that has been mentioned in Committee. However, the Merseyside chamber of commerce is entitled to know the answer to that question.

The Government have recently emphasised the assistance that has been given to Merseyside through the Merseyside economic development corporation. They recognise the need for such a body, even though it is a quango. We still do not know which body will be responsible for co-ordinating tourism in the area. Certainly it will not be an elected body. From time to time the Secretary of State visits Merseyside and says that the prospects there for tourism are good. We should like to know what will happen. The people of Merseyside recognise the role that has been played by the county council. It has acted as a catalyst in developing the tourist potential in the area. I refer to the small ships race and to the museums and art galleries. We do not yet know what is to happen to the satellite museums, although we know what is to happen to the Walker art gallery.

9 pm

The hon. Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel), who is no longer in his place, referred in an intervention to his belief that people do not want a democratically elected fire service; they want an efficient fire service. I prefer to stand by the principle enunciated many years ago by a Liberal Prime Minister, Campbell-Bannerman. I believe, with him, that self-government is better than good government. It is far better for people to make their own mistakes and for those mistakes to be rectified in a democratic manner. I need go no further than the debate in the House on 16 November 1971 on the reorganisation of local government. The present Secretary of State for Energy said then that he believed it was right for the newly reformed local government to be on the basis that those making the decisions should go through the process of democratic election. The right hon. Gentleman was right in 1971. I think that he would be right now. He is always described as the wettest property in the Cabinet. He should have the guts to say whether he holds to the view that he stated in 1971.

If the Secretary of State for the Environment thinks that Merseysiders and local government officers will co-operate in administering a regime that has no democratic basis, I am afraid that he has another think coming. Even if the Bill is passed by next July he will be unable to

implement its provisions by April 1986. There will be such chaos that the next Labour Government will be left to pick up the pieces, if we can find them, early in 1987 or 1988. We shall restore democracy to local government in the metropolitan areas. Certain Conservative Members believe that there is a strong case for democratic government of the capital of the United Kingdom. They should also look very carefully at the amendment which seeks to create democratic local government in the metropolitan authorities, which face many of the problems and difficulties experienced by London. They should join the Opposition in the Lobby tonight not only on their amendment, which I applaud wholeheartedly, but on the amendment which seeks to ensure that there will be democratic local government in our metropolitan conurbations.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg (Hampstead and Highgate): The hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) made a very strange remark. He said that people would rather have bad government than self-government.

Mr. Wareing: I did not say that.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: That is what it sounded like. If the hon. Gentleman would care to repeat what he said, I should be grateful.

Mr. Wareing: Because the hon. Gentleman is so far away in the Yukon of the House, he did not hear what I said. I said that self-government is better than good government. It was a quotation from Campbell-Bannerman, the Liberal Prime Minister.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: I am very grateful to the hon. Gentleman. As it was quoted in relation to the fire service, people will be saying that when they are dead and that will not do them much good.

The hon. Member for West Derby said that the mess would have to be cleared up by a Labour Government in 1987 or 1988. I advise the hon. Gentleman to look at the parliamentary records relating to the reform of London local government in 1963-64. The Labour party then threatened that the social services and the children's services would not be given to the new London boroughs. The Labour Government had time to make a change, but they did not. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman makes his threats in good faith, but they are empty threats because a Labour Government will not be elected in 1987 or 1988. In addition, if there were a Labour Government, they would not want to change the system because the single tier authorities—the districts and the boroughs—do not want an upper tier authority.

I welcome my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham (Sir I. Gilmour) to our debate. If he bothers to read the history of London local government for the past 80 years, he will realise that there has been constant conflict between the metropolitan borough councils and the London county council and between the London boroughs and the GLC. All academic writers on the subject make that point.

My right hon. Friend was wrong. London borough council officials, after the formation of the GLC, said that the new GLC was just as much a "Big Brother" as the old LCC was to the metropolitan boroughs. The latest proposals provide us with the first opportunity to prevent the conflict that we have experienced for years and which has been to the detriment of the people of London.

Mr. Denis Howell (Birmingham, Small Heath): When power resides in two authorities, whatever they are, there will always be conflict, and it is right that there should be. The hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg) is saying that the conflict, which has long existed between the boroughs and the GLC and its predecessor, the LCC, will turn into conflict between the boroughs and the Government of the day. That will be much worse.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: I shall not attempt to discuss the west midlands and Birmingham. I do not believe that the London Boroughs Association, which, contrary to certain remarks, is controlled by the Conservative party, will be engaged in conflict with central Government.

I want to address my remarks more to my right hon. Friends than to Opposition Members. The Opposition are wholly unreconstructed. The debates in 1963 and 1964 about the abolition of the LCC show that the Labour party has not advanced one iota since then. It is still living in a land of make believe. The hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) said that the Opposition would co-operate if the Government set up a Royal Commission or an inquiry. But what happened between the Herbert commission and the implementation of legislation? There was precious little co-operation between the Labour-controlled LCC and central Government. The hon. Gentleman would be unable to deliver any more than the Labour party was willing to deliver in those days.

The Liberal party spokesman, who has disappeared into thin air, will not mind me saying that the Liberals have little interest in a higher tier of government for London. The last Liberal who understood, because he had a broad vision, was Sir Percy Harris, who served more than 30 years ago. The Liberal party at county hall has not distinguished itself in any thinking since then.

London has never wanted overall London government. Perhaps I have spanned the sectors of the party, because I was appointed as London spokesman for the Conservative party by my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), and reappointed by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. I seem to enjoy the confidence of both segments of the Conservative party, at least with regard to London.

I do not believe that one can compare the position of the capital city of London with that of, for example, Paris or Rome. A person from Paris calls himself a Parisien. However, if one talks to the average citizen of Hampstead or Sutton, he does not say that he is a Londoner; he says that he comes from Hampstead or Sutton. Indeed, in Hampstead, a person will start arguing about the village from which he came. There is Belsize village, town ward, and other places. In that sense, London is not the entity that many people try to pretend it is. London is far more a collection of independent authorities than a capital city.

What is London? My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State clearly showed why the idea of a London-wide body was unnecessary, irrespective of comments made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham, who probably did not follow the arguments that were being put forward. Is London the area covered by the Thames water authority? Is it the area covered by London Regional Transport, the Greater London council or the Metropolitan police? We have always had that problem in London. It used to be the LCC area. Then there was the London postal region and the London

[Sir Geoffrey Finsberg]

telecommunications region. No one has ever satisfactorily defined what London is. What I am trying to say is that in the end the average Londoner is far more concerned and interested in his own borough council than in a vast amorphous body.

Mr. Tony Banks: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will accept that all cities are organic. They grow and diminish in their scope. What makes the boundary of a London borough any more precise in its definition than that of London as a whole? I do not understand.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: As I develop my argument, I may help the hon. Gentleman. I am not sure whether he is now publicly chairman-elect of the GLC.

Mr. Banks: I am.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: I hope that will be the GLC's gain and our loss. We shall have to see what the year produces.

Mr. Banks: I shall remain a Member of Parliament.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: In that case, the hon. Gentleman will be neglecting his proper duties and proving that there is no need for a chairman of the GLC, which is the point that I would make. The hon. Gentleman has made that point for me and I am grateful to him.

The boroughs are closer to the people than the upper tier. Those who oppose abolition and those who want a voice for London are not always the same people. My friend Alan Greengross, who represents Hampstead on the GLC, is wholly with me in wanting the abolition of the GLC but not wholly with me when he says that he wants a substitute body. I do not believe that he has thought through what the consequences of that substitute body would be. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State never mentioned the re-creation of Ken Livingstone; he merely said that in the end there were no worthwhile functions although Alan Greengross listed 23.

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: I shall give way in half a second to my distinguished constituent, one of 26 Labour Members of Parliament whom I seek to represent.

I was going to say that those same people also tend to call for a Royal Commission so that the matter can be fully investigated.

Mr. Foot: The hon. Gentleman has said that he differs from the view of Mr. Alan Greengross. Does the hon. Gentleman acknowledge that one of the principal arguments that he is concerned about is the future control of Hampstead heath, where the hon. Gentleman has shown himself to be such a deserter and where so few of his constituents support him? Is not Mr. Greengross advocating a proper solution to that problem, whereas the hon. Gentleman has no solution whatsoever?

9.15 pm

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: The right hon. Gentleman clearly does not bother to read the *Hampstead and Highgate Express*. If he will be patient, he will hear me talk about Hampstead heath. I am glad that he followed my call to his Labour GLC to remove the tinkers who occupied the heath on two occasions.

There has been a call for a Royal Commission to look at this matter again. We had a Royal Commission 20 years ago. It reported, and the facts have not changed. The Herbert commission suggested that the top tier should cover matters that have now been lost—the ambulance service, housing and transport, which was flogged to the GLC and rightly removed recently. There is little left to make it worth creating a London-wide body. Those who hanker back to a Royal Commission or the Herbert report conveniently forget that the Royal Commission, after careful investigation, advocated that education should go to all the London boroughs, not just to the outer London boroughs.

Mr. Foot: Will the hon. Gentleman answer my question? Did not Mr. Greengross, having considered these matters, reach the conclusion that one reason why there should be a body in future was that one authority should be responsible for a place such as Hampstead heath? The *Hampstead and Highgate Express*, which is a fine newspaper, is passionately opposed to the hon. Gentleman's view. So are the overwhelming majority of his constituents. They want a single authority to do the job and many of the other jobs cited by hon. Members.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: I shall not arrange the order of my speech to suit the right hon. Gentleman, who does not represent Hampstead but who resides in a rather more lush part of Hampstead than I could afford. I know what my constituents say, and they do not follow the line of wanting a London-wide body. I promise the right hon. Gentleman that, when we are discussing Welsh matters, I shall not interfere in his constituency.

I wish to talk about the propaganda that has been coming from the paid hacks at county hall, because people are beginning to believe some of the stories. I want to make it very clear that those closest to the citizens are the London borough councils. The Conservative majority on the London Boroughs Association has said clearly that it can run the services without an upper tier authority. That includes the leaders of Harrow and Hillingdon councils, who reiterated that a few weeks ago. They know what they want for their people.

The same misrepresentation has been put about regarding Hampstead heath, upon which I have walked for rather longer than most of those now prating about it. When I was a child I was taken on the heath, and I yield to no one in my love and admiration for it. But there is absolutely no reason why the dedicated people who look after the heath—not the councillors at county hall, but the hard-working park keepers—could not do exactly the same job for any authority that was responsible for the heath.

I shall come in a moment to what I said several months ago, when the Bill was first published, about the future of Hampstead heath, which the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) would have heard had he attended a meeting of the Heath and Old Hampstead Society. It is clear that the Government have never said that giving management to the three territorial boroughs would mean splitting the heath. That has never been said and it has never been intended. It has been said by those who make propaganda from over the water, but it has never been said and was never intended by the Government. If that were so, I would violently oppose it, because that is not the way to do it.

There are two major issues—and here I answer the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent if he wishes to listen. First, Hampstead heath should be properly funded. That assurance has already been given repeatedly by Ministers. Secondly, its management should not be fragmented. That again is perfectly clear from what has been said repeatedly by Ministers. If it were not, I would be desperately unhappy. But the Government have never said anything different and, as the Member of Parliament representing Hampstead, I am satisfied with the assurance that I have had on those points. Both those objectives can be achieved without creating an elected London-wide body.

It may be—I have said this before, and I repeat it for the benefit of the right hon. Gentleman—that the three-borough joint committee is not the ideal solution. [HON. MEMBERS: "Ah!"] I said that many months ago. Hon. Members who say "Ah!" have not bothered to listen. I put forward for consideration other ideas to my right hon. Friend, and I am glad that they have not finally been rejected.

I wish to put on record equally that the solution that has been found for Kenwood house is on the basis that I put to my noble Friend the Minister for the Arts, and I very much welcome that decision. Indeed, it has been welcomed locally by my constituents and by the Friends of Kenwood.

I would be more impressed by some of the arguments that I have heard and some of the head shakings that I have noticed by some of my hon. Friends who seem to want a London-wide body if they had served in London local government and knew what it meant. It is clear that the number of London councillors representing numbers of wards must be closer to local matters than one person representing 60,000 or 70,000 people, whether he be a Member of Parliament or a GLC member. Local councillors are much closer in their appropriate matters that affect the people.

This is not a constitutional matter, despite all that we are hearing; it is a practical matter. There are three practical issues. First, how would London legislate for its problems in future if there were no overall body? It would legislate in future as it can now, through the London boroughs, one of which would be the lead borough. In much the same way, the general powers Bill of the GLC is only a vehicle for the London boroughs. The GLC puts in its own disclaimer on a substantial number of the legislative powers to the effect that the clause in question is being promoted at the request of the London Boroughs Association. Therefore, that is perfectly possible for the future of the London boroughs.

Secondly, how will London discuss issues of concern of a London-wide nature? It will do so through the London Boroughs Association, as it always has done perfectly adequately. My hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson), in an intervention, spoke about the Association of Labour Authorities which has split away. All I can say is that that is a foolish and dangerous precedent for those boroughs. It would not take very much for the Conservative boroughs in the Association of Metropolitan Authorities to do the same, and local government throughout the country would lose seriously. My friends in the old London county council area in the metropolitan boroughs lived for nearly 20 years under a Labour majority on the old metropolitan boroughs standing joint committee, but they did not walk away because they had not got the bat to play. I hope that, sooner rather than later, the Labour boroughs in London will come back and realise that the only people they are harming are the constituents who are losing out because of this lack of joint consultation.

There are other problems, but they are of a limited nature, and time is also limited. But I can say that the boroughs are certain that they can manage. I wonder why my hon. Friends run down the London boroughs and disbelieve that they are capable of running themselves. Many London boroughs have a rateable value well in excess of some of the major cities in Britain, and they do not need a nanny above them to co-ordinate their affairs.

It has been said that far too many powers and functions are being handed over to the Government or to new quangos or that the reorganisation may cost more. That is not true. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has referred to Alan Greengross's publication. It is a pity that in his publication, Mr. Cyril Taylor, a Conservative GLC member, gives credence to that fallacy. I could answer in my own words what he said, but instead I shall quote from a letter sent to me by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, which is perhaps in more diplomatic language than I might use. He said:

"Councillor Taylor's pamphlet . . . purports to show that our abolition proposals are fundamentally flawed and will result, crucially, in higher costs for ratepayers. Yet the pamphlet is based on serious misrepresentations of our proposals and fundamental factual errors which make it impossible to take its conclusions seriously. For example, Councillor Taylor adds together accurate figures for the costs of some services—some of which apppear to have no basis in reality—in such a way as to under estimate greatly the proportion of GLC spending which will become the responsibility of the boroughs. The fact is that nearly three-quarters of the net current expenditure of the GLC before abolition will become the responsibility of the boroughs afterwards, and most of the rest will become the responsibility of the boroughs collectively in the joint fire and civil defence authority. Councillor Taylor goes on to predict unfair additional burdens on some boroughs as a result of abolition, despite the Government's clearly stated policy that the financial system will be adjusted to avoid undue gains and losses to authorities. In particular, contrary to what Councillor Taylor suggests, we shall help to achieve this by extending, in the abolition Bill, the London Rates Equalisation Scheme. Councillor Taylor also misunderstands our proposals on the apportioning of the cost of servicing outstanding debt. The effect of our proposals is to reproduce a very similar distribution of costs to the existing situation. For these reasons"——

Mr. Dykes *rose*——

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: I shall give way in a moment. I have not failed to give way so far, but I shall do so in my own time.

The letter continues:

"For these reasons, it would not be right to treat Councillor Taylor's arguments as a serious challenge to our own firm view that abolition will yield significant savings which will be of benefit to all Londoners."

Mr. Dykes: I do not want to make a long intervention, but unfortunately my hon. Friend, having commenced his speech just after 9 o'clock, could be accused of filibustering when many other hon. Members want to speak, and strongly, against the Bill. Does my hon. Friend agree that he is in danger of seriously misleading the House with that quotation when a respected official at county hall, J. Crockford, the director of finance, in paragraph three of a letter of 6 February 1985 to Cyril Taylor, who complained about assertions in the Minister's letter, said:

[Mr. Dykes]

"The Minister claims that three-quarters of GLC net current expenditure will become the responsibility of the boroughs. This is a constantly repeated statement which I cannot avoid describing as seriously misleading."

Does my hon. Friend agree that for an official to use the phrase "seriously misleading" in an official letter is the strongest condemnation of a ministerial view which is guaranteed to misrepresent the situation?

9.30 pm

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: My hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) quotes from a letter of February. I have quoted from my right hon. Friend's letter of 26 March—a month and 20 days later. I prefer to rely upon the civil servants of the Department that I once had the honour to serve rather than upon anyone at county hall.

Mr. Wilkinson: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: No. I am accused of speaking for too long.

If my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East had attended the meetings of London Conservative Members, he would have had a chance to convince more of us. However, for the past year at any rate, he has not bothered to attend. That has been a great shame. We have missed him very much.

As my right hon. Friend said earlier, the overwhelming majority of London Conservative Members support the Bill and do not support the idea of an overall body. Conservative party members in Greater London at their AGM—the people who worked for the election of my hon. Friends, who attended the meeting the other day and who stand on doorsteps in order to get us elected—voted by about 170 to 17 that they did not want an overall body. The motion had been proposed by two borough leaders. Borough leaders throughout London have said that they do not want an upper tier.

Those are the people to whom we should listen. We have a duty to listen to them. Let us take no notice of the rubbish about how 74 per cent.—74 per cent. of 10,000 people—say no. I prefer to support the 1·5 million who said yes, at the general election, to getting rid of the GLC.

Mr. Foot: I am provoked into speaking by the speech of the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg). I shall be brief because many other hon. Members wish to speak.

The hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate made an extraordinary speech. He sought to give the impression, in reference to Hampstead heath, that he speaks for a considerable section of his constituents. All those who have followed the controversy must know that the overwhelming view of the people of Hampstead and Highgate who wish to preserve the treasure of Hampstead heath and to protect it properly is that the Government's proposals are no good. Indeed, people are searching for a solution such as is suggested by the amendments.

I am not sure what the hon. Gentleman's present view is of how the heath should be controlled in the future. He said that there is no proposal to divide it into three. I understand that he is right about that. Even the present Government have not made so direct and mad a proposal as that, but they have done the next best thing. They have suggested that the future control of Hampstead heath should be divided between three boroughs, none of which wants the responsibility. That is a recipe for the utmost confusion and for a failure to protect the heath.

Although those who live there derive great advantages from the heath, they are not the only ones who are interested in its protection, which is also a matter of concern to the people of London and, indeed, of a much wider area. Large numbers of people who visit London come to the heath. Its protection has been a difficult matter. It has been protected against people who wish to settle on it, against developers and against every form of threat and invasion. That is how the heath has been protected over the years and it is right that the House should take some note of what is said by those who genuinely want to protect it. We should take no note of what is said by the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate, who certainly does not represent his constituents on this matter, if indeed he still represents them on any subject. I hope that the Government will not listen to him.

There will probably be another chance to mention this matter tomorrow. I had assumed that it would not be discussed until then. This is an example of how the Bill is creating hazards that I doubt whether the Government even considered when they embarked on the enterprise.

We know that the Minister who is to reply to the debate was only shoved in at a late stage to prop up the Secretary of State who was becoming extremely confused over the Bill. He is quite a good prop, but with such a bad case as this even he seems to be collapsing under the weight. The Government did not even consider the future of Hampstead heath and similar facilities when they embarked on the Bill, and they have got into ever deeper confusion. Injury to the heath would be one of the many ridiculous and dangerous by-products of the Bill if the Government carry it through. I therefore hope that the Government will consider these amendments.

There are overwhelming reasons for accepting the amendments, as the right hon. Member for Chesham and Amersham (Sir I. Gilmour) has said. I prophesy that if the Government determine to ram the Bill through the House and if they succeed in ramming it through another place, they will not be finished with it. Within three or four years the matter will have to be reconsidered because there will be great pressure and it will be seen that it is ridiculous to deprive London of a voice. The country will reconsider the case and we shall have to debate it all over again.

The Government have only to show a little grace and readiness to listen. I know that that is not the most notable quality of the Government. It is especially difficult for Ministers to think and act in those terms when they have the voice of the Prime Minister drilling in their ears all the time. It is difficult for Ministers to hear themselves think in such conditions. We understand their problem and sympathise with them greatly. If they all got together and went along to the Prime Minister tomorrow morning and told her that, of all the fat-headed ideas that she has tried to force on them, this is the worst and that at last even this Front Bench of worms will turn, they might be able to save the day. If they do not do that, they will have trouble after trouble in this Parliament, and possibly in the next one.

We shall eventually restore to London the voice and authority that it deserves. In the process, we shall fight to protect every inch of holy ground on Hampstead heath, even if we have no support from Conservatives.

Mr. Marlow: I am sorry to disappoint the right hon. Member for Blaenau, Gwent (Mr. Foot), but my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has the overwhelming support of everyone on this side of the House personally and for this policy.

Amendment No. 68 is best described as the mark II GLC amendment. I dare say that some of my hon. Friends want it. I wish that they would tell us so. Those of my hon. Friends who do not support the mark II GLC but are inclined to support the amendment are being naive. Certain things happen when a democratically elected body has no role. We have an example on the other side of the Channel in the form of the European Assembly at Strasbourg. It has impeccable democratic credentials but, alas, some would say, it has no power. It is looking for power all its waking life and even in its dreams. If it gets powers, no doubt the appetite will grow with the feeding. It is living proof that the less power a democratically elected organisation has, the more posturing it goes about.

If we had a democratically elected successor body in London, I am quite sure that it would be a hothouse for political agitation. It would have no resources and would blame everyone else for anything that it did not like, especially if its political complexion was different from that of the Government of the day. It would have no responsibilities and no powers, and anything that went wrong would be somebody else's fault. That would be an occasion for great political posturing—*[Interruption.]* My hon. Friends seem to disagree, but at present the GLC has no responsibility for defence, yet it goes in for nuclear-free zones. If we set up an organisation such as that proposed, exactly the same will happen again. It will be a recipe for conflict, and we can do without it.

Mr. W. Benyon (Milton Keynes): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Marlow: I am sorry.

Currently, 75 per cent. of the money spent by the GLC and the responsibilities that that entails will be passed on to the borough councils in London which are closer to the people and much more democratic. A total of 20 per cent. of expenditure is to be spent on the fire service. As my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler) rightly said, the main responsibility for the fire service is vested in the Home Office. Borough councillors within London will be responsible for the fire service, but not in a political organisation for which there is no need. There is no job for a successor to the GLC. It will have no responsibilities, and we are better off without it.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham (Sir I. Gilmour) asked why London was different from other capital cities. In most other European countries, the capital is a sort of primus inter pares, but London is very different from other English cities, and it is perfectly proper that it should have a different form of local government. Paris and Bonn are completely different, and there is no reason why we should adopt the same solution as was adopted there.

The only possible reason for the amendment is to provide an identity for London. I am a Londoner born and bred, and many of my constituents in a third generation new town are Londoners born and bred. They do not look to the GLC to represent them, nor do they need that sort of identity for London.

Mr. Dykes *rose*——

Mr. Marlow: I am afraid that I shall not give way, and my hon. Friend well knows why.

We all know what the City of London or Westminster means, but if one looks at a map, what is it that combines Richmond and Kingston-upon-Thames with London docklands? What divides Sunbury from Twickenham? My hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) is very interested in these issues. Perhaps he will arrange a trip for both of us in an aeroplane so that we can fly over London. Will he be able to tell me where it begins and ends? We all know what London is, and we do not need a GLC to identify or represent it. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has spoken against the amendment, as has my hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg). They are quite right. The amendment is nonsense and we should throw it out.

Mr. Tony Banks: I am in favour of amendment No. 68. It is becoming increasingly clear that throughout the passage of this Bill the Government have failed to make a case for abolition. They might have satisfied a few bigots behind them and no doubt pleased a few Conservative leaders of Tory boroughs, but in terms of general public awareness they have failed to make their case.

From the submissions that were made on "Streamlining the Cities" and from the discussions during the 170 hours in Committee, we know that at no point could the Government claim any independent or authoritative support for their proposals. Had they been able to do so, I am sure that they would have done. However, no independent source came to the Government's assistance, and again the Secretary of State has completely blown the argument.

In effect, the right hon. Gentleman said that London will now be the Secretary of State, because he will decide on overall London-wide issues. The right hon. Gentleman also said that the decisions will be taken at local level, even though we now have rate capping, GREAs and targets. People at local level will not be allowed to decide. Instead, Marsham street civil servants will decide the targets and the amount of money which local communities will have at their disposal to meet local needs. Therefore, the Secretary of State will be London, and, to all intents and purposes, he will also be the boroughs. That is what is happening to local government in London. All the power will effectively be concentrated in the hands of the Secretary of State and his civil servants.

9.45 pm

I support amendment No. 68 and amendment No. 6, but with great reluctance and a deal of equivocation because they represent a compromise and I do not wish to compromise on this—that is perhaps the one attitude that I share with the Prime Minister. I want the GLC to continue in its existing form. Indeed, I look to the next Labour Government to ensure that the GLC has far more properly defined and extensive powers over the whole of the Greater London area—whatever we decide that to be, because in the end, like the boroughs, the boundaries of Greater London will be decided by the House.

Unlike Conservative Members, I believe that people regard themselves as Londoners. I do not know what Conservative Members tell people abroad who ask where they come from. Do they say that they come from Hampstead, or from Hayes and Harlington?

Mr. Dicks *rose*——

Mr. Banks: No, I will not give way. The hon. Gentleman has only just walked into the Chamber. People may say that they come from the west end or the east end of London, but they regard themselves as Londoners. That being so, London-wide government naturally follows. Indeed, if one good thing has come out of this great conflict between Parliament and county hall it has been the sharpening of people's perception of themselves. I believe that they see themselves more as Londoners now than they did even 18 months ago. Therefore, although I dislike the amendments because they are a compromise, I shall reluctantly support them.

Something in me wants the Bill to go through utterly unamended because I realise how much damage it will do to the Conservative party in London. A large part of me would therefore like the Bill to go through as it is. Nevertheless, I shall support amendments Nos. 68 and 6 because I prefer to preserve some element of democratic accountability and amendments calling for an inquiry by a Select Committee are clearly preferable to the back-of-a-fag paper undertakings on which abolition is based. We have been told many times that the concept did not emerge from long brainstorming sessions in the Cabinet but merely from the Prime Minister's dislike of Ken Livingstone and the activities of the Labour GLC.

When major changes in local government in this country are predicated on the party political prejudices of the Prime Minister it is a bad day for local democracy and a bad day for local government reorganisation. Every previous change in local government structures has taken place only after vigorous and detailed inquiry. We have heard about the Herbert commission, Redcliffe-Maud and the Marshall inquiry. Indeed, the two most prominent Ministers steering the Bill on its troubled passage through the House supported the GLC's strategic role when they gave evidence to the Marshall inquiry, but a change of Government and a promise of holding on to office has clearly changed their minds.

Changes in local government are now being brought about by personal fiat and the disquiet among Conservative Members is becoming increasingly apparent. I believe that that disquiet stems not just from whatever democratic feelings still linger in some elements of the Conservative party but from the fact that some Conservative Members have a pretty acute nose when it comes to sniffing the political winds and they realise—this is the bit that I like—that if the Bill goes through it will cause enormous damage to the Conservative party in London. Up to 20 Tory seats could disappear as a result of these changes. At least five Tory-controlled local authorities will go Labour in the 1986 elections. Hammersmith, Brent, Ealing, Wandsworth and Waltham Forest will undoubtedly be won by the Labour party because of the Bill. That is worrying many thoughtful Tories.

The hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg) asked about the London Boroughs Association. I have a letter from the hon. Member for Beckenham (Sir P. Goodhart) to councillor Cyril Taylor, who is the deputy leader of the GLC. I do not know why he should deliberately misunderstand or misrepresent the Government's position. After all, he is a reasonably intelligent Tory—there are still a few left. He makes it quite clear that putting control in the hands of the LBA would be

"political suicide for the Conservative Party in London, as the constitution of the LBA is weighted against us."

That is a straightforward political consideration. The hon. Member for Beckenham realises that what his hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate is offering is politically unrealistic for the Conservative party.

There is no authoritative support for the Government's proposal. Although I want to see as much damage as possible done to the Conservative party in London—if the Bill is passed unamended, that will happen—my love of democracy and anxiety for Londoners generally finally persuade me to support amendments No. 6 and No. 68.

Mr. Speaker: It may be for the convenience of hon. Members if I tell them that the Front Bench spokesmen will seek to speak at 10.15 pm. If hon. Members are relatively brief, many of them will be called to speak.

Mr. W. Benyon (Milton Keynes): This is the most crucial part of the Bill. Although Hampstead heath is important, I beg leave to say that other matters should be even more important.

In the Bill, most powers are being given to the boroughs. Those of us who support the amendments have nothing against the boroughs. Far from it. We are worried about the clash that will occur, not with other elected authorities, but with the powers transferred to the Secretary of State and, to a lesser extent, with the London-wide quangos and those that are composed of indirect representation.

The element of centralisation gives me the greatest anxiety. I ask myself three questions. First, do my right hon. and hon. Friends want these powers? Apart from the extra staff and effort entailed, it will be a bed of nails for whoever holds that office in future. Every candidate and councillor of a different political persuasion who receives queries about planning, roads or whatever will say, "That is not my responsibility. You must go to the Government, because that is where the power lies."

Secondly, even if my right hon. and hon. Friends are happy with the powers, are they happy that they should be exercised by a potential successor? If the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) controlled planning in London, would it not bring even a slight quiver of anxiety to the spines of my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench?

Mr. Cormack: To both Front Benches.

Mr. Benyon: Thirdly, is this something that the Tory party should be doing? The ethos of the Bill—this is why I supported it on Second Reading—is that we are removing an unnecessary tier of local government. Plainly, the tier is not unnecessary. One can tot up the matters that are not going to the boroughs. There is obviously a conflict between my hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg) and my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) about the exact proportion that is going to the boroughs. Plainly it is not unnecessary to have an authority to replace the GLC to cover these matters, because the powers are being vested in the Secretary of State.

Therefore, we have the extraordinary contrast between ILEA being elected and these powers being exercised directly by the Secretary of State. ILEA deals with only a section of the population in its area, whereas the powers for planning and roads will affect old and young alike.

Finally, to take up the point made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham (Sir I. Gilmour) about capital cities, I must stress that this is not just an emotional argument. My hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) said, "If we have the body that is proposed by the amendment, it will be a hotbed of agitation." That was exactly the view that Hitler took of the Reichstag. It is completely different to want a body that represents our capital city, as happens in every other major country. I hope that my hon. Friends will support the amendment.

Mr. Fatchett: I shall concentrate my remarks on the metropolitan counties, since much of the debate has been about the GLC. However, I should say that I have felt throughout the progress of the Bill—tonight's debate has strengthened that feeling—that it is peculiar, to say the least, to contemplate a capital city without an elected body or some form of elected local government. The hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) said that he could differentiate between Britain and other western European countries, because in the latter the capital cities are primus inter pares, but that that was not the case in London because it was so much bigger than any other British city. Rather than weakening the argument for an elected authority, that strengthens the argument for a strategic body, democratically elected and accountable, to control and supervise the functions that are essential to London.

We have been told repeatedly that the purpose of the Bill is to devolve services and functions to the metropolitan districts. The reality is different. Some functions will be devolved; others will be centralised. A major criticism of the Bill is that the Secretary of State is assuming vast powers in relation to local government. Furthermore 70 per cent. of metropolitan county spending will be controlled by joint boards. The pattern of local government therefore will leave many questions to be answered. The Bill shows the ill-conceived and incoherent way in which the Government have approached the problem. For instance, why should we devolve 30 per cent. of metropolitan county spending to the districts and subject those services to democratic control, but devolve 70 per cent. of spending to joint boards which will be subjected to no democratic control. Those who serve on the joint boards will not be elected but will come indirectly from the metropolitan districts.

To take the argument a stage further, metropolitan counties border shire counties. In the latter, functions which in the metropolitan areas will be controlled by joint boards and will, therefore, not be subject to democratic control, will be subject to democratic control. How will the Government explain to the electorates of the metropolitan counties that it is safe for those who live in the shire counties to vote on those issues, but it is not safe to allow those who live in the metropolitan counties to do so? This extension of quango government is something that the Government will live to regret, and we in the metropolitan counties will continue to oppose it because we believe in democracy. In principle, the Bill is wrong. In principle, I shall continue to oppose it and, in principle, I shall continue to argue that we need democratic control of functions in the metropolitan counties, whatever happens to the Bill.

The Bill is also bad in practice. Its reality is that all the joint boards will leave a vacuum in local government and this is particularly so of the relationship between the joint boards and the electorate. The elector will not know to whom to turn. Nobody will stand for the joint boards and be elected to them. The people who will be appointed will have been elected to authorities which cover other functions. They will not be directly elected. To whom does one go as an elector? To whom does one take one's problems? There will be no direct, definable councillor to whom one can turn.

10 pm

The debate has concentrated heavily on London. Those Conservative Members who have grave doubts about the Government's proposals for London and are likely to support the amendment tabled by the hon. and learned Member for Feltham and Heston (Mr. Ground) should realise that the arguments obtain for the metropolitan counties as well. If they are to vote for democracy in London, they should be consistent and vote for democracy in the metropolitan counties as well. If they do not, those of us in the north will feel that the great divide in the country is prevailing yet again. It will show that they are worried about democratic rights in the south but not about those in the north, and have not taken an interest in the arguments about the north. The arguments are the same and so are equally strong. Therefore, I ask Conservative Members to support us and to save local government in the metropolitan counties.

Mr. Martin Stevens: The subject of the debate and of the two amendments on which we have been concentrating is the desirability of introducing a small democratically elected body to represent the people of London. The question can be tackled in two ways. We can talk about the practical needs of Government or we can talk about it in what has been called an emotional or romantic way and say that the people of London need someone to speak for them no matter what he says or how little power he may have.

In a way, the fact that so many of us have experience of local government in London may almost be a drawback. However modest one may be as an individual, we feel that the importance of the role that we played at county hall and elsewhere must be echoed in the hearts of Londoners. I am sure that my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Hexham (Mr. Rippon), who has tabled amendment No. 6, and under whom I served devotedly when he was leader of the opposition on the old London county council, feels that the focus of ordinary Londoners' attention is concentrated on the activities at county hall. I am equally sure that he is mistaken.

The practicalities of making London government more simple to understand and more democratic have been argued by many right hon. and hon. Friends, but I wish to put a question to which I have not yet heard an answer. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said that, during the 21 years of its life, the GLC had never been perceived as acting for London, and he instanced a number of examples, such as the docklands area. However one may view the system under which the dockland area is being developed, one cannot begin to deny that the improvement and the excitement and the acceleration of the provision of jobs, houses and life in that great area of London is moving forward in a way that would have been impossible if the Government had left the area under the previous arrangement.

[Mr. Martin Stevens]

The question I want to put to the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) who will be winding up for the Opposition is this. Can he give an example of a single occasion during those 21 years when the chairman or the leader of the GLC was seen by ordinary Londoners to be speaking for the people of London? Can he give me a single example of when the chairman or leader of the GLC has gripped the imagination and aroused the enthusiasm and local patriotism of Londoners, as other local institutions have been able to do over the centuries? The answer is that it has never happend. We are being persuaded, by this great outflow of ratepayers' money, to ascribe to the Greater London council youthful, exciting, get-up-and-go qualities that it has never had. It is a bumbling morass of bureacracy. It puts off decisions until the next day, duplicates expensively what others have done, takes holidays and does not answer letters. The GLC has never stirred the imagination of Londoners and it never will. If the hon. Member for Blackburn can say when the leadership of the GLC has aroused the emotions of the people of London and given visible leadership to London, I shall present him with a bunch of flowers at the end of this debate.

Mr. Cormack: Much though I enjoyed the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Fulham (Mr. Stevens), I disagree profoundly with it. There was a time when the illustrious leader of our party regarded the Greater London council as the jewel in the crown of the party. That, of course, was when the Conservatives were in political control. When the leadership of the GLC passed into other hands our views changed.

I want to concentrate briefly on the central issue that is before us this evening. With respect to the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett), it is not the metropolitan counties.

As was said by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Feltham and Heston (Mr. Ground), who spoke so eloquently to amendment No. 6, there is a very real difference. If the Bill, for which I have little time and for which I have not and will not cast a single vote, is placed on the statute book, the people of Leeds, Birmingham and Sheffield will be directly represented. There will be a co-ordinating authority in their cities. There is a very real difference between that and what has been fatuously dismissed as the emotional argument about the capital city. I say "fatuously dismissed" because, for all the eloquence of my hon. Friend the Member for Fulham, for a century or more now the capital city has had a directly elected co-ordinating authority of sorts. Those of us who have put our names to the amendment are proposing something which recognises that fact and which is wholly consistent with the Conservative party manifesto. Many of us believe that this pledge was inserted in the manifesto as a last minute political gut reaction, and we are not very happy about it. Nevertheless, the amendment accepts that this pledge was part of the manifesto and the logic of the Government majority, yet it still says, "Think again about London".

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State entirely failed to persuade me when he sought, I thought with a lackadaisical lack of fervour, to put across the case. He did not answer the question about strategic planning. It seems to me to be absolutely essential that a body of some kind should be responsible for strategic planning in London. My hon. Friend the Member for Milton Keynes (Mr. Benyon) made a very telling point when he referred to the fact that the Secretary of State may one day come from another party and that this was one of the most important factors of all to bear in mind. One should never take to oneself powers one does not wish one's opponent to have. That is a cardinal principle of democratic government. The Government are seeking to enact a dangerous precedent.

My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Feltham and Heston presented a list of functions which are by no means the same as the functions exercised by the GLC. He listed functions which should be the preserve of a directly elected body.

Even at this late stage I beg my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to recognise that people feel deeply about this matter. I do not subscribe to the view that Mr. Cyril Taylor or Mr. Greengross are inexperienced or that they have not thought the issue through. They have thought it through thoroughly and carefully. Many people and associations involved in town planning and architecture in London and who have had great experience believe that the Government have got it wrong.

I ask my right hon. Friend please to concede that he might be mistaken. If the Government go along this road conflicts will be so great that we shall be able to quote yet again the Prime Minister's greatest admirer:

"You ain't seen nothing yet."

Conflict will occur in the London Boroughs Association and in all the quangos. For a Tory Government to propose a measure which in effect says that "a thousand quangos bloom" flies in the face of everything that we have preached in the last two or three years.

Even if the powerful speech about Hampstead heath by the right hon. Member for Blaenau, Gwent (Mr. Foot) is dismissed — because the Government are not in the business of protecting heaths at the moment — a powerful case has been made. Some hon. Members criticise non-London Members for taking part in this debate, but we all have the right to speak about our capital city. Why should our great capital city be almost alone in western Europe in not having the modest type of authority proposed in the amendment?

Mr. Chris Smith: I was stirred by the speech by the hon. Member for Fulham (Mr. Stevens), who said that the GLC had never stirred the imagination of Londoners. Nothing has stirred the imagination of Londoners more than the attempt by the Government to abolish their representative council. The proposal to abolish London's democratic voice has galvanised Londoners into the defence of an institution which was previously regarded as being bureaucratic and remote in many ways. In many respects it is, and it does have its faults.

The Greater London council's saving grace is that it is elected and represents the capital city. Londoners regard themselves as being part of London. They value the opportunity to vote for a council that represents Londoners. That is what has galvanised enormous support across London, particularly in my constituency.

I speak to many of my constituents who feel very deeply that removing the GLC will take from them the right to have a voice in the future of their city, not as part of a borough but as a metropolis. That matters to my constituents. Surely it should also matter to the House, even though it appears not to matter to the Government.

10.15 pm

Mr. Straw: The hon. Member for Fulham (Mr. Stevens) offered me flowers. I shall decline his kind invitation because the good members of the backbone Labour party would not entirely understand it, were I to accept. However, I shall answer his question. It is not just Ken Livingstone who has made a name for himself as leader of the Greater London council. There have been many distinguished leaders from the Conservative side. Horace Cutler and Sir Desmond Plummer were both well-known names in London, and they sought to speak for London. Sir Desmond Plummer certainly excited the imagination of the Minister of State because, year after year, it was he who was so excited by the GLC that he came to the House to move the Second Reading of the GLC money Bills. In March 1971, he said of the GLC:

"It has progressive and expanding programmes, it is making life better for Londoners, and it will make it infinitely better for Londoners in the 1970s and the 1980s."—[*Official Report*, 18 March 1971; Vol. 813, c. 1741.]

The right hon. Gentleman went on in a similar vein throughout the 1970s, excited by Sir Desmond Plummer and Horace Cutler, for example when he was approving of the GLC's employment initiative in 1978.

I shall decline the bunch of flowers, but I believe that I have earned them. When he winds up, I look forward to the Minister of State accepting an invitation, which I have offered him on three occasions, to explain why, when he first introduced the Bill, he said that he had always believed in the abolition of the GLC right from the 1960s. In fact, he has been supporting the GLC from the 1960s and 1970s. It is the responsibility of Ministers to explain why they have changed their mind.

If ever there was a case for the amendments before the House, it was made by the Secretary of State himself in his speech. It was a quite astonishing speech, in which the right hon. Gentleman revealed two things. The first is his utter ignorance of the geography of our nation and our cities. Secondly, he revealed the true motives that lie behind the Bill, because the Bill does not in the least involve real devolution of power to districts, but, as the Secretary of State admitted, the centralisation of power. The message from the right hon. Gentleman was, "Whitehall knows best. Only Whitehall can decide."

Quite often we read in the Conservative *Newsline* newspaper that the Secretary of State goes around the country criticising Marxists. I think that he has been taking too much notice of Marxists, especially Marxist-Leninists. It was obvious from his speech that he has been converted to democratic centralism. I have never heard such a perfect description of democratic centralism in which one cannot leave little units to decide among themselves because it is messy and they might make the wrong decision. The M25 is outside the boundaries of Greater London; the M1 goes from London to Birmingham; and a change in the traffic scheme in Talgarth Road affects Berkshire. One cannot leave those decisions to be sorted out locally. One has to accrete the powers and centralise it in Marsham street and Whitehall.

Mr. Tracey: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Straw: I shall not because I have only two minutes——

Mr. Tracey : It is an important point.

Mr. Straw: I shall give way, but the time will come out of the Minister of State's speech.

Mr. Tracey: I should like the hon. Gentleman to make it clear before he finishes his speech whether metropolitan county councils would be reinstated if the Labour Government were to come back into power. I should like the hon. Gentleman to make that clear because the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) has never made it clear to the House.

Mr. Straw: We have made the position completely clear to the House on many occasions.

What I want to do now in the two minutes that I have left is—[HON. MEMBERS: "Answer the question."] The answer is that there will be a reinstatement of countywide democracy in the metropolitan counties. [HON. MEMBERS: "Ah."] I shall tell Conservative Members this much as well, and the time that I take will also come out of the Minister's speech. We shall not write our manifesto on the back of a cigarette packet. We shall not ignore the democratic wishes of our own party. We shall discuss the matter and consult people before we come to a final conclusion, if this Parliament, in both Houses, approves the Bill unamended. But we have not reached that stage, either.

In justifying his extraordinary statement that one power after another—such as transport, land use and planning —had to be centralised within Whitehall, the Secretary of State sought to deny that London was a geographical entity—a city.

I remind the right hon. Gentleman of what the Secretary of State for Education and Science said when he was the Minister for Local Government in 1962. There has been no earthquake since then—London has had the same, if not a smaller, population and has stayed within similar boundaries because the green belt has not been altered. In 1962 the right hon. Gentleman said:

"Yet Greater London is, in a very real sense, a single city. Admittedly, it embraces many places of distinctive character which attract strong loyalties. Nevertheless, the whole of the great urban area, which spreads out to and is contained by the green belt, is one metropolis." — [*Official Report*, 10 December 1962; Vol. 669, c. 52.]

We all know that to be the case for the metropolises of Manchester, Merseyside, parts of the west midlands, Tyne and Wear and within Yorkshire. There will always be difficulties in deciding exactly where the boundary lies —whether the boundary between Redbridge and Essex goes down one road in Buckhurst hill or another road.

We also know that, broadly speaking, the boundaries of the GLC coincide with the boundaries of the metropolis. If the Secretary of State does not recognise the nature of capital cities, he should not hold such a great office. If we fail to agree to the amendments, London and the other major conurbations will be the only major cities in the free world without their own unified system of government.

I ask the Conservative party, which was founded almost on the idea of local democracy and of not accepting centralised control——

Mr. Kenneth Baker: What?

Mr. Straw: The Minister questions me. He should read Disraeli and find out what the real Conservative party is all about. The trouble is that he has read only the works of the Prime Minister who has hijacked the party. In the past, the Conservative party has been a defender of local democracy. Unless the amendments are passed, it will never be able to claim that local democracy is one of the principles that it holds true.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: My hon. Friend the Member for Milton Keynes (Mr. Benyon) was right to say that this is an important debate. It goes to the heart of the question of the need for a strategic overview of metropolitan areas. Two main amendments are before the House. The first was tabled by the Opposition and argues for a strategic overall authority for all metropolitan counties, including London. The second, tabled by some of my right hon. and hon. Friends, argues for a strategic authority for London alone. If there is an administrative argument for an overview strategic authority for the reconciliation of conflict and for the better administration of certain joint services, it applies as much to the metropolitan counties as it does to London.

I appreciate that my hon. Friends believe that there is a special case for London because it is our capital city. At the very heart of this debate is the question whether we need a strategic overview. Embedded in the Bill is the fact that there must be overall strategic planning for London. We cannot imagine a conurbation as large and as highly developed as London without strategic overview planning. It is essential for land use planning and for roads.

My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Feltham and Heston (Mr. Ground) is deeply aware of the details of the Bill. He accepts that strategic planning is an essential part of the proposals in part I.

The question arises whether our proposals produce conflict. My right hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham (Sir I. Gilmour) said that the history of the last 100 years of our municipality and of our capital city was not one of conflict. I beg him to look at the works of Mr. Ken Young, who is the principal historian of our municipality. My right hon. Friend will observe that there has been an ebb and flow and a tug of war between the overall authorities and the boroughs. That has been endemic within the municipality, and it has happened within the lifetime of hon. Members. When the GLC was set up in 1963, it had many strategic functions, one of which was housing. When it was set up, it was responsible for 700,000 houses. In June this year, it will be responsible for just 15,000 houses — fewer than any London borough.

Indeed, the conflict between the upper and lower tiers came to a head in the premiership of my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath). He will remember the arguments between Desmond Plummer, representing a Tory-controlled GLC, and the London boroughs about housing strategy in London, and the conflict that arose from the desire of a Conservative-controlled GLC to have a housing strategy which meant building in the outer boroughs. He will recall having to preside over arguments and meetings and resolve that conflict. The conflict was resolved essentially in the interests of the boroughs. That is an example of a tug-of-war having been won by the boroughs.

Mr. Dykes *rose*——

Mr. Baker: If my hon. Friend will forgive me, I must press on.

Then there is the question of roads. There has to be overall planning for roads and for traffic control. It is in precisely this area that the GLC has abandoned its strategic role. It has not had a road policy. *[Interruption.]* It has an anti-road policy. The strategy for roads of the Labour-controlled GLC is to be against roads and road development. Mr. Livingstone has financed two groups, one called Capital and one called Traffic, the objects of which are to campaign against a strategic road strategy for the city. Under this policy the movement of traffic in London has worsened, because there has been no strategic development of roads in London for the last six or seven years. That is why many businesses are moving out to the area where there is better movement of traffic—around the M25.

I have been asked by my right hon. and hon. Friends whether I could devise a body which would maintain a strategic overview but would not have the overall powers of the GLC — a mini-GLC. I have considered this seriously. I have studied all the pamphlets and the flood of words that have come out in the last year. If one creates a body which has executive functions, it must have the power to appoint staff and to raise money. If one creates such a body, it will inevitably be a mini-GLC. There is no halfway house. That is the essential dilemma and the difficulty.

In the last moments of my speech, may I deal——

Mr. Dykes *rose*——

Mr. Baker: —with the argument that has been put about the Voice for London.

Mr. Dykes *rose*——

Mr. Baker: With regard to the Voice for London, some of my hon. Friends have said that this is an emotional point. If it is an emotional argument, I do not derogate it for that. In fact, much of the heart of politics is about emotion. I accept that the Voice for London is an emotional matter. I understand the feeling that somewhere there must be a body that speaks for London. If one considers the history of London, as my hon. Friends the Members for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg) and for Fulham (Mr. Stevens) did, it will be noted that over the decades and centuries there has not been one body, one institution, that has spoken for London. The closest that one could get to it was the old London County council when it was run by Herbert Morrison. That was a strategic authority. It was responsible for planning, roads, hospitals and social services, but those powers have been long abandoned. Indeed, no one has spoken for London in that sense. That was a Government within a Government. Mr. Morrison said that he could speak for London. He spoke for the inner metropolis, but he never spoke for the outer London boroughs such as Richmond, Enfield, Hillingdon and Havering.

There has never been one voice for London in our history. It is one of the unique features of the development of our great capital city that it is an amalgamation of different communities, villages, cultures and ethnic groups. They have all added to the identity that makes up the unique——

It being half past Ten o'clock, MR. SPEAKER *proceeded, pursuant to the order [11 February] and the resolution this day to put forthwith the Question already proposed from the Chair.*

The House divided: Ayes 193, Noes 335.

Division No. 169] **[10.30 pm**

AYES

Alton, David	Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Anderson, Donald	Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Archer, Rt Hon Peter	Barnett, Guy
Ashdown, Paddy	Barron, Kevin
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack	Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Ashton, Joe	Beith, A. J.

Bell, Stuart
Benn, Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Cartwright, John
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Concannon, Rt Hon J. D.
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cowans, Harry
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eastham, Ken
Ellis, Raymond
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
Garrett, W. E.
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, John
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Central Fife)*
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr. Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
Mackenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Park, George
Pendry, Tom
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Redmond, M.
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ryman, John
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R. *(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'kl'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wainwright, R.
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
White, James
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John McWilliam and
Mr. Sean Hughes.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Richard
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Hon Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(N Luton)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(S Antrim)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, E. *(B'y St Edm'ds)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(SW N'folk)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John

Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(W Herts)*
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Gregory *(Derby N)*
Knight, Mrs Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCurley, Mrs Anna
McCusker, Harold
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Moate, Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, J.
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parris, Matthew
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Powell, Rt Hon J. E. *(S Down)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prior, Rt Hon James
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rifkind, Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Ross, Wm. *(Londonderry)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev W. M. *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spence, John
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(N Hertf'dshire)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, J.
Sumberg, David
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Terlezki, Stefan
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexh'll)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Carol Mather and
Mr. Robert Boscawen.

Question accordingly negatived.

Amendment proposed, No. 6, in page 1, line 15, at end insert—

'(3) Within three months of the date of the Royal Assent to this Act the Secretary of State shall lay an order before both Houses of Parliament—

(a) for the London Residuary body established under section 55(1)*(a)* of this Act to have a membership directly elected in accordance with the Representation of the People Act 1983 and this Act and that section 55 and Schedule 13 of this Act be consequentially modified; and

(b) for the name of the London Residuary Body to be changed in consequence of the implementation of proposals of this sub-section; and

(c) for section 65 of this Act to cease to have effect as respects the London Residuary Body; and

(d) providing for the transfer to the London Residuary Body of such functions, not being functions which are transferred by this Act solely to individual London boroughs, as shall be determined by Parliament on the recommendation of a Select Committee of the House of Commons.'.—*[Mr. Ground.]*

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 210, Noes 334.

Division No. 170] **[10.44 pm**

AYES

Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Benyon, William
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'rmline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Cartwright, John
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Concannon, Rt Hon J. D.
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cormack, Patrick
Cowans, Harry
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*

Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eastham, Ken
Ellis, Raymond
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
Garrett, W. E.
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, John
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Central Fife)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Haselhurst, Alan
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Heffer, Eric S.
Hicks, Robert
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr. Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Knox, David
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ronald
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
Mackenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Nellist, David
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Park, George
Pendry, Tom
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Redmond, M.
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R.*(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'kl'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Wainwright, R.
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
White, James
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Hugh Dykes and
Mr. John Wilkinson.

NOES

Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Richard
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Hon Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(N Luton)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(S Antrim)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, E. *(B'y St Edm'ds)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(SW N'folk)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick

Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(W Herts)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Gregory *(Derby N)*
Knight, Mrs Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCurley, Mrs Anna
McCusker, Harold
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Moate, Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, J.
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parris, Matthew
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Powell, Rt Hon J. E. *(S Down)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prior, Rt Hon James
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rifkind, Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Ross, Wm. *(Londonderry)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev W. M. *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spence, John
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(N Hertf'dshire)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, J.
Sumberg, David
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Terlezki, Stefan
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Carol Mather.

Question accordingly negatived.

Clause 4

DEVELOPMENT PLANS

Mr. Cowans: I beg to move amendment No. 76, in page 3, line 4, after '(1)', insert

'Subject to subsection (5) below,'.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following amendments: No. 77, in page 3, line 23, at end insert—

'(5) The Secretary of State shall before the abolition date lay before Parliament a report in respect of the strategic guidance to be given by him under Schedule 1 to this Act, setting out—

(a) the matters he is to take into account in formulating his strategic guidance,

(b) the arrangements to be made for the giving of advice to him in preparing such guidance,

(c) the arrangements for consultation on, publicity for and objections to any such guidance before it is given to a local planning authority in a metropolitan county or Greater London, as the case may be.'.

No. 103, in schedule 1, page 71, line 28, after 'plan', insert

'following an examination in public into that guidance and any subsequent modifications'.

11 pm

Mr. Cowans: When we can clear the Chamber of those who are not interested in local government—when the gossip column people move out and those who care about local government stay—perhaps we can get on to the amendments—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Will those hon. Members who are not listening to the debate kindly leave quietly?

Mr. Cowans: I am grateful, Mr. Speaker, because some of us are extremely interested in local government —*[Interruption.]* There is a saying that empty vessels make the loudest noise. If some of the empty vessels left the Chamber, perhaps this nonsense legislation would not be before us.

We move the amendments in all seriousness, because even the Government believe that there is a need for overall planning. But, as with so many Government actions, knowing the answer, they step back from the problem and try to hedge the issue. Even Conservative Members appear to accept the argument, but only in respect of London. Twice today I have asked the House to remember that the Bill relates not only to the GLC, but to six metropolitan county councils. However, in defence of the Bill, the Government seem to refer only to the GLC.

I should like to quote from a document from the Town and Country Planning Association of 20 March 1985, which argues the need for a strategic conurbation-wide authority. It states:

"Conservative MPs in the South East appear to accept the need for one publicly accountable London-wide body for the Greater London area. There does not appear to be the same anxiety about the efficient local government of the Metropolitan conurbations."

Throughout the debate, that has been proved repeatedly, because the Government's arguments reflect only their paranoia about the GLC. The Bill proposes the abolition of the six metropolitan county councils, yet we have never heard an argument from the Government that bears any resemblance to the major part of the Bill.

Three august bodies, which are not as far as I know affiliated to the Labour party — the Royal Town Planning Institute, the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors and the Royal Institute of British Architects —in a document dated 25 March 1985, state:

"All three development professions are concerned that the Bill as it stands will abolish bodies whose task it is to take a wider view than that of individual districts or boroughs without setting up an adequate alternative legislative and organisational framework."

Those are the professions that work in local government.

In relation to the London Planning Commission, which the Government hope to set up under the Bill, those organisations make the important point:

"The London Planning Commission and the voluntary planning conferences in the metropolitan counties are given neither the powers nor the resources necessary to plan or to create the essential infrastructure."

In other words, we have a paper tiger with no power.

The amendments recognise the position. We do not regard any Secretary of State, Labour or Conservative, as a divine animal who, when legislation has been passed by the House, should have the freedom to manoeuvre and do anything he wants under its provisions without returning to the House. Any Member of Parliament worth his salt who has sat in Committee for a long time dotting i's and crossing t's would not want a Secretary of State to have power to do what he liked without coming first to the House. If the amendments are not accepted, that is what will happen.

As the Bill stands, the Secretary of State could introduce any order or lay down criteria or guidance without having to come back to the House to justify what he is doing. It makes nonsense of spending two or three months in Committee arguing the case left, right and centre if the Secretary of State is then allowed to ignore the House of Commons when laying down strategic planning guidance. Why did we spend all that time in Committee? There was no filibustering. All the issues were discussed as fully as possible until we had the nonsense of the guillotine. Yet the House sees fit, without these amendments, to lay a divine responsibility on a Secretary of State.

Any Secretary of State worth his salt should have no fear of the House of Commons. He should not be afraid to return to the House if he wants to lay down guidance and say, "This is the guidance I want to lay down. I am telling you about it so that there can be a debate." With the majority that the Government have, there is no fear of them losing any vote, but at least the House would have the opportunity to place on record its views and whether it thought something had been neglected.

It might be useful for the Secretary of State to have the benefit of a debate, because he might find that he had missed something. Members of Parliament are elected to represent their constituents, and they should have the opportunity to debate or challenge what the Secretary of State wishes to do. This is not a political point. Far too much legislation allows Secretaries of State or Ministers to lay orders without coming back to Parliament. If that is not a negation of democracy, I do not know what is.

I foresee the day when there may be a one-page Bill to the effect that the Secretary of State can do anything he likes once the Bill has been passed. The amendment seeks to prevent that. All we ask is that, when laying down guidelines, the Secretary of State should present them to and obtain the approval of Parliament. That is not a political matter. In nearly all Bills there is what I would define as a "belt and braces" clause. It allows the Secretary of State, of whatever political party, to do practically anything he wants. I think that is wrong.

On what basis could the Minister reject these amendments? We note that the Confederation of British Industry, the Association of British Chambers of Commerce and the House Builders Federation highlight the need for a strategic framework so that the providers of services can look to one body to make decisions. On far too many occasions one finds that planning issues transcend metropolitan district boundaries. The organisations to which I have referred do not normally support the Labour party. Indeed, I doubt whether they ever would, yet even they have grave doubts about the draconian powers that will be given to the Secretary of State unless these amendments are accepted.

Finally, I refer to an article in *The Standard* of 27 March 1985, headed "Jenkin's HQ is cracking up." If the Secretary of State cannot look after his headquarters, that is all the more reason why he should come to the House of Commons on all occasions and debate the issue. If he is right, his view will carry the day. If he is not right, he will have had the benefit of hearing the views of individual Members.

These amendments are essential and should be made to the Bill. Every hon. Member should have the right to stand up and argue his case. If the amendments are not accepted, I believe we shall end up with the Prime Minister in No. 10 with a computer, and the rest of us can go home. That will not be good for democracy, for legislation or for the public. It would be nonsense not to accept the amendments.

Mr. Simon Hughes: The issue before the House is whether we should be given details of one of the powers which the Secretary of State agrees should continue to exist at the strategic level, namely, strategic planning, but which in future will be exercised by him instead of by a directly elected authority. For the purpose of tonight's debate I accept that these are probing amendments rather than amendments which are to be conclusively determined. If that is right, it is very important for the House to know what advice the Secretary of State envisages he will give by way of strategic guidance. As a London Member, the Under-Secretary knows that that is important, whether one seeks to increase or to decrease the traffic using the road system. One has to cater for a population which may remain static, or become or smaller.

[Mr. Simon Hughes]

One must deal with an area which will be governed within the same boundaries or, as the Secretary of State hinted, beyond the present Greater London boundaries.

11.15 pm

The amendments seek a commitment from the Government that we shall be told the strategic plan guidance in advance so that we can debate it. If strategic planning has still to be done, the fundamental starting document — the strategic plan which the Government accept must be updated—must be based upon the best informed advice. That should not mean intervention by the Secretary of State, with his, or her, prejudices or views. The plan should be debated and thrashed out, using expertise and views which cover as wide a range as possible. By that means we can decide upon the best parameters and the best guidance. We need clear assurances tonight, although in the past we have had very little from the Government Front Bench.

Dr. Twinn: The Opposition seem to be far too taken by pretty colours on maps. They should look at the real world. Earlier, we heard about looking at urban development on a map and deciding whether any community of interest was involved. I represent a constituency in a London borough, but it has little affinity with the remainder of London. It was hijacked into London in 1964. Its residents do not look upon London as its setting. They believe that they live in Middlesex, and regret that Middlesex no longer exists. My constituents are sensible to take that view. They regret that they were hijacked into the London boroughs. They would much rather be regarded as living in an urban district, with their own Edmonton council, although that, alas, would probably be Labour controlled.

There is a dichotomy on London. Planning is a problem. The public relate to small areas. My constituents see Edmonton as the area with which they associate themselves in terms of strategic planning. They might also think of Enfield or Tottenham—although they might try not to do that if Spurs are playing and there might be parking problems. They might look to the greener pastures of Chingford and Barnet. They might look to Hertfordshire, but they do not think of London as a whole, of Croydon or of Bromley. I understand that places such as Purley exist in the south of London somewhere, but such places have no impact upon my constituents.

In terms of strategic planning, we must consider the relationships in a whole area. We fool ourselves if we think that the GLC boundaries have any relevance except in party political terms. They represent the compromises made when boundaries were set during local government reorganisation. The GLC boundaries mean nothing in strategic planning terms.

The M25 is outside the GLC area, except for that part which goes through Enfield. The green belt is also mostly outside the GLC area. I should upset many colleagues if I were to suggest that places such as Dartford, St. Albans, Reigate and possibly Cambridge should be part of a London region. Commuters travel from as far away as Norwich. Those areas are part of the functional London region.

If we are to talk about strategic planning, for goodness sake let us talk about real strategic planning. The GLC has been a failure as a strategic planning authority. It is no example to give. Many of my colleagues in the planning world who do not share my political views have said to me, on the issue of the GLC, "Do try to argue your case on the abolition of the GLC, but forget the planning issue, because I would not use planning as an example to try to save the GLC." Strategic planning is not for the GLC.

Mr. Cowans: I am enjoying an entertaining speech, but I cannot see its relevance, because all that we are asking is that the Secretary of State comes to the House and lays down the guidelines, and that we have the chance to challenge and discuss them. I understand what the hon. Gentleman is saying about how his area looks to other areas, but our case is that we are asking that the Secretary of State comes before the House and lays down the guidelines, so that he and I have a chance to discuss them. That is what the amendment says.

Dr. Twinn: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman is enjoying the discussion. We are trying to define what strategic planning is about.

As my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench will know, I have suggested that we have wider inputs into strategic planning. I should still like to see SERPLAN, the regional planning authority, take on the role that it was set up to play. I suggested that in Committee, but Opposition Members ridiculed the idea of having effective strategic planning. They said that the county councils were against it, as well as the London boroughs. I understand that view.

Mr. Tony Banks: The hon. Gentleman is quite right. We rubbished the proposal, but it was rubbished on the basis of SERPLAN's evidence, which was that it did not believe that that was the proper thing to do. SERPLAN rejected the Secretary of State's proposals.

Dr. Twinn: The hon. Member for the GLC rather jumps the gun. I understand SERPLAN'S view on that. It represents entrenched interests of the shire counties around London, which rightly look on the GLC excesses and say, "We do not want any of that affecting the shire counties." I sympathise with that view, but if we are talking about rational strategic planning for the London region, perhaps we have to look at a wider area. I urge my right hon. and hon. Friends to consider that, although I understand that it may not be possible within the bounds of the Bill. I hope that they will come to it later.

In effect, there will be no change in strategic planning in London. What happens now is that the Secretary of State makes the effective decisions. London boroughs have their say. Of course they do. They have their development plans. The GLC has tried to have its say but has failed. Its one attempt at strategic planning, when it tried to exert itself and be a strategic planning authority, was docklands. It is the only occasion when it has tried to be a strategic planning authority. It could not get agreement among its own Labour boroughs in inner London. They argued for years and years, until in the end the Government had to exert themselves and put an urban development corporation into docklands to try to bring about some effective development.

Now we begin to see something happening in the inner city. As a London resident, I welcome that. As a London Member of Parliament, again I welcome that, because I can see that there is a need for the core of London to be developed. But the GLC did not do that. The GLC, or any successor authority, if the Opposition were to have their

way, would have no more effect than the present GLC on strategic planning in London. It is the Secretary of State who in the end has the impact on London.

The London boroughs will be able to bring strategic planning in London down to the constituents' level. They will be able to identify with the London boroughs and with their own ward councillors. They will be able to put their priorities across to their ward councillors and feed that information to the Secretary of State and the London planning commission. In that way, we shall have far more effective strategic planning in London.

The proposals in the Bill will lead to more effective planning of London than anything that Opposition Members may suggest. Although I regret that we shall not go for a wider strategic and regional planning function, I accept that the Secretary of State's powers remain paramount, and I support them in the Bill.

Mr. Tony Banks: I wish to speak to amendment No. 103, which draws attention to the various arguments that we put forward in Committee about the centralisation of planning powers, the loss of democratic input and the practicability of the working of the new planning system. The hon. Member for Edmonton (Dr. Twinn) raised an interesting point about discussing the scope of strategic planning for the south-east. Frankly, this is not the place to be discussing it. It is a guillotined debate, late at night, which is not the way to consider strategic planning for London and the metropolitan counties. That is our complaint about all aspects of the Bill — it is ill-considered. We have not been given the opportunity of rational and impartial discussions on vital matters.

One of the major new provisions of the Bill is the power that it gives to the Secretary of State to issue strategic guidance. It is far more specific than anything currently available to him.

The hon. Member for Edmonton mentioned SERPLAN. It wrote a letter on 31 October 1984 saying that the proposals would

"make the Secretary of State the strategic planning authority for Greater London, but without the obligation to prepare an overall structure plan and to subject it to formal and detailed scrutiny through an examination in public."

Why is it that the strategic guidance will be the only element in the planning system that will not be subject to possible public inquiry before it is laid down? That is the democratic argument that concerns us in London and the metropolitan areas.

The Bill makes no provision for public involvement in the guidance that will, in effect, be the structure plan for London. The strategic guidance will not reflect extensive consultations that have gone into both the GLDP proposed alterations and the shire structure plans. Nor will it be subject to an examination in public, which considerably reduces the opportunities for Londoners to influence the future development of their city — opportunities which the shire counties will continue to enjoy.

Once again we have to make a comparison between the unfavourable way in which London is being treated and the favourable way in which the shire counties are being treated. That is in some way connected with the fact that the shire counties are Tory controlled, while the GLC and the metropolitan county councils are Labour controlled. It is a party political matter.

The Minister said in Committee that he undertook to ensure that the voices of the London boroughs and other interested bodies were heard by the London planning commission in the early stages of the preparation of strategic guidance and that changes would be made in the Bill to ensure that. That is the sort of matter that should have been thought through beforehand. The Minister is coming forward with a hastily prepared Bill and saying that he might have to change his mind if it does not work out.

The Minister also said in Committee:

"I should stress that the reference to this guidance in this context is not to give that guidance statutory force."

In the same breath he also said:

"Once it is issued, clearly authorities must have regard to it."
—[*Official Report, Standing Committee G*, 22 January 1985; c. 473.]

There will be no public involvement in the issuing of the guidance, and we do not know what its force will be. When the Minister replies, I hope that he will tell us so that we understand it.

The proposed new strategic planning system for London and the metropolitan counties will mean duplication, delay and increased costs in preparing up-to-date plans. A proper co-ordination between the London boroughs will be difficult to achieve, the strategic guidance being argued at up to 33 separate inquiries. Where is the streamlining of the cities in that complicated machinery? There is no prospect of a London-wide framework emerging until the early 1990s. Not only will the issuing of mandatory strategic guidance by the Secretary of State be far less democratic than at present, but the system will be far more bureaucratic.

The Government, in stumbling around in the area of strategic guidance, have tentatively indicated in various consultation papers that there will be at least five stages involved in discussing, preparing and consulting on the strategic guidance before it can be used by the boroughs. The planning commission will be consulting the boroughs and others; for example, SERPLAN. Then the planning commission will be formulating its advice to the Secretary of State: it consults, and passes on its advice to the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State will consult other Government Departments, and then issue guidance.

As in many other matters, all power will eventually reside in the hands of the Secretary of State and at Marsham street. I cannot believe that Conservative Members will be prepared to support him.

11.30 pm

Sir George Young: I think that the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) did well to conceal his disappointment at the substantial majority by which the last amendment was rejected. I hope that, in the light of that decision, he will now take down all the posters stating that 74 per cent. say no, and replace them with posters stating that 61 per cent. say yes, because that was the decision of the House this evening.

I think that the hon. Members for Newham, North-West and for Tyne Bridge (Mr. Cowans) underestimate the extent to which the Secretary of State has considerable planning powers at present in dealing with appeals and the existing GLDP and structure plans. The contrast that they sought to make between the existing system and the proposed one does not stand up because the Secretary of State already has extensive powers.

The hon. Member for Tyne Bridge made some remarks about my departmental headquarters at Marsham street. The battle over abolition is beginning to take its toll at

[Sir George Young]

county hall, which seems to be subject to periodic attempts at arson, and in my Department, which is showing some slight cracks. Happily those cracks are not very serious and the building will remain there for some time.

If I may deal with amendments Nos 76 and 77, the hon. Member for Tyne Bridge made a plea that before abolition my right hon. Friend should report to Parliament on the arrangements for strategic guidance. Following royal assent, I would expect my right hon. Friend to issue more detailed advice about the mechanics of the planning arrangements, perhaps in the form of a circular for the local authorities concerned. I do not see the need to put this kind of elaboration and these practical arrangements before the House. The principles have already been established through the consultation paper and the revised proposals paper, and in the lengthy debate in Committee. That part of our proceedings was not guillotined, and we had the most extensive debate on planning that I think any hon. Member could have expected. The suggestion that the matter was not adequately debated does not stand up.

It may help if I enlarge on the matters contained in the amendments, and respond to the remarks of the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes). The range of subjects which strategic guidance must cover was mentioned in Committee. The topics, including those mentioned by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey, would cover population trends, housing, major transport routes, industrial and commercial centres, minerals and open space. Metropolitan county planning conferences and the London planning commission will advise my right hon. Friend on what aspects of these topics need to be covered in strategic guidance. They can advise on the issues to be resolved, and on the scope and detail of the guidance needed.

I cannot prejudge the nature of this advice as it will vary considerably from conurbation to conurbation. Typically, however, I would expect my right hon. Friend to be concerned with issues of countywide significance and with those which straddle district and borough boundaries and have a strategic significance. The guidance will not be a detailed blueprint, but will allow the successor authorities flexibility and freedom in preparing their urban development plans. Moreover, it will provide the essentials to maintain a coherent and consistent approach. As to the arrangements to be made for the giving of advice to the Secretary of State, the Bill provides for the setting up of a planning commission in London which will be a source of professional advice and expertise. Arrangements for setting up the commission will be subject to an order laid before Parliament. Outside London such special arrangements are not needed, but my right hon. Friend will set up planning conferences of the local authorities. The smaller number of authorities will make it more practicable for the Secretary of State to work with them to produce the advice that will be needed. The conferences that my right hon. Friend will convene will include the planning authorities, Government Departments and neighbouring authorities. They will be non-statutory and this will give them a greater measure of flexibility to respond to the differing needs and differing requirements of each area. I am confident that these arrangements will lead to effective and soundly based advice that is rooted in the practical experience of the authorities concerned.

I turn to the arrangements for consultation. Before the London Planning Commission and the planning conferences advise the Secretary of State on what guidance they consider is appropriate, they will need to gather essential information. They will have to consult interested parties and take soundings with those likely to have something useful to say. How precisely they do it will be a matter for them, but it could well be that the LPC will hold its own informed hearing or take evidence. To prescribe the procedures in advance would merely restrict the commission's ability to organise its consultation as it sees fit.

Once received, my right hon. Friend will make arrangements to publicise the advice of the commission and the conferences. There will be a general invitation to comment to the Secretary of State. This means that Londoners and others will have an opportunity to make their views known at that stage. I would expect the invitation to be targeted on specific groups which are likely to be substantially affected by strategic decisions. In the light of the response, the Secretary of State will prepare draft guidance to clarify issues, resolve conflicts and provide a coherent framework for the unitary development plans.

The Secretary of State will make arrangements for this draft guidance to be publicised and for comments to be made. I would not rule out at that stage the possibility of holding discussions with those concerned where any major questions remain to be answered. The finalised guidance would then be issued to the districts and the boroughs and be available to others who could make use of it. I am determined that this should be a simple, straightforward process, with built-in flexibility to meet the different circumstances in each conurbation. As I have explained, there will be ample opportunity for those with an interest in the planning process to make their views known. I hope that in the light of that more detailed explanation of what we have in mind the hon. Member for Tyne Bridge will withdraw the amendment.

I turn to amendment No. 103. I enjoyed the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Edmonton (Dr. Twinn), who clearly has a great interest in and knowledge of planning. Planning which is more firmly based on the boroughs is more likely to be effective. The amendment contains a proposal for an examination in public into the draft strategic guidance. It seems that the amendment is based on a misunderstanding of the Government's approach. The strategic guidance, is, after all, designed to provide a basic framework for the more detailed work of the successor authorities when they come to prepare the UDP. I must stress that the Secretary of State's guidance will be guidance only and will not be a plan.

Had we been contemplating strategic guidance in the form of structure plans, the argument that the hon. Member for Tyne Bridge advanced would have been much more convincing. There would then have been a case for an examination in public. But that is not the position. The structure plan element is in part 1 of the unitary development plan and it is this which could be the subject of statutory consultation and an inquiry. Alternatively, there could be an examination in public if it was called in by my right hon. Friend. I think that that is the right approach. It is at that point that the statutory planning procedures begin to bite. It is far more appropriate to hold an inquiry once policy is developed to a structure plan level on detail and application than to have one into the

Secretary of State's guidance. It is far more appropriate to retain as far as possible responsibility with the local authorities.

The guidance set out by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will not be in the form of tablets of stone. The local planning authorities must "have regard" to it, as is set out in schedule 1,. They must have regard to it when they prepare their unitary development plans. The question of how they have dealt with strategic issues in that plan will be tested through the established practice of public consultations, objections and public local inquiries. There will have to be a public local inquiry at that stage if there are objections to parts I or II of the plan.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): May I press the Minister on a point that was made in Committee regarding local authorities and plans that have already been formulated? Will the flow of planning continue or will the local authorities have to wait for the strategic plan? If so, that would make a terrible mess of local planning arrangements.

Sir George Young: The answer is to be found on page 83, part III, of schedule 1 which deals with transitional provisions. There we have taken on board what the hon. Gentleman said. There is provision for continuity of plans so that useful work does not have to be jettisoned. I would be happy to write to the hon. Gentleman to explain in more detail how that will operate. We had a lengthy debate on continuity and the transitional provisions. What we have now done enables my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to ensure that useful planning work continues and that we can move over to the new system of unitary development plans as soon as possible.

To introduce an EIP at an earlier stage for the draft guidance would create a completely unnecessary measure of duplication and unnecessarily prolong the development planning process. I commend the approach in the Bill and ask the House to reject the amendments.

Mr. Cowans: I do not intend to press the amendment to the vote, but I leave the Minister with the thought that it is precisely because the guidance is not a tablet of stone and could be varied from the sublime to the ridiculous hour by hour, day by day, week by week that it is vital that the matter should be brought back to the House. I invite him to look once again at the issue. He did not mention one vital point. Yes, the public will be consulted, but there will be no input after the Secretary of State, having looked at the responses in private, makes a decision. It is at that point that hon. Members are entitled to have a say. However, as I say, I do not intend to press the amendment to a Division and I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Schedule 1

Development Plans

Sir George Young: I beg to move amendment No. 44, in page 84, line 13, at end insert—

', paragraph 2 of Schedule 4'.

This is a technical amendment. Paragraph 21 of schedule 1 deals with the transitional period between 1 April 1986 and the issuing of a commencement order for a local planning authority to begin preparing a unitary development plan. It provides that the London boroughs and metropolitan districts will be empowered to continue local plan work, which picks up the point made by the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay) a few moments ago.

Paragraph 21(2) sets out the necessary powers from the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 for them to do so. As it stands, the paragraph inadvertently omits paragraph 2 of schedule 4 of the 1971 Act which exempts a London borough which wishes to undertake a review or survey of a development in its area from considering matters which the GLC has already reviewed or surveyed. The amendment inserts "paragraph 2 of schedule 4" and it will ensure that the London boroughs have full powers to continue their local planning work during the transitional period. I urge the House to accept the amendment.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 5

Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas and Ancient Monuments

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I understand that the Opposition do not wish to move amendment No. 78.

Mr. Cormack: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. May I be allowed to move the amendment?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman may move the amendment if he so desires.

Mr. Cormack: I beg to move amendment No. 78, in page 3, line 24, after 'effect', insert

'subject to the Secretary of State reporting to Parliament on the arrangements to be made to ensure the satisfactory co-ordination and integration of the responsibilities and work of the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission, Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts, Museum of London and the City of London.'.

I want to say a few words on the amendment because I am a member of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts. Labour Members who look somewhat aggrieved because I have moved the amendment should remember that I am not one of the Government's most fervent supporters of the Bill. This is an important, if peripheral, matter. It illustrates the unfortunate nature of the Bill, and the way in which it has been handled means that we have not been able to debate in detail some important peripheral issues.

I thank my hon. Friends for seeing representatives from the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts, and other bodies, who believe that London has a solution which is broadly acceptable and can be made to work. On the other hand, I ask my hon. Friends to recognise the grave concern among archivists all over the country about the fact that the arrangements elsewhere have not been sufficiently carefully thought through.

The Bill was conceived as a political act, designed to deal with what the Government reckoned to be a major political problem. However, its enormous ramifications in areas which are peripheral but of real intrinsic importance were not sufficiently thoroughly thought through.

11.45 pm

I pay tribute to my right hon. and hon. Friends for their efforts to ensure that the solution in London is acceptable, but I urge them to have further discussions with archivists and others who are very concerned about the arrangements for the metropolitan counties.

[Mr. Cormack]

If the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) persists in looking aggrieved, I shall speak until midnight. I know a great deal about this subject.

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): The hon. Gentleman considers that he knows a great deal about most subjects. He frequently entertains the House with his knowledge. However, there are some matters a little further on in the Bill that are important in a wider way to other parts of the country. We should be grateful if the hon. Gentleman would permit us to consider them.

Mr. Cormack: My intention was to speak for about three or four minutes, and that is what I have done. However, I believe that it is important that hon. Members should recognise one another's special interests. People all over the country are gravely concerned about this matter. They have devoted their lives to a profession of considerable importance. I therefore make no apology for airing their interests and concerns in the House this evening. I regret the fact that the hon. Gentleman, whose party tabled the amendment, is not prepared to move it. There would have been a sense of real grievance if the amendment had not been moved this evening.

Sir George Young: I welcome the contribution of my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack), because he has a fund of interest and expertise in this area.

I understand that there is a misprint, in that the amendment refers to the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts instead of the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments.

My hon. Friend acknowledged that good progress has been made in London. The Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission and the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments are to exercise new responsibilities after abolition, and we are confident that they will carry them out very well.

My hon. Friend rightly mentioned the concern about archives outside London. My right hon. Friend and other Ministers in the Department are actively pursuing the matter with appropriate bodies to try to find a more satisfactory solution. We undertake to keep my hon. Friend fully informed of the progress that we are able to make.

Amendment negatived.

Schedule 3

National Parks and Countryside Functions

Sir George Young: I beg to move amendment No. 45, in page 92, line 15, leave out from 'counties,' to end of line 17 and insert—

'the district councils in the metropolitan county or counties shall become constituent councils of the board in place of the council of that county or the councils of those counties'.

This is a technical amendment designed to remove possible doubts concerning the continued application after abolition of the legislation which presently governs the constition of the Peak Park joint planning board in so far as the metropolitan district councils are concerned.

It is our intention that the board should continue to be governed by schedule 17 to the Local Government Act 1972 and schedule 1 to the Town and Country Planning Act 1971, and that the transfer to the Metropolitan district councils of the appointment and funding functions as presently exercised by the metropolitan county councils should be effected within the existing legislative framework in association with the provisions of paragraph 2(1) of schedule 3 to the Bill. However, there is now some doubt as to whether the Bill as presently drafted is fully consistent with the objective. The amendment is designed to remove that doubt.

Amendment agreed to.

Schedule 5

Road Traffic

The Minister of State, Department of Transport (Mrs. Lynda Chalker): I beg to move amendment No. 47, in page 116, line 18, leave out paragraph 10 and insert—

'10.—(1) Where the Secretary of State is not satisfied in the case of Greater London or a metropolitan county that all the local authorities in that area have made joint arrangements for the exercise of such of their functions under Part V of the 1984 Act as are necessary to secure the control, management, development and extension of any system of traffic control which relates to two or more of those authorities, he may make an order under this paragraph.

(2) An order under this paragraph may transfer to the Secretary of State such functions of the local authorities in question under that Part of that Act as he considers necessary to enable him to secure the control, management, development and extension of that system.

(3) The Secretary of State may delegate, with or without restrictions, the exercise of any function transferred to him under this paragraph to the local authority from which it was transferred.

(4) Before exercising any function transferred to him under this paragraph, the Secretary of State shall consult any local authority appearing to him to be likely to be affected unless it appears to him that the exercise of the function will only have a temporary effect on the system of traffic control in question; and any local authority from which a function has been so transferred shall consult the Secretary of State before exercising any function under the 1984 Act in any manner which may affect the exercise by the Secretary of State of any function so transferred.

(5) The Secretary of State may recover from each local authority from which functions have been transferred by an order under this paragraph such proportion of the expenses reasonably incurred by him in exercising the functions transferred by that order as may be agreed between the local authorities from which functions were so transferred or, in default of agreement, as may be determined by him.

(6) A sum recoverable by the Secretary of State under sub-paragraph (5) above may be recovered by him summarily as a civil debt.

(7) The Secretary of State shall revoke an order made under this paragraph in relation to a system of traffic control in operation in Greater London or a metropolitan county if at any time he is satisfied that all the local authorities in that area have made joint arrangements for the exercise of such of their functions under Part V of the 1984 Act as are necessary to secure the control, management, development and extension of the system.

(8) An order under this paragraph may contain such supplementary and transitional provisions as the Secretary of State thinks necessary or expedient, including provisions for the transfer of property, staff, rights and liabilities and provisions amending any enactment or any instrument made under any enactment.'

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Government amendment No. 41.

Mrs. Chalker: Amendment No. 47 is necessary because paragraph 10, as drafted, would not be effective

if there were no agreement on joint arrangements for urban traffic control. As I said in Committee and to the Select Committee on Science and Technology, it recasts the Secretary of State's reserve power to take over responsibility for urban traffic control systems extending to more than one borough or district. The purpose of the reserve power is to ensure the continuance of the major benefits which these computerised systems for traffic control achieve. Amendment No. 41 is purely technical and consequential on amendment No. 47.

I very much hope that where UTC systems extend to more than one area, the borough and district councils will come to joint arrangements to manage the systems. They could do this in various ways—by a voluntary joint committee, by a lead district or borough method or by employing consultants. However, reserve powers are needed in case there is no such agreement in any areas.

Mr. Snape: These amendments illustrate perfectly the complexity of trying to operate the Bill's provisions for district co-operation and consultation and Government guidance and reserve powers. If they are all as simple as the hon. Lady has just said, why were they not included in our fairly long deliberations in Committee? It is not right glibly to pass over these amendments by saying that they are necessary to tidy up the Bill, because one of the amendments replaces two subparagraphs with eight.

The deeper and longer one looks into the Bill, the more unworkable it appears. It is clear from amendment No. 47 that the Government have little confidence in the districts co-operating on traffic control systems. We have doubts that they will co-operate effectively on any of the matters of common interest identified in the Bill.

In Committee the Minister of State made more than 40 references to the need for consultations co-operation, reserve powers and strategic guidance. Amendment No. 47, by subparagraph (4) introduces yet another requirement for districts to consult the Government, on top of the powers with which the amendment is primarily concerned. Such confusion is symptomatic of the bad drafting of the Bill and its unworkability in regard to highways and traffic. It is further evidence that a county highways authority is the only means of managing roads efficiently and effectively.

The Department said in its paper entitled "Arrangements for Staffing the New Structure" that urban traffic control would be transferred to a residual body. It is absurd to suggest that UTC should be administered by a body with no highway responsibilities. That is another example of the recipe for confusion inherent in the Bill.

The Committee dealt with data research and collection, which, I am sure the hon. Lady agrees, are essential elements of transport planning. It cannot be done rationally at district scale because so much travel crosses district boundaries. Even if individual districts could afford it, there would be wasteful duplication if they independently carried out analysis work on the same data. Similarly, road safety and accident investigation are important and specialised topics for which, the Committee agreed, all county councils had formed small specialist teams. That expertise could not be dissipated between districts without a significant loss in effectiveness. Similar arguments could be applied to the design and maintenance of bridges, the design of roads, street lighting, resource allocation for highway maintenance and to materials testing laboratories.

Time after time in Committee we asked the hon. Lady to come up with expert evidence of the sensibleness—if that is what she thinks it is—of the Bill in regard to those responsibilities. We still eagerly await the favourable view of just one professional body.

The hon. Lady said in Committee that she felt that these matters could be dealt with more efficiently at district level, and indicated that at present they were dealt with by the existing metropolitan county councils. She seemed to suggest that somehow this was inherently inefficient. Even at this late stage, with just a few minutes to go before the guillotine descends and yet another unworkable clause appears on the statute book, the hon. Lady should produce some evidence to show that this is a simplification which will make traffic control more workable than at present. We have had considerable debate on these matters in Committee and elsewhere, and so far the hon. Lady has produced no such evidence. She should now produce evidence to show that what is proposed in the amendments is better than what was proposed in the Bill. We still await an explanation as to why it was necessary, at this late hour, to multiply two sub paragraphs by four to produce this tidying-up amendment. The onus of proof lies with the Government, and so far it has been singularly lacking.

Mr. Simon Hughes: The amendment epitomises the Government's ludicrous approach to these matters. It is suggested that if the authorities which are left alone to deal with traffic management cannot agree, the Government under subparagraph (2) will take unto themselves the powers which under subparagraph (3) they will delegate back with or without restrictions. On the way round the circuit they will have allocated the bills between the authorities which started off with the responsibility.

This is another example which argues blatantly for the need for strategic authorities, because at the end of the day such an authority will have the power to say, "I am sorry, but we must impose this over the whole area governed by the county or metropolitan county because we must have consistency." Traffic management does not stop at a borough boundary.

This paraphernalia will cost something, add to delay and arrogate to the Secretary of State or the Minister further powers centrally. It is just the sort of thing which the Government have been forced to add to the Bill because they know that it requires greater centralisation to work. It is unlikely to be more satisfactory than the present system and merely shows the bureaucratic tangle into which the Government have, yet again, got themselves.

Mr. Snape: It seems that we shall get no answers, even at this late hour. The hon. Lady has three minutes in which to reply, and I am perfectly prepared to sit down so that she can do so.

In addition to the points made by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), there is the inevitable——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to make another speech, he must have the leave of the House.

Mr. Snape: I did not think that I would need the leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Lady still shows no signs of replying, although she still has time to do so.

Perhaps I can point out to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey that subparagraph (8) is the

[Mr. Snape]

inevitable catch-all which lies behind every clause in the Bill—that anything we have forgotten the Secretary of State can do anyway, because that is how he drafted it. I hope that in the two minutes available to her the hon. Lady will provide some answers.

Mrs. Chalker: In the minute or so left to me I wish to say just three things about the amendment. First, we believe that it is important to keep the expertise together. Secondly, I believe that in different metropolitan areas and in some London boroughs it may be possible to keep these expert teams together without recourse to the reserve powers. I should, however, be failing in what I believe is an important aspect of traffic management if I did not take reserve powers in the Bill in case there is a breakdown, not necessarily immediately after abolition, but perhaps some years hence.

I am always prepared to do something that will safeguard the speedy movement of traffic in London and the metropolitan areas. That is why the reserve powers are there—not to be used in the first instance, but to ensure that we have the best technology available, which was developed by the Transport and Road Research Laboratory. I recommend SCOOT—the split cycle and offset optimisation technique—to any district in this country and especially abroad where it will sell well.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment made: No. 48, in page 117, line 8, at end insert—

'Commencement

13. Any power conferred on the Secretary of State by this Part of this Schedule may be exercised at any time after the passing of this Act so as to take effect on or after the abolition date.'. —*[Mrs. Chalker.]*

It being Twelve o'clock, further consideration of the Bill stood adjourned, pursuant to the order [11 February].

Bill, not amended in Committee, and as amended (in the Standing Committee), to be further considered this day.

Rate Support Grant (Scotland)

12 midnight

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Michael Ancram): I beg to move,

That the Rate Support Grant (Scotland) (No. 2) Order 1985, dated 14th March 1985, a copy of which was laid before this House on 15th March, be approved.

After last night's debate, there may be a slight sense of déjà vu about this debate. Nevertheless, this is an important order for ratepayers and I wish to explain fully the reasons behind it.

The order is a brief one with a simple purpose, which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State explained to the House in his statement on 7 March. It increases the amount of aggregate Exchequer grant for 1985-86 by £38·5 million so that the domestic element of rate support grant can be increased by the same amount. The additional grant makes it possible for the level of domestic rate relief to be increased to 8p from the 5p which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced in December as part of the 1985-86 rate support grant settlement.

The decisions by local authorities about rates attract widespread comment each year, and 1985 is no exception —especially as there is a further and confusing factor in the rates equation. But revaluation is not a novel concept. Regular revaluations are an accepted feature of the system in Scotland. Indeed, valuations were reviewed continuously until the passing of the Valuation and Rating (Scotland) Act 1956.

Since then, there have been revaluations in 1961, in 1966 when the Labour Government were in power, in 1971, in 1978 when the Labour party was again in power, and this year. Opposition Members accept that principle, which they reaffirmed as recently as the debate on the rate support grant order on 24 January. They seem to have altered their view only as the impact of revaluation on the domestic sector became apparent, although they leave out of account altogether the impact on rates of high expenditure by local authorities, a matter to which I shall return later.

Hon. Members will be familiar in general terms with the changes that revaluation will make to the shares of the rating burden borne by different sectors of ratepayers. As a great many figures have been produced on this recently it may help if I set out the position.

On 1 November last year the assessors, as required by statute, provided estimates of the outcome of revaluation to each rating authority—that is, the regions and islands councils—and to the authorities, the district councils, within them. The same information was provided to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. On the basis of these estimates of rateable value for each authority, by class of subject and assuming expenditure and grant as in 1984-85 terms, the post-revaluation picture in national terms which emerged indicated that the domestic share of the rate burden would go up by 17 per cent., the industrial would fall by 25 per cent., the commercial by 1 per cent. and that the "other" category, covering mainly public undertakings, would come down by 11 per cent. It was clear, therefore, that there would be a significant increase in the domestic rate burden and that some action was needed to mitigate the effect of revaluation on the domestic ratepayer in 1985-86.

On the basis of those estimates and in the light of my right hon. Friend's consultations with the Convention of

Scottish Local Authorities he made his proposals for the 1985-86 rate support grant settlement. They are contained in the Rate Support Grant (Scotland) Order 1985, and in the Rating of Industry (Scotland) Order 1985, both of which were approved by the House on 24 January.

In particular, industrial derating was reduced to 40 per cent. and domestic rate relief was increased fivefold, taking it from the equivalent of 1p to 5p. That substantial increase was in part financed by a significant increase of £19 million in aggregate Exchequer grant which was announced as part of the settlement. The effect of the increase in domestic rate relief was to halve the effect of revaluation on the domestic sector, reducing the shift in the rating burden from 17 per cent. to 8 per cent. Making an allowance of 5 per cent. for inflation between 1984-85 and 1985-86, these arrangements would have meant an increase of 13 per cent. in the rating burden on the domestic sector provided, and this is an important proviso, that authorities spent in line with their guidelines in 1985-86 and reduced expenditure in response to the general abatement of grant in 1984-85.

I may say that the convention has not disputed the method on which these figures have been worked out. The method has been used consistently throughout our discussions with the convention as the most satisfactory way of estimating the effects of revaluation on different groups of rate payers.

If the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson), who keeps muttering about the revaluation in England, had attended the three-hour debate that we had on the subject, he might have heard the answer.

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): I attended the debate last night. The arguments of the hon. Gentleman then were as weak as those that he puts forward now. They do not persuade a single Opposition Member. He would not persuade a fraction of the Tory party conference at Perth, if he dared to put forward those feeble arguments.

Mr. Ancram: The hon. Gentleman obviously does not listen, because I have not yet reached the subject matter of the order. I am giving the House facts and figures, to which the hon. Gentleman might like to listen.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): How is it that the West Lothian county cricket club, which has a modest ground at Boghall in Linlithgow, pays more than twice the rates of the famous and large Worcester county cricket ground in England?

Mr. Ancram: The hon. Gentleman has lived through enough revaluations to know that valuations are made by an independent assessor, and if they are unfair, there is a right of appeal against them.

The convention always forecasts higher figures because it assumes that all authorities will overspend. Not surprisingly, the convention forecasts were self-fulfilling, but this does not invalidate the figure of my right hon. Friend of what was available to ratepayers if authorities had spent in line with guidelines. However, overspending by authorities resulted in a very different picture—an increase in the domestic rate burden of 24 per cent. in Scotland. As one local authority after another struck its rate in the course of February, the extent of the burden on the domestic ratepayer became clearer.

In addition, in February much fuller details of the result of revaluation, as it affected individual properties, became known as the assessors delivered the new valuation rolls to authorities. While average movements in aggregate levels of rateable value for each area by sector had been known from November 1984, it became apparent that there was a significant range around the averages with some large increases, as we have learnt recently.

It became clear that the information which emerged in February about the level of some individual increases in domestic rate bills required urgent further action. My right hon. Friend took that action at the earliest possible opportunity.

On 7 March he announced a further substantial increase in the domestic element of rate support grant of £38·5 million. This enabled him to increase the total of the domestic element from £14 million in 1984-85 to £102 million in 1985-86, and increase domestic rate relief from 1p in the pound to 8p—an eight fold increase. This has been very widely welcomed on behalf of domestic ratepayers who were facing high rate bills. The relief of 8p in the pound means a reduction of £1 a week, or 11·5 per cent., in the average domestic rate bill in Scotland in 1985-86. It replaces domestic rate relief worth only 14p a week on average rate bills introduced at the time of the 1978 revaluation presided over by the Labour Government. It is clear evidence of the Government's concern for the domestic ratepayer.

Had local authorities spent in line with the Government's plans in 1984-85 and in 1985-86, domestic rates in Scotland would have increased by only 6·5 per cent. As it is, domestic rates will increase by 17·2 per cent. The difference between 6·5 per cent. and 17·2 per cent. is accounted for, not by revaluation or by reduction in the rate support grant percentage, but by the expenditure decisions of local authorities and their consequences.

Therefore, two thirds of the increase in domestic rates nationally is still due to overspending by authorities, and one third to inflation and a reduction in the grant percentage.

I appreciate that individual authorities differ from the national picture. Co-operative authorities spending at guideline are especially affected by the cut in the grant percentage. I have listened carefully to representations made by those local authorities and, indeed, by those who represent them, and I have said that we shall take those representations into account when considering the grant settlement for 1986-87.

What we have done will be of proportionately greater benefit to the ratepayers of authorities which set low rate poundages. That is because the domestic rate relief is paid per pound of rateable value, not per pound of the rate bill. Thus, for instance, a ratepayer in Perth and Kinross will proportionately benefit more than a ratepayer with the same rateable value in Glasgow. For the same reason, ratepayers with high rateable values will, in cash terms, benefit more than will those with low rateable values.

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): Before the Minister concludes——

Mr. Ancram: I was not about to.

Mr. Dewar: I know, but just in case the hon. Gentleman comes to a premature end, having run out of good ideas and Scottish Office oratory, will he say why, if everything is so wonderful in the best of all Tory worlds, the Secretary of State for Scotland said on television that,

[Mr. Dewar]

because of the political consequences of the maladministration of the rating system, it is essential that there is action to reform it before the next general election? Is that a guarantee that there will be legislation before the next general election, and that the reform will be on the statute book, or is it merely a vague expression of intent that will not result in action?

Mr. Ancram: If the hon. Gentleman will allow me to make my speech in my own way, he may get the answer to that before long.

In his statement of 7 March, my right hon. Friend said that the cost of increasing domestic rate relief would be financed by adjustments within his existing policies and expenditure programmes He has now worked out the details and announced the necessary cash limit changes today. Those which set the provision for industry will be reduced by £5·2 million, all of which bears upon provision for the Scottish development agency; roads and transport will be reduced by £4·8 million; and the hospital and community health parts of the health programme will be reduced by £5 million. My right hon. Friend will be able to adjust the agriculture Vote, which is reduced by £0·5 million, and the cash block for local authority housing, which was reduced by £10·5 million before the cash limits were announced on 19 March.

We expect to be able to abate the effect of the changes considerably by exercising the flexibility that we now have to carry forward to 1985-86 a proportion of the capital underspend in the current year. Although the exact amount cannot be announced until outturn figures are available, the capital programmes concerned look as though they will be substantially underspent. The result of our action to increase domestic rate relief to the level proposed in the order is almost to negate the average effect of revaluation on the domestic sector as a whole. In 1985-86, the domestic rate burden increased by £185 million. Of this, £90 million was accounted for by revaluation. That has been almost wiped out by the £88 million of domestic rate relief.

The remaining £95 million of the increase is accounted for by local authority overspending at £63 million and the reduction in grant and inflation of £32 million.

I accept, of course, that individual properties will have fared very differently in the revaluation. For those whose valuations have increased above the average there will still be significant increases in rate bills despite what we have been able to do for the domestic sector as a whole. I should like to stress again that any individual ratepayer who feels that his new valuation is incorrect has the opportunity to test on appeal the evidence underlying the valuation.

I am very much aware of the widespread criticism of the rating system which has resulted from revaluation in Scotland. The most unsatisfactory aspects of the rating system are fully appreciated by us. Since we came to office we have searched, so far without success I have to agree, for an acceptable alternative, and we have made significant improvements in the system, most recently in the Rating and Valuation (Amendment) (Scotland) Act 1984.

We are still looking for ways of removing the objectionable features of the present system of local government finance and a ministerial study into the whole question was announced last October. As I told the House yesterday, I am a member of the study team whose remit covers Scotland. As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said yesterday, we are determined to find an agreed solution to the problem. We believe that our present system is, despite the efforts we have made, still unfair. Revaluation has highlighted the problems. While we have to say that there are no easy answers, we are determined to find a more satisfactory system.

Mr. Dewar: Does the Minister think that it is responsible for the Secretary of State for Scotland to commit and pledge himself to action at a stage at which his junior Minister has just made it clear that he has no idea what the action should be?

Mr. Ancram: The hon. Gentleman knows that the review was set up in October last year with the intention of finding a solution to the problems that exist within local government financing. We are determined as a result of that review to find a solution, but, as the hon. Gentleman himself said, if I am right in my recollection of a speech he made the other day, this is not a matter to be rushed. If we are to find a proper answer to the real problems that exist, we must take our time in doing so.

In returning to the order, I hope that hon. Members will agree that it substantially mitigates the effects of revaluation on domestic ratepayers and I commend it to the House.

12.17 am

Mr. Jim Craigen (Glasgow, Maryhill): I find it difficult to follow that. I am intrigued that the Minister is one of the three wise men who are currently studying rates reform. I referred on another occasion to the three wise monkeys. I am not sure in regard to rates reform whether he is hear no evil, speak no evil or see no evil. If the order were the good news for domestic ratepayers that the Government have heralded it as being, it would not be sneaked through the House after midnight.

I am tired of Scotland's Ministers putting Scottish affairs on the back burner. We are not saying no to this £38·5 million aid to domestic ratepayers, but it will not compensate them for the shift that took place in the revaluation or the cut that has been engineered by the Government in the rate support grant.

Ministers may feel that they will buy off trouble in Conservative Association executives. I wish there was a Conservative party conference every month — [HON. MEMBERS: "Or reselection."] If there were mandatory reselection for Conservative Members not one of them, save perhaps the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. McQuarrie), would be chosen again as a candidate. But he let me down the last time. I was about to take away his title "the Buchan bulldog" because he sounded more like a Banff spaniel when he supported the Minister in his most recent announcement about domestic rate relief.

This increase comes nine weeks after the Government assured us that the rate support grant settlement for 1985-86 was adequate. We told the Government then, and we say again, that they have added to the hardship facing Scottish ratepayers. Year after year they have reduced the amount of rate support grant for essential local government services. The chickens are coming home to roost.

When the Minister talks about local authorities being in excess of guidelines, he should bear in mind that 36 authorities are within the guidelines, or within 1 per cent.

of the guidelines. I shall deal later with debt interest charges which are causing problems for local authorities in fixing their budgets.

The Government have reduced rate support grant from 68·5 per cent. in 1979-80 of approved relevant expenditure—in other words, programmes that were approved by the Scottish Office—to 56·6 per cent. for 1985-86. I think the Minister will confirm that, with the additional £38·5 million, the new rate support grant is 57·7 per cent.

The Government have gone over the top in their treatment of ratepayers in the coming year. They have mishandled the revaluation exercise and miscalculated the effects of their own rate support grant settlement for the coming year. In respect of local authorities, the Minister reminds me of the police inspector in "Casablanca" who, once the hero and the heroine have escaped, says, "Round up the usual suspects." It is always somebody else, never the Government, who is to blame.

Mr. Gerald Malone (Aberdeen, South): If I can persuade the hon. Gentleman to come back for a moment from Harry's bar in Casablanca, will he please tell the House what he would have done about revaluation, because the Labour party agreed to that principle?

Mr. Craigen: The hon. Gentleman should have been here last night when we spent three hours on the subject of revaluation. When the Minister says he has a feeling of déjà vu, I have a feeling of weariness, because we are given no answers by this Government about the real problems that face Scottish ratepayers. In the early hours of yesterday morning the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) rightly said that percentages do not really bring home the significance of what is happening over the rate support grant cutbacks and the effects of revaluation.

Mr. Ancram: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way, because my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Malone) asked him a particularly interesting question in view of the debate that took place on 28 July 1982, when the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) said:

"The Minister should make it clear now that there will be no more flirting with this halfway house and parboiled non-solution. He should tell us that there will be a proper revaluation in 1985-86."—[*Official Report*, 28 July 1982; Vol. 28, c. 1195.]

That was the hon. Gentleman's view then and it appeared to be the view of the Labour party at that time. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will tell us whether he disagrees with it.

Mr. Craigen: That view was not held when there was a massive cut in rate support grant. The Minister did not listen to my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) at that time. More significantly, the Government were prepared to proceed with a partial revaluation, and they have already established the precedent of fixed divisors between domestic and non-domestic ratepayers.

My hon. Friend the Member for Garscadden needs no lessons from the Government Front Bench, although occasionally he listens to me. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), has a district authority in excess of guidelines, although he shifts within the Scottish Office before the problems become too great for him.

I am glad that the Minister has confirmed that he told COSLA that the average increase in domestic rates will be significant this year as a result of the changes in the rates support grant and in revaluation. If the Minister thinks that the increase is acceptable, his view is different from that of the Treasury, which is always reminding us that it is trying to reduce inflation. Rate increases will be well above the rise in the retail price index in the coming year.

May we have some information about the difficulties that will face commercial ratepayers? There are four categories of commercial ratepayer. I understand that shops, offices and hotels face substantial increases, although the remaining category will enjoy a reduction.

Perhaps the Minister will comment on his recent discussions with COSLA, which wanted him to reinstate the needs element cut. The original rate support grant order had a significant impact upon domestic ratepayers and upon the district councils because of the way in which the Government altered the needs element in the grant.

We cannot ignore the way in which debt charges swallow up local authority resources. Current expenditure guidelines do not deal with loan charges. When the original rate support grant order was determined, interest rates were at 10·4 per cent., and we know what has happened recently. Can we expect a variation order in the foreseeable future?

Revaluation and outstanding appeals were mentioned in the debate yesterday. I think that we brought home to the Minister that it would take some time for many of the appeals to be settled. Will this not destabilise the grant-aid calculations?

Does the Minister refute the point put to him by a COSLA representative, that about £1,000 million has been taken out of the system since this Government came to office as a result of cuts in central Government aid to local authorities? In other words, a £1 billion rake-off by the Government has to be met by the rating system and the ratepayers.

The Government are the author of the present misfortunes facing the rating system and the ratepayers. Local government finance is complex enough at the best of times, but the ratepayers will be concussed by the twin effects of the revaluation and the rate support grant reductions. The Minister will reap the consequences of the whirlwind that he and his colleagues have set in motion.

12.30 am

Mr. Albert McQuarrie (Banff and Buchan): I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, perhaps much to the dismay of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mr. Craigen), on introducing the order. I might manage to please the hon. Member for Maryhill later in my speech, but now I should like to congratulate my right hon. Friend on increasing the amount of money for the rate support grant to local authorities to the tune of £38·5 million, which will have the effect of increasing domestic rate relief, as is well known, to 8p per pound of rateable value.

While any additional aid will be welcomed by the ratepayers, the cuts in RSG imposed on the local authorities for 1985-86 are such that there will be a huge impact on those local authorities. The best example that I can give is that of my local authority. I am not afraid to say this, because not the least affected is Banff and Buchan district council in my constituency, which has suffered a reduction of £857,429. Taking the 1984-85 needs element, that reduction was equivalent to a rate of 4p in the pound.

[Mr. Albert McQuarrie]

My hon. Friend the Minister is aware that a change in the distribution formula was introduced in 1984-85, which was expected to reduce the grant distributed to the district councils by the equivalent of a penny in the pound over the period of four years until 1987-88. However, as a result of the further reduction in support from Her Majesty's Government, and the transfer of support from the districts to the regions and the islands councils, Banff and Buchan district council may not receive any rate support grant needs element in 1986-87, and thereby the equivalent of a further 4p in the pound will require to be met from the rates during this financial year.

In that connection, I should like to draw my hon. Friend's attention to a letter that I received from the director of finance of Banff and Buchan council on 23 January 1985, in which he said:

"As you will be aware, not only has the Secretary of State reduced the total amount of Rate Support Grant payable to Scottish Local Authorities, but he has also changed the formula used to distribute this Grant in such a way that Regional Councils receive more Rate Support Grant (Needs), and District Councils are paid less."

The director went on to quote the figures which I have just given about the two 4p rates. He said:

"In other words, losses of Rate Support Grant (Needs) will push the current District Council's Rate Poundage up by 61·5 per cent. over 2 years. The basis for this re-allocation of the available funds has not been made clear to me, but I understand has been made because the judgment of the Secretary of State is that it should take place."

That is totally unacceptable to members of the Banff and Buchan district council, and it is similarly totally unacceptable to me.

Mr. Michael Hirst (Strathkelvin and Bearsden): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. McQuarrie: I shall not give way. Last night I tried unsuccessfully to get into the debate, and many hon. Members overstayed their leave, so I am going to do it tonight.

While the increase in relief, which is the subject of the order, has helped a little, the reductions imposed by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for 1985-86 and the prospects for future years will place a heavy burden on a low-spending authority such as Banff and Buchan, which has desperately endeavoured to keep within the guidelines set by my right hon. Friend.

This further reduction in rate support grant, with an assessment for 1985-86 of 72·26p in the pound per head of population, using the client-group approach, and after taking account of the specific grants, will mean that Banff and Buchan receive no rate support grant for needs element for 1986-87. The equivalent figure for 1984-85 was 53·11p. That implies for next year an increase of 36 per cent. My right hon. Friend has now announced the final calculation of the extraordinary expenses grant, which is the oil grant for 1981-82.

My local authority in 1985-86 will require to repay the sum of £150,428 of a provisional grant already received. When one considers the massive cut made between 1984-85 and 1985-86 of over £800,000, one can understand the great difficulty that my district council is facing in assessing a rate value which is not penal to the ratepayers in my constituency. It is therefore imperative that my right hon. Friend should consider two important factors in relation to the allocation of rate support grant. The first is the increase in the threshold below which district councils receive no needs element of rate support grant, which should be revised to be in line with the rate of inflation. Secondly, no authority should lose grant per annum more than the equivalent of a penny rate as a result of any change in the distribution formula.

I am well aware that the relief that has been granted by my right hon. Friend in the order has been made in an attempt to reduce the tremendous burden that faces domestic ratepayers. I need not remind him of the largest public protest that has ever been known in Scotland over the rises which domestic ratepayers face. To give 8p in relief, as I have said, is commendable, but it is a drop in the bucket compared with what is essential if we are to remove the rates burden from the shoulders and the pockets of those who can ill afford these massive increases.

Mr. Ancram: I am slightly surprised that my hon. Friend feels that £88 million is a drop in the ocean. I appreciate the concern of his constituents. I hope he can confirm that the overall combined rating effect — we have to take region and district together—will be a 7·9 per cent. increase for the domestic ratepayer.

Mr. McQuarrie: That may be so, but a 7·9 per cent. increase, based on the revaluations means that the majority of my constituents who are householders or ratepayers will be required to pay a greater sum this year than last year. Whether it is a 7 per cent. or a 17 per cent. increase, it is still considerable.

I am aware that my hon. Friend had nothing to do with the recommendations agreed in 1982 by Parliament and which received the support of Opposition Members. I am sure that all my constituents and those of other hon. Members object to the savage way in which the assessors have made their decisions on the revaluations, which my right hon. Friend has tried to relieve by placing the order before the House. Some of the revaluations are monstrous. I have recommended all constituents who feel aggrieved about their valuations to make a formal appeal to the assessor. The answer is to have a complete review of the rating system in Scotland. The present system is archaic, and it has placed a great burden on those who pay rates.

It is no use the Opposition claiming that the Conservative Government created the problem, because it was created by the last Labour Government, who did nothing to solve it. The system has dragged on from one year to another for too long. Each year the situation becomes more difficult, with fewer people paying rates because of the large number who are living on social security.

Although the order is intended to be specifically for the benefit of domestic ratepayers, one must not forget, as the hon. Member for Maryhill said, the small and large businesses, which are suffering severely. We must look to measures which will relieve the hardship on these sectors.

I do not propose to read to the House the correspondence from the National Federation of Self-Employed and Small Businesses, as it will have been sent to all hon. Members. I draw attention only to the yellow sheet, which shows the Scottish revaluation, underlining the necessity to take action now.

Despite what has been said by the Opposition, this relief should be welcomed by all parties in the House. We want to find a satisfactory solution to the problem once and for all.

Mr. Dewar: What is it?

Mr. McQuarrie: I shall tell the hon. Gentleman. In the first instance I recommend that my right hon. and hon. Friends give some thought to removing the burden of education, police, transport and fire costs from the local authorities and bringing them into central Government, though not taking away the power of local authorities to operate the services. That is one means by which the rate funding incurred by a local authority could be reduced and brought into the national Exchequer. That is one of the small considerations of which my right hon. Friend might take cognisance when reviewing the matter at ministerial level.

All hon. Members represent ratepayers, and I believe that hon. Members of all parties want to find a solution. My right hon. Friend is making strenuous representations direct to the Cabinet and to the Prime Minister that a solution must be found now. The solution will be found; not because there is a Tory party conference, not because we in the Conservative party do not have re-selection, as do the Opposition, not because we fear defeat at the polls, but because there are Conservative Members who are honest.

Mr. Dewar *rose*——

Mr. McQuarrie: I shall not give way. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) would not give way to me last night, and I shall not give way to him tonight.

There must be no fudging now on a matter which is of the greatest importance to all hon. Members, whatever their political allegiance. We must be seen to be looking after the interests of the people who elected us, in order to ensure that the ratepayers of Scotland are not disadvantaged against any other part of the United Kingdom.

Considerable complaint has rightly been made in Scotland that England has not had a revaluation since 1973. The revaluations and rates currently fixed by local authorities in England in many respects are much lower than those in Scotland.

The order will lead to the elimination of a penal tax on every householder in Scotland whose property has been the subject of revaluation, including council house tenants, who have faced large rent increases from local authorities. The action that my right hon. Friend has taken against high-spending authorities is to be commended. I welcome the order and I hope that by this time next year we shall have seen the last of the rating system in its present form. I hope also that a new system will be introduced and enacted in the next Session that will meet with the approval of the general body of ratepayers in Scotland.

Last Saturday, Lord Whitelaw said at Helensburgh that there must be a change in the rating system. He added that he had discussed the matter with the Prime Minister and with the Cabinet. He urged that we should legislate and introduce a new system in the next Session to ensure that a successor scheme is brought into effect. That is what the people of Scotland want and that is what Conservative Members will fight for. I hope that we shall receive the support of Members of all parties in this place to achieve that aim.

12.46 am

Mr. Hugh Brown (Glasgow, Provan): I usually enjoy the speeches of the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. McQuarrie), and I enjoyed his contribution this evening. The first part of his speech, which was well rehearsed, probably came from the Buchan district council. The second part showed at least that he has a good sense of humour. I enjoyed both parts of his speech.

We are dealing with a difficult subject. I have examined my file on rating and revaluation and discovered a host of unanswered oral questions in my name. When Scottish questions were last taken on the Floor of the House we did not even reach question No. 8. That leads me to observe that we need a serious debate on the principles of valuation and revaluation.

I am sure that the Minister made a good speech, but I did not understand the parts that I heard. I am sure that the parts that I did not hear, because of the noise, were good. He seemed to add nothing to a solution of the problem now. We should be more concerned with finding an answer now, not in the distant future.

I feel a sense of failure because I am almost tempted to support some parts of the case that the Minister was presenting. He is clearly the underdog. He does not have a Friend in the Chamber.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North) *rose*——

Mr. Brown: I heard no great evidence of support for his case on Monday, Tuesday or today. If what I have heard since Monday is support, I would rather have opposition. At least I would know what others were about.

Mr. Walker: The hon. Gentleman has made the point that we have been dealing with Scottish business since Monday. This is the third day of our consideration of Scottish business. According to my calculations, some of us have now spent up to 20 hours on Scottish business. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that that destroys completely the argument of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mr. Craigen)?

Mr. Brown: I have forgotten what my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mr. Craigen) said. However, the debate should have taken place at an earlier hour. We probably all agree about that. That being so, I invite the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) to make his own speech.

I am rather surprised that the Secretary of State for Scotland is not present this evening. I am aware that he has a Cabinet meeting tomorrow morning, but I think that he should have attended the debate.

The Government's record on rating is abysmal. There have been many promises in the past. I remember the Prime Minister's promises of 1974 and 1979. Indeed, even yesterday she left the impression that there was a commitment to reform or even to abolish the domestic rating system. Therefore, I am a bit sceptical about what is being said at the moment. It contrasts with what has been said in the past when nothing has been delivered. It has been associated with the inevitable attacks on local government.

A slight change is taking place. The hon. Member for Banff and Buchan never once said that he was representing a profligate local authority. The overall picture, that all the problems in local government have been created because

[Mr. Brown]

of one or two Labour-controlled authorities, is nonsense. More and more people who take the trouble to look at the facts and figures are coming to that conclusion.

The issue is surely that there has been an increase in the rate burdens on two categories of ratepayers — commercial and domestic. We are just now getting information on the extent of those increases. Very little of those increases—this is where I agree with the Minister —is due to the revaluation.

My hon. Friend the Member for Maryhill can make his own defence of what was said a couple of years ago. I agree with him. I am in the privileged position that I speak for nobody but myself. I shall not even be answerable to the Provan constituency party for much longer. Therefore, I say definitely that I am in favour of regular revaluation within the rating system.

I would not make any great criticism of a Government who decide that they do not want an upheaval in a possible election year. I do not fault the Government for the mechanics of these matters. The Labour Government postponed the revaluation for two years. I do not remember the reason, but it did not seem very convincing. It was supposed to be too soon after reorganisation. Nevertheless, there were practical reasons. I am saying only that it was justifiable for the Labour Government to postpone it at that time, just as it may be for this Government for other reasons.

It is not the revaluation that has created the problem but the fact that local government is not popular. I have said this before. Conservative Members have a heavy responsibility for always attacking local government. They say that it is inefficient. Of course, they criticise Labour-controlled authorities. That sounds good. It might satisfy the nice ladies in the women's section of the Conservative party who do not know much about the facts of political life, but Conservative Members will not get away with that in the House.

Mr. Hirst: I admire the hon. Gentleman's reasonable point of view. Does he support the kind of spending plans that have been put forward by, for example, Edinburgh district council?

Mr. Brown: I shall neither defend nor criticise Edinburgh district council. I have enough bother trying to find out how Glasgow arrives at its decisions. I suspect that the hon. Gentleman does not know much about Edinburgh. If he sticks to Bearsden and Strathkelvin and Milngavie, he will be doing all right.

A popular clamour has now built up. A paragraph in the Layfield report said:

"Revaluations have always been unpopular with Governments since they are widely misunderstood. The easy way out has been to postpone the evil day. This makes the final reckoning all the more serious."

Obviously, if the Government are cutting support to local authorities and if there are two years of other cuts and reduction, when revaluation comes it makes it worse. That is what Conservative Members are not facing. Indeed, the Government invited comments on their White Paper of August 1983, after the election. I wonder how many of those Conservative Members who are now squealing made any representations at that time to change the rating system or to abolish domestic rates. Two hands have been raised. I am delighted to know that. Those hon. Members can speak for themselves. However, there was no great clamour from the hon. Members for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Hirst), for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) or for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Malone) for the abolition of the domestic rate, even though they were invited to comment.

May I just—*[Interruption.]* Is there a private battle going on? I wish to point out to the Minister that Conservative Back Benchers are running scared. There is a great panic. In the past, Labour Members have been guilty of saying, "Oh, it was not me. It was the Government who did it. I have nothing to do with such Government decisions." The Parliament Under-Secretary of State, however, will not be able to opt out by using that argument.

Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): The hon. Gentleman is being very fair, but I hope that he will acknowledge that for many years I have demonstrated the fact that the rating system is not democratic, combining taxation and democracy. I have said that again and again for 20 years.

Mr. Brown: I am not making a personal attack. I have some regard for the hon. and learned Gentleman, although that regard is reduced when I read some of the stuff that he writes in the *Daily Express*.

I recognise that individual Members have long argued that the rating system is not satisfactory. The trouble is that they have not suggested any alternative that has been accepted. I do not want to talk about the technicalities of the possible alternatives. I wish only to say that the Secretary of State in his replies, and the Prime Minister, have both left the impression that there is to be some significant change, if not abolition of domestic rates. It must come soon.

We have heard about what the Secretary of State said on Channel 4. According to *The Scotsman*, he said:

"We have had one go at trying to reform rates and everyone was against the alternatives. This time we have to deliver. Not acting at all means that there will be severe political consequences."

We would all agree wih that.

"No-one is prepared to put up with the system as it is, and I agree with them."

What does that mean? If the Secretary of State is not "prepared to put up with the system as it is"

there must be some change. The Secretary of State is a Cabinet Minister. Why does he not make such statements to the House? Why does he make them on Channel 4? I am entitled to ask the Minister why the Secretary of State can make such a statement, and why Sir James Goold—poor man, trotting up and down—can now say:

"I am confident that we will succeed and that the whole country will thank us for it."

What did Sir James mean by that? Has there been some meeting with the Prime Minister? Has agreement been reached on some concession or change.? If so, what is it? The House has a right to know.

I asked a question on Monday, and the Minister was good enough to reply to it. I asked what all this had to do with valuation levels in England. I do not know whether we are to hear from the Scottish National Party, but that has nothing to do with the matter. There is an idea that we are dragging our feet beause we have had more revaluations than England. That does not make a pennyworth of difference to the amount of public expenditure or of Government support to local authorities. That English red herring has nothig to do with the problem

facing us. The second thing that I established—again the Minister was quite helpful—was that, because no legislation allows it, the Government cannot direct assessors to increase rates on commercial properties or to decrease rates on industrial premises. There is no doubt that this problem is a product of valuation in previous legislation to which we have all subscribed.

What concession is likely to be on offer? How will the Conservative party buy off the pressure that is coming from Conservative Members' constituents? What will they be told? Will the Select Committee consider the matter? There is no power to relieve commercial ratepayers. Is that worth examining? It must be established that the burdens on such ratepayers are wrong. Should we demand further relief for domestic ratepayers or should there be more rate support grant for all local authorities, which would reduce everyone's burden?

The House, not somebody watching Channel 4 or talking to Sir James Goold on the telephone, should be told. I do not know whether Conservative Members have met the Prime Minister yet. Will there be concessions, or will they be fobbed off with the information that legislation, which will solve the problem, will be introduced next year? That would be dishonest, although it would be in keeping with the Prime Minister's record. The Minister should say what relief or concessions the Government might be able to come up with in the short term.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. This is a short debate, and it would be helpful if we could have short speeches.

1.1 am

Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): I shall be brief. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has given a considerable relief to domestic ratepayers. However, there is an inequity in the system and I look to my right hon. Friend to find other ways—I am sure that he will —to extinguish them.

I am unimpressed when I hear Opposition Members criticise the Government for difficulties in local government expenditure. No Opposition Member stops telling us that there should be an increase in such expenditure. Not one of them says that local authorities, which are extravagant, have distorted the system which was invented to protect the domestic, commercial and industrial ratepayer. All Opposition Members favour extravagance. They want the Government to provide more funds and local authorities to provide more services. They never stop saying that we should spend more.

The moment a system which prevents that appalling theft and fraud is established, the Opposition cry, "It is all your fault." If it had any other effects, they would say the same. They would say, "But spend more. Let central Government provide more funds. It is all the fault of the Secretary of State and the Treasury. You have reduced rate support grant and this and that. Just provide the funds", as if the Government were some sort of mad grandmother fairy scrooge who sat on money which she could otherwise bestow upon her children. That is the fallacy of Opposition Members.

The Opposition constantly eschew that there is money when it does not exist, and that the source of our problems is the fact that it is not thrown about enough. That is not the case. The source of our problems is simply a switching of extravagance. Authorities such as Glasgow which have been extravagant have closed down streets of commerce, and because no rates have been produced, smaller communities have suffered.

The squinting has come about because of irresponsible extravagant authorities. The Secretary of State has done his best to stop that. He has done well in an attempt to prevent the worst effects of that extravagance, and he has corrected it. I congratulate my right hon. Friend, although more must be done.

However, the blame rests on those who take the view that the right of a local authority is to be extravagant. That is what the Opposition imagine. I shall not repeat myself, other than to say that fiscal responsibility is essential. The Secretary of State had done his best to redress the squint which extravagance has forced upon the local authority system, but more must be done.

1.8 am

Mr. Donald Stewart (Western Isles): I would contest the view of the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) that people are demanding undue extravagance from the Government for local authority expenditure. Authorities can no longer maintain even minimal services because of the chipping away that has occurred over the last few years. If the hon. and learned Gentleman comes to my constituency, I shall prove to him that that is true, and it is equally true of the whole of Scotland.

The hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. McQuarrie) took pride in the fact that, unlike the Labour party, the Conservative party has no reselection system. But what has happened with rating will teach Scottish Conservative Members that reselection is very much on the cards, only this time it will be carried out by the electors.

Some Opposition Members earlier today criticised the increase in the television licence fee, but that could be churlish because if the Scottish Tory conference is televised they might think that the more expensive licence is worth every penny.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Provan (Mr. Brown) said that the fact that Scotland had had two revaluations while England had had none was a red herring. At Prime Minister's Question Time yesterday an English Member complained that rates in England had risen by 9 per cent. Yet here we have a Minister stating if not with approval at least with some satisfaction that the increase in Scotland is only 17 per cent. That is no red herring.

As the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan has said, the order is welcome in a sense, but it would not be necessary at all if the Secretary of State—under orders from his bosses in Whitehall and the Cabinet — had not consistently cut rate support grant in recent years. It is to be cut by about £70 million from this financial year to next. In 1984-85 rate support grant rose to 60 per cent. of relevant expenditure. If the 1985-86 settlement was restored to that percentage it would provide a further £84 million and reduce the burden on all categories of ratepayers by about 6 per cent.

As for relief on domestic rates, even with the increase from 5p to 8p proposed in the order only three areas—

[Mr. Donald Stewart]

Moray, Inverness and Lochaber — will have average increases of under 5 per cent. on rates bills. The average increase for all areas will be about 21 per cent.

As the Secretary of State is no doubt well aware, ratepayers in Scotland are outraged at the increases to be imposed. He probably did not expect there to be such anger. His ministerial competence must therefore be in grave doubt, especially as it seems that the Scottish Office has made no request to the Cabinet for extra funds to keep the rate increases down.

That means that the rates relief increases will have to be met from the existing Scottish budget and we all know that that will mean less money for other things, such as health, housing and education, which are already suffering disastrously.

It should not be forgotten that the Scottish revaluation was due in 1982 but was postponed by the Scottish Office and the Government for political reasons, because they judged, fairly accurately, that a general election was in the offing. If the revaluation had gone ahead then, the percentage increase for domestic ratepayers would undoubtedly have been much smaller, especially as there would not have been such a swing in favour of the industrial ratepayer. The Scottish National party's policy at that time was that it was wrong to postpone the revaluation, although it must be stressed that we oppose the entire domestic rating system. Government statements that the system had to be reformed have been bypassed and the Conservatives now have to face the anger of their own supporters in Scotland.

Mr. Ancram: The right hon. Gentleman seemed to be saying that it was his party's policy that the revaluation should have gone ahead, but when the order postponing it was announced his hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson) said that it would be wrong to oppose the order and went on to say that there was nothing wrong with revaluation and much to be gained from it.

Mr. Stewart: We have never opposed revaluation as a principle. It has to take place from time to time because one cannot continue with the same valuations for years on end. Our objection is to the fact that Scotland has had two revaluations in a period in which England had none.

I was even more horrified to learn that the Secretary of State had been suggesting the introduction of a poll tax to supplement the rates system. That is the worst of both worlds. It is idiocy and not worth considering. It would probably just give the Government yet another excuse to cut rate support grant.

My party favours scrapping domestic rates completely and replacing them with a fully fledged system of local income tax. That would be a progressive tax and thus fairer than either the present system or a poll tax. It would also mean that local government would have some financial autonomy again, and we believe that that is a very important issue.

The incompetence and anti-Scottish prejudice of Ministers at the Scottish Office has been shown up and they fully deserve what is coming to them.

1.14 am

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): I shall follow the closing remarks of the right hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Stewart), and will not dodge the opportunity to say firmly what my hon. Friends and I would support to replace the mess of rating in Scotland, which confronts us. It is similar to that outlined by the right hon. Gentleman. It would be a system of local income tax. It would obviously need a measure of equalisation for the regions and districts that do not have the revenue base. As a result it would return greater autonomy, financial accountability and responsibility to the regions and districts. Even Conservative Members would agree that it would be a major improvement on the present position.

The order is disappointing. Commercial rates will not be given a level of assistance, even comparable to that which the Minister announced tonight for domestic rate payers. Let there be no doubt about that level. He re-emphasised in his opening speech that that will be bought at the expense of industry, roads, hospitals, agriculture and housing. That is little recompense to people on waiting lists for housing and hospitals, people in areas of industrial decline, people in agriculture who are suffering great problems at present, and people who would benefit from an injection of capital investment in the infrastructure and the roads network. There is little economic relief for Scotland.

Most interestingly, the Government's panic measure has not even commended itself to the National Federation of Self-Employed and Small Businesses, which at their annual conference in London last weekend dissociated itself completely from the economic policies being pursued by the Government. The hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. McQuarrie) will confirm that the Tory party, which is a minority party in terms of its political representation — *[Interruption.]* Hon. Members should look at the opinion polls. At present the Tory party is not in second place, but third. It is a minority political party in Scotland and is heading in the direction of becoming an even smaller minority. That is one of the few positive benefits for Scotland which will come from the complete shambles that the Scottish Office has made of this measure.

It is time to redress the injustice. We shall see what happens in Argyll and Bute. My party would opt for a system of local income tax, which would be fairer, spread the burden better than a poll tax system, as the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) suggests, and would get away from the position that the Government have placed the ratepayers of Scotland in fairly and squarely tonight. We welcome any relief that is available, but they will do little to reverse the present reality. Therefore, we look forward to reversals at the polls.

1.19 am

Mr. Martin J. O'Neill (Clackmannan): The right hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Stewart) and the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) said that there should be a local income tax, but they did not say whether there should be a local corporation tax for businesses. If there is no local corporation tax, there will still be revaluation and the anomalies that we are debating tonight.

In my constituency, those anomalies have resulted in Maclays brewery's rates bill being reduced by 12·14 per cent. It may be only accidental that the Younger family has a major shareholding in that brewery—[HON. MEMBERS: "Withdraw."] If the Secretary of State, whose family has that shareholding, were here I would be happy to give way

and allow him to answer my point. If the Secretary of State cannot be here to debate an issue of this importance, I shall not withdraw my suggestion.

Mr. Fairbairn: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As I understand the implication of the hon. Gentleman's statement, he is suggesting that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has exercised a corrupt influence on the assessor. In my opinion, that is unparliamentary and it should be withdrawn.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I heard nothing containing that inference, and so far I have heard nothing that is out of order.

Mr. O'Neill: In Alloa, a short distance from the place about which I spoke, Fine Fare supermarket, which specialises in employing people part-time for about 20 hours a week—the sort of employment that was praised by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his Budget statement—has suffered a 44 per cent. increase in rates as a result of the revaluation. We have riven across Scotland the sort of inconsistencies that I have just mentioned, and I could give chapter and verse for many others. It is a great burden on businesses and individuals.

During tonight's debate, in our discussions last night, in the press, and in a Channel 4 interview, we have seen the Government scurrying to find some kind of solution. I am sure that the Conservative party's Perth declaration on devolution in the 1960s was as worthless as anything that Conservative Members will say at the next Perth conference. This is the Government's biggest foul-up for some time. They have nowhere to hide. They have granted themselves a range of rate-capping powers which mean that no blame can be attached to Scottish local authorities for present rate bills. The blame rests with the Government because of the way in which they have operated the revaluation system.

I remember only too well sitting with my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) during debates in the last Parliament when we suggested that we should have revaluation urgently. At that time, Conservative Members did not say a word about it. The only time that the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) and the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), spoke was to try to change the rating system in respect of outside pipework at the BP chemicals plant at Grangemouth. What happened as a result was that all ratepayers in Central region suffered a 6p in the pound increase in rates. The Government were running along behind the CBI. That was the Government's only contribution to rating reform in the last Parliament, and the ratepayers of Central region know it to their cost.

Had I the time, I could give the House another 10 examples of anomalies in the present system. The system of local government finance and fund raising is in a complete mess, and the only way to change it is not by declarations at Perth, but by a change of Government. If the Gallup poll issued today, which shows Labour ahead of the Tories by 6·5 points, is anything to go by, we shall have to wait at least until 1988 for realistic changes.

1.24 am

Mr. Ancram: I know that other hon. Members want to speak, but if I am to make any answer at all, I must speak now.

Apart from the disgraceful remarks that he made at the beginning, the hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) should not put his faith in opinion polls. I seem to remember that in 1981 he was doing precisely the same thing. The only poll that matters is the poll on election day itself.

One thing that has become clear during the debate is that the Labour party has no idea of what its policy on valuation or revaluation is. It must be a matter of embarrassment to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) when first of all his own Front Bench spokesman tonight denied and then, when challenged on that, misinterpreted, the point that he made in 1982. The hon. Member for Clackmannan is obviously completely out of line with his Front Bench, because the Opposition Front Bench has made it clear that it believes in revaluation and its principles.

Given the figures that I gave earlier, which are established figures and which show that one third of the average rate increases in the domestic sector in Scotland are attributable to revaluation and to the rate support grant settlement, and that two thirds are attributable to local government spending, my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) was right in saying that it lies ill in the mouth of the Opposition to suggest that local government spending has nothing to do with the rating problems that we see today.

The right hon. Member for the Western Isles (Mr. Stewart) was another one who fell into that trap. He referred once again to the chopping of services since 1979. If services have been chopped, how can he explain, on figures that are agreed by COSLA, that even in the current year expenditure is 2 per cent. more in real terms than it was when the Government came into office? That is no chopping of services, and he knows it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr McQuarrie) asked several questions, one of which I answered during his speech. He was right to say that this year the maximum loss in rate support grant was suffered by his authority, but no decisions have been taken for later years. Obviously, as I have already said, we will be taking account of the views expressed by low-spending authorities in reaching our decisions.

The repayment of the oil grant to which my hon. Friend referred arises because the actual expenditure submitted by the council is lower than the estimate submitted in 1980. I am sure that both he and the council will welcome the decision of my right hon. Friend not to make further calculations on the oil gramt for the years 1982-83 and 1983-84.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Provan (Mr. Brown) made a reasoned speech about the whole question of revaluation. There was much in it on which he and I would be in agreement. He pressed me on the point about finding an alternative to the present system of financing local government. I refer him to the answer which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister gave at Question Time yesterday, when in regard to the studies to which I referred earlier, she said:

> "Those studies, both on the rating system and on the reform of local government finance, are under way. I hope that we shall be able to come to an agreed solution . . . If everyone sticks to his own pet scheme, we shall not get anywhere."

That is evident from the number of schemes about which we have heard during the past two days. My right hon. Friend ended by saying:

[Mr. Ancram]

"I hope that we shall be able to bring forward proposals which will command sufficient support to put them through." — [*Official Report*, 26 March, 1985; Vol. 76, c. 211]

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mr. Craigen) asked what response would be made to the convention's request for more grant. As he may know, the convention wrote to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State at the beginning of March to ask him for an increase in grant of £31 million. Within days my right hon. Friend announced an increase in aggregate Exchequer grant of £38·5 million, more than COSLA had asked for.

Then, very much in line with what my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross was saying, the convention asked for yet more grant in the form of more needs element. He was right in saying that this would encourage local authorities to spend more and perpetuate the problem of high spending, which we have been trying to tackle. If Opposition Members think that the needs element should have gone to help the ratepayers this year, it is worth remembering that it could not have done so because the rate had already been struck. The only way in which an extra needs element could have been used was in terms of expenditure.

As the results of appeals become known, adjustments are made to the resources element of the rate support grant. The system is designed to cope with such changes and translate them into adjustment in grant. Also, in regard to the reduction in rate support grant, it is worth remembering, at the risk of repeating something that has been said on a number of occasions, that the record for the largest reduction in a single year is still held by the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan).

The hon. Member for Maryhill also asked about interest rates. The grant to be paid to authorities takes account of interest rates as forecast in November 1984. The forecast will be revised in November 1985, and any additional grant paid. This is a long-established feature of the rate support grant system and it is obviously known to directors of finance when they prepare their budgets.

We have had a useful debate. What is absolutely apparent is that the order, which provides much needed relief for the domestic ratepayer, should be welcomed by every hon. Member. I hope that the efforts which have been made by my right hon. Friend to provide this much needed relief for the sore-pressed ratepayers of Scotland is something upon which the whole House can agree.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Rate Support Grant (Scotland) (No. 2) Order 1985, dated 14th March 1985, a copy of which was laid before this House on 15th March, be approved.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Thursday 28th March, Standing Order No. 3 (Exempted business) shall apply to the Motion in the name of Mr. Secretary Walker relating to the draft Redundant Mineworkers and Concessionary Coal (Payments Schemes) (Amendment) Order 1985 with the substitution of One o'clock or three hours after it has been entered upon, whichever is the later, for the provisions in paragraph (1)*(b)* of the Standing Order.—*[Mr. Archie Hamilton.]*

Housing Defects (Newton Aycliffe)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn—*[Mr. Archie Hamilton.]*

1.31 am

Mr. Derek Foster (Bishop Auckland): I make no apologies for detaining the House on this crucial matter for many families in the town of Newton Aycliffe. This is a sad story of Newton Aycliffe folk whose dreams have turned into nightmares. They are the victims of the right-to-buy legislation—the sale of the century. They were stampeded into buying their council houses. They thought they had a bargain. They now know they have a millstone around their necks.

There are 429 houses on the Horndale 2/3 estate built by the Aycliffe development corporation in 1970 and 1971. Of these, 106 are now owner-occupied; 86 were bought from the Sedgefield district council under the right-to-buy provisions of the Housing Act 1980; the rest were bought from the Aycliffe development corporation before the transfer of housing to the Sedgefield district council in 1978.

The council proposes to re-roof 323 of the rented houses on this estate as part of its programme of remedial work under section 51 of the New Towns Act 1981. The district council will receive Government grant towards this work.

The council has offered to re-roof the owner-occupied dwellings at the same time, with the owners meeting the cost which is likely to be about £3,000. This will enable the owners to benefit from the economies of scale and will permit the council to re-roof more of its own dwellings.

Unfortunately, partly because of the very high rate of unemployment in my constituency, many of the owners are quite unable to find £3,000, even if loans were to be made available to them. If the owners cannot afford the work, they may prevent some of their tenant neighbours from benefiting from the Government grant. Moreover, the work will have to be done sooner or later. If it is done later, the cost will be much greater.

How have these unfortunate circumstances arisen? First, the Government ignored the warnings of the Sedgefield district council in its response to the Government's consultation document on the right-to-buy legislation in 1979. In its response the council suggested that there were three categories of houses that should be excluded from the right-to-buy legislation. Among these categories were

"dwellings where constructional defects are known or suspected",

particularly houses in respect of which

"surveys have established the existence of severe defects in large numbers".

The council said at that time that

"it would be improper to sell properties containing defects before remedial works have been carried out".

The Department of the Environment undertook to see that the council's comments would be "studied thoroughly". It has since admitted to the Sedgefield district council that it did not study those documents.

The Department and Ministers brought pressure upon the council not to provide such full information about the defects to prospective buyers, even though earlier advice had been for full disclosure.

It is obvious from scrutiny of the correspondence and of the record of meetings that the Minister was interested

only in implementing the right-to-buy policy with indecent haste, without caring about the consequences for unsuspecting buyers. I have the documents and I shall make them available to the Minister or to anyone else who wishes to see them.

I further contend that the spirit of those meetings was an insult to elected members and to professional council officers, and a betrayal of the constitutional relationship between central and local Government.

As a result of contemptuously ignoring advice from councils such as Sedgefield, and as a result of Ministers' eagerness to boast of the number of houses sold, the Government landed themselves and unsuspecting owner-occupiers throughout the country in a costly mess which led to the Housing Defects Act 1984.

The Government estimate that expenditure under that Act will cost between £170 million and £250 million. The estimate for Sedgefield district council is about £5 million — but by no means all defective houses have been designated under the Act. The houses in Horndale 2/3 are certainly not designated. I cannot understand why those houses have not been designated, especially since the council is to receive a grant for rented houses of the same type on the same estate for the same repairs.

It is open to the council voluntarily to designate the houses, but it would receive no grant towards the £320,000 cost of meeting the repairs since the most severe restraints upon capital spending are being imposed by the Government.

It is also open to the council to seek a special dispensation to allow it to make repair grants available. However, the council has already received between 300 and 400 applications for such grants which it cannot meet because of the same Government constraints on capital spending.

I urge the Minister to designate these houses under the Housing Defects Act, thus guaranteeing grants to the owner-occupiers of Horndale 2/3.

The Minister for Housing and Construction was in Newton Aycliffe on Tuesday this week. He ignored my challenge to see the houses for himself, in spite of knowing about tonight's debate. While he was there he said:

"We did not force Sedgefield district council to sell these houses and they need not have done if they thought they were full of faults."

I have documents to prove the Minister's statement to be wrong. I challenge him to retract his statement, to apologise to the district council and to make clear the Government's responsibility to the residents of Horndale.

I do not have time to quote chapter and verse, but I shall quote from one letter. A letter from the Department of the Environment dated 10 May 1982 states:

"I am therefore instructed to write to your Council"

—that is, Sedgefield district council—

"to give formal warning that the Secretary of State is contemplating giving your Council notice of his intention to use his powers under Section 23 of the Housing Act 1980 to enable tenants to exercise the right to buy and the right to a mortgage."

That is force in anyone's language. In my contention, the Minister of the day — the right hon. Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Mr. Stanley) — forced the council to sell those houses against all advice, and his successor should now admit that.

One of the undeclared objectives of the right-to-buy policy was to shift the burden of housing repairs from the public to the private sector, from the public purse to the home owner's back. That the unfortunate home owners of Horndale now understand only too well, and they will not readily forgive the Government.

1.40 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Sir George Young): The hon. Member for Bishop Auckland (Mr. Foster) has spoken movingly on behalf of his constituents, the owner-occupiers on the Horndale estate. I understand the predicament in which they find themselves. I should like to try to outline the Government's view of the position because it varies a little from the description given by the hon. Gentleman.

I should like to deal first with the recent visit to the hon. Gentleman's constituency by my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Construction. I also have seen the reports in *The Northern Echo* and been in touch with my hon. Friend. He seems to have been misreported. What he actually said was that there was no reason why the council should not have sold the dwellings at open market value —in other words, reflecting the defects. As I understand it, he did not make the statement attributed to him in that paper.

While Sedgefield might have wanted certain types of defective houses excluded under the terms of the Housing Act, the tenant has the right to buy, and the important thing is that he should be given full knowledge of the condition of the property — he should be fully aware of the defects. Then it is up to the tenant to make a final decision on whether he wants to buy in the light of the information about his home. I shall return to that matter.

I understand that the owner-occupiers face substantial bills for repairs to the roofs of their homes. My hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Construction has also made it clear that he is quite happy to return to the hon. Gentleman's constituency and to meet the owners on a subsequent visit, which I understand will be arranged later this summer.

As the hon. Gentleman knows, the Government are willing to assist Sedgefield with roof repairs to the properties that it owns on the estate, and he drew a contrast between that assistance and the fact that no financial assistance is apparently available to owner-occupiers. During the passage of the Housing Defects Bill last year, the Government were accused of exactly the opposite, of favouring private owners of defective houses, while doing nothing to help local authorities with similar dwellings. I would not dispute the basic figures that the hon. Gentleman mentioned. I understand that about 125 people have purchased houses on the Horndale estate, about one quarter of them from the development corporation in the 1970s, and about three quarters from Sedgefield council under the right to buy. However, there is some dispute as to whether Sedgefield council made available information about the defects to the roofs to those who bought under the right to buy. That is crucial to the present dispute.

The council has told my Department that it advised individual purchasers of the findings of the Ove Arup consultants' report on defects at Newton Aycliffe, and it also advised purchasers to have a detailed structural survey of their properties. I cannot comment on the veracity of those statements, but they appear to have been made in good faith by the council.

In his opening remarks, the hon. Gentleman suggested that the tenants had been "stampeded" into buying their homes, and that my Department had so pressurised

[Sir George Young]

Sedgefield council to see that council houses were sold quickly under the right to buy that it destroyed an attempt by that authority to make special arrangements with tenants buying houses on that estate.

My Department closely monitored the right to buy progress in Sedgefield from November 1981 until December 1983, and we had two meetings with the authority. We were anxious to ensure that tenants received offer notices under section 10 of the Housing Act 1980 as soon as was practicable, and that tenants could in general exercise their right to buy effectively and expeditiously. At no time was it suggested that that should be achieved at the expense of neglecting the interests of tenants in houses that were known or suspected to be defective.

Sedgefield council brought to our attention in 1981 the problem of selling houses at Newton Aycliffe that were known to be defective. My Department advised that while there could be no question as to the tenant's right to buy where he met the conditions laid down in the Housing Act 1980, it was in both the landlord's and the tenant's interest that there should be full disclosure of any actual or potential defects that could affect the valuation of the property and the tenant's future liability for repairs. That is crucial to the debate on whether information was available. We advised that the basic principle should be that of full disclosure of information, particularly where the local authority was aware of a risk of structural defects that might not be revealed by a normal surveyor's survey.

As far as we are aware, Sedgefield council has advised tenants purchasing dwellings under the right to buy in Newton Aycliffe to have the properties surveyed. Some tenants may not, of course, have heeded that advice.

In widening the opportunities for home ownership, the Government have never underestimated the extra responsibility that new purchasers take on board. In general, it is for an individual purchaser to satisfy himself that the house he wishes to buy is in a good state of repair. That is why, in our right-to-buy booklet, we advise that individuals should have their houses surveyed before they take the final decision on whether to buy. We also make it clear that after purchase the individual owner-occupier will be responsible for the repair and maintenance of his or her property.

As well as the local authority giving advice about the condition of these dwellings, the building societies, solicitors and surveyors, where employed by purchasers, may also have been expected to give advice.

I understand that Sedgefield council called together representatives of those professions operating in Newton Aycliffe to advise them of the content of the Ove Arup report and its implications for the right to buy.

It would be difficult for the Government to take sides in this dispute between the local authority and owner-occupiers. It is essentially a local matter. If owners consider that the authority has been guilty of maladministration, they may refer the matter to the local ombudsman, and I believe that has already been done. They might also seek individual legal advice as to whether they have an action in the courts. Let us look forward and see what might be done to help them.

As the hon. Gentleman will know, the Housing Defects Act 1984 was introduced specifically to provide assistance to private owners of dwellings which had formerly been owned by the public sector and which had been found to be defective. Assistance is available by means of a reinstatement grant, or in some cases by repurchase, for eligible owners of dwellings which have been designated for the purposes of the Act either by my right hon. Friend or by a local housing authority. The criteria for designation in both cases are that the dwellings are considered to be defective by reason of design or construction and that their value has been substantially reduced as a result of the defects becoming generally known.

Under the terms of the Act, my right hon. Friend, in making a designation, may not describe a class of dwelling by reference to the area in which the dwellings are situated. In other words, a designation by my right hon. Friend must apply to every dwelling of a particular class in the country as a whole.

The only dwellings that meet the criteria for designation nationally by my right hon. Friend are prefabricated reinforced concrete types designed before 1960, and my right hon. Friend has already designated those types under the Act, which came into force on 1 December 1984. I understand that the houses are of traditional design and construction built in the 1970s, not the 1960s, which is why they have not been designated.

Section 12 of the Act provides for a local housing authority to be able to designate dwellings within its area if it considers that they meet the criteria for designation locally.

Assistance to owners under the Act is exactly the same in respect of houses designated by a local housing authority as for houses designated nationally by my right hon. Friend. Although there is no provision for Exchequer contribution in respect of dwellings repurchased under a local designation, my right hon. Friend will contribute 90 per cent. of the cost of reinstatement grants under such a designation.

Assistance under the Act is intended for those who purchased from the public sector in good faith and in ignorance of the fact that their homes were inherently defective. I referred to the confusion surrounding the circumstances of the sale of the houses concerned, and as to whether or not the present owners were adequately informed about the problems associated with this type of roofing. It is for Sedgefield district council, however, to consider in the first instance whether it could be satisfied that the criteria for designation under the Act would be met with respect to these particular dwellings.

Local designations are subject to veto by my right hon. Friend and I cannot, of course, anticipate the outcome of his consideration in any particular case.

The next port of call for the hon. Gentleman, who is clearly diligent in pursuing this case, is Sedgefield district council. If I may give him a little encouragement, I remind him that my right hon. Friend, in the House on 13 March, said that he was prepared to consider sympathetically applications from local authorities which have particular difficulty in meeting their statutory obligations under the Housing Defects Act. Further guidance to authorities on how to bid for additional resources is given in a circular issued today by my Department. That may offer some encouragement to the hon. Gentleman and to his constituents.

Turning to the offer to which the hon. Gentleman referred, Sedgefield council has offered to provide new pitched roofs for owner-occupiers on a rechargeable basis at a cost of about £3,000. I understand that that is £1,500 less than the owner-occupier would have to pay if he did

the work himself. Owners would not be charged for fees and supervision, and there are economies of scale to be achieved. It is for the individual owners to decide whether they wish to take up this offer. Of course, £3,000 is a lot to add to anyone's existing mortgage borrowing, but I think that owners will need to take into account whether the work will make their property more saleable and add to its value. Clearly, the more owners who take up the council's offer, the better, since that will improve the appearance of the estate, which would otherwise be blighted by the current dispute, and the estate would certainly look a little odd if it were left as a mixture of flat and pitched roofs.

I may not have been able to offer to the hon. Gentleman all the comfort that he wished, but it seems that there may be a way forward. As I said, my hon. Friend will be in the constituency again later in the summer, and he has made it clear that he would be happy to meet residents of the estate who handed him a petition when he visited it a few days ago.

I hope that the debate has not been totally without hope for those people with whose problems I very much sympathise, and that there may be a way through this rather tangled dispute.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at seven minutes to Three o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 28 March 1985

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL BILL *(By Order)*
Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time upon Monday 1 April.

Mr. Speaker: As Bills Nos. 2 to 5 have blocking motions, I shall, with the leave of the House, deal with them in a single group.

FELIXSTOWE DOCK AND RAILWAY BILL *(By Order)*

GREATER LONDON COUNCIL (GENERAL POWERS) BILL *(By Order)*

LINCOLN CITY COUNCIL BILL *(By Order)*

YORKSHIRE WATER AUTHORITY BILL *(By Order)*
Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time upon Thursday 18 April.

Oral Answers to Questions

HOME DEPARTMENT

Drugs (Importation and Distribution)

1. **Mr. Sackville** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will consider the setting up of multi-agency task forces dedicated to the prevention of illegal drug importation and distribution.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. David Mellor): We have no plans to establish a task force of this kind. There is already very close and successful co-operation between Her Majesty's Customs and Excise and the police in combating drug trafficking, through the central drugs intelligence unit and in other ways. But I shall certainly look closely at American experience of its task force programme in the course of a visit which I shall be paying to the United States in a few weeks' time.

Mr. Sackville: Does my hon. Friend agree that often the major drug traffickers can be indentified only by their assets and banking transactions? Will he and his Treasury colleagues devise some formal structure to enable the Inland Revenue to share information with other agencies so that those investigating drugs and other organised crimes do not continue to operate with their hands tied behind their backs?

Mr. Mellor: As my hon. Friend knows, we are considering giving the courts improved powers to confiscate the assets of those convicted of serious crimes, including, of course, drug trafficking. The availability of information about financial matters and the stage at which that information can be made available will be a key part of that process.

Mr. Corbett: As there has been an increase of about 65 per cent. in the last three years in the number of registered addicts, apart from those who are not on the register, how can the hon. Gentleman be so indolent about the matter, remembering that 1,000 Customs officer posts have been got rid of in the last five years?

Mr. Mellor: The hon. Gentleman falls below his normal level in what is a travesty of the situation. We have tried to ensure that the register of drug addicts is an accurate reflection of the number of people who are addicted. Indeed, we have been encouraging family doctors to notify addict numbers. It turns logic on its head if, as we seek to improve the accuracy of the register, we are criticised for the number of persons on the register, many of whom will have been addicted to drugs for some years.

As regards Customs officers, the hon. Gentleman well knows that there is all the difference in the world between manpower reductions on static checks and an increase in intelligence. For example, there has been an increase of nearly two thirds in the number of officers engaged in intelligence work on heroin. That has led to a dramatic increase in the number of seizures of drugs and convictions of drug importers.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Is my hon. Friend aware that we are approaching the season of festivals, open-air concerts and similar gatherings and that drugs are often distributed at such events? Does he agree that chief constables in areas where such festivities take place must co-ordinate their activities to deal with the problem?

Mr. Mellor: I am sure that chief constables, whose duty it is to do what my hon. Friend asks, will take careful note of the commonsense point that he raises.

Mr. Alton: Given the success of the Department in sequestrating the funds of the National Union of Mineworkers, is it not time for the Government to apply the same rigours to sequestrating the funds of those who sell and ply heroin, who cause enormous misery, yet who are able to salt their money away in safe havens and who often avoid extradition from countries, such as Spain, where extradition agreements are non-existent? If the Minister agrees that it is time for a rigorous attitude to be taken, when does he intend to introduce legislation?

Mr. Mellor: The hon. Gentleman's supplementary question would have been more pertinent without the rather shallow simile that he applied at the beginning. I understand that always he finds these temptations hard to resist. He has put to me the idea of improving procedures for the confiscation of assets as if that were a new thought. My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has been saying for 12 months now that we are working actively on finding a new power. Twelve years ago the House thought that it had solved the problem. It is clear now that it had not. We are now considering the Hodgson report. The hon. Gentleman will know — [HON.

MEMBERS: "Too long".]—as should one or two of those who seem to be involved in organised barracking on an important topic——

Mr. Kilroy-Silk: Nonsense.

Mr. Mellor: —that it is much easier to define a problem than to resolve it. We are working hard on the problem.

Mr. Ashby: Will my hon. Friend do something about the internal battles which are carried on between the police and Customs and Excise in the investigation and prosecution of drug offences?

Mr. Mellor: My hon. Friend has raised an important point. As far as I am aware, there is good liaison between Customs and Excise and the police. I believe that some accounts to the contrary are overdone. He may be interested to know that about six months ago the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis set up a high-level committee to further that liaison between the police and Customs and Excise. I believe that that committee is working to good effect.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk: Is it not right that the Government must take a major share of the blame for the substantial increase in drug addiction that has occurred every year since they came to office? The Government have reduced the number of Customs officers, allowing more cocaine and heroin to enter the country. They have failed properly to co-ordinate the activities of Customs and police officers. Most importantly, they have created the social conditions, in terms of unemployment, which have allowed drug abuse to flourish. How does the hon. Gentleman feel as the Minister who has presided over the largest ever increase in drug addiction, deaths and destruction of young people's lives?

Mr. Mellor: Perhaps it was an improvement when the hon. Gentleman was saying "Nonsense" from a sedentary position instead of rising and engaging in an all-purpose rant that will not enhance his reputation in this place. However, if that helps him with the Knowsley, North reselection procedure, we shall not mind too much.

Hampshire Constabulary

3. **Mr. Hunter** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received for an increase in the establishment of the Hampshire constabulary.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Giles Shaw): Last year, following a reorganisation of the force, the Hampsshire police authority applied for approval for three additional police posts. We welcome the reorganisation, but my right hon. and learned Friend was not prepared to agree to the additional posts, because further consideration was being given to recruiting civilian staff, which might release more police officers for operational duties.

Mr. Hunter: Despite the exemplary dedication and professionalism of the Hampshire constabulary, the crime rate in the county, and especially in Basingstoke, has risen considerably. The media locally and nationally make much of the fact that this is due partially to existing manpower being inadequate. Does my hon. Friend agree that at the very least existing funding should be made available so that police forces can operate at full establishment level, which is not now the position? Preferably, more funds and greater establishment should be encouraged.

Mr. Shaw: I am sure my hon. Friend will agree that the overall pattern of recruitment into the police force has improved markedly since 1979, with over 9,000 officers additional to establishment. The Hampshire establishment has increased by 130 police posts since 1979. However, I understand my hon. Friend's view that there should be further examination of the proposals which the Hampshire constabulary seeks to make. If it has found the opportunities for civilian recruitment, there might well be a case for re-examining what it has said.

Mr. Colvin: Is my hon. Friend aware that yesterday consideration of the Controlled Drugs (Penalties) Bill, to provide tougher penalties for drug traffickers, was completed, and that during the course of that consideration my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department mentioned——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The question is directed to the establishment of the Hampshire constabulary.

Mr. Colvin: Indeed, Mr. Speaker. During the course of considering the Bill in Committee, my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department mentioned that one part of the Government's policy was to ensure that the police in Hampshire and elsewhere have the powers to enforce such legislation. Is my hon. Friend confident that the Hampshire police have those powers? It is no use passing laws in this place if the police are unable to enforce them.

Mr. Shaw: My hon. Friend is right. It is my right hon. and learned Friend's duty to examine every police establishment to ensure that it is capable of executing its duties efficiently and economically I can assure my hon. Friend that this review of establishment takes place regularly with a view to ensuring that the legislative load can be carried on a sufficient number of shoulders.

Mr. Skinner: Is the Minister aware——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind the hon. Gentleman that the question relates to Hampshire.

Mr. Skinner: Indeed, Mr. Speaker. My supplementary question is directed to Hampshire. I can include the New Forest and the little ponies as well, if you wish me to do so.

Is the Minister aware that the problem faced by the Hampshire police force must have been evident for the past 12 months? If the Hampshire police force was understaffed and undermanned, and if it seemed unlikely that it would be able to resolve all the problems facing it, why did the Minister and the Home Secretary agree to send several thousand policemen, including many from Hampshire, to the coalfields of Yorkshire and elsewhere to try to smash the National Union of Mineworkers?

Mr. Shaw: I think that that is an uneconomic supplementary question, and that it should be closed.

Children (Deportation)

4. **Miss Maynard** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many children have been deported or removed from the United Kingdom since 1979.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Waddington): Few people under the age of 18 are either deported or removed. I regret that figures are not available to show either their number or the number who leave with their parents against whom such action has to be taken.

Miss Maynard: Is the Minister aware that large numbers of children who were born in Britain or who are British citizens are being driven out of this country because of the way in which the immigration laws operate? Is that not an absolute disgrace? Will the hon. and learned Gentleman agree to review the whole issue?

Mr. Waddington: The hon. Lady is entirely wrong. All those children who were born in Britain before 1 January 1983 and who therefore automatically became British citizens — although perhaps their parents were here illegally or temporarily — could not be deported, because British citizens cannot be deported.

Mr. Budgen: I remind my hon. and learned Friend that the present immigration rules are a substantial relaxation of the promise made by the Tory party in 1979. If the application of those rules were relaxed in the face of pressure, such as that put upon my hon. and learned Friend by the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Miss Maynard), there would be real resentment and anger in those areas which have had to bear the brunt of heavy immigration.

Mr. Waddington: My hon. Friend has gone very wide of the question on the Order Paper. The Government have conducted a well-balanced immigration policy. For that reason, immigration was not a big issue at the last election. We can take pride in that policy. We should try to talk about these issues moderately. It is sad that the Opposition often try to make party political points out of them. We have every reason to believe that we are carrying out a well-balanced policy.

Mr. Ashley: While the Minister is considering the plight of deported children, will he consider the position of the 25 unaccompanied teenagers who are confined to closed camps in Hong Kong? Will the hon. and learned Gentleman admit some of those teenagers to Britain and urge other Governments to admit the rest of them?

Mr. Waddington: The right hon. Gentleman has gone wide of the question as well. We are anxiously studying the position of those people in camps in Hong Kong. At the moment, however, we are discussing our immigration rules in so far as they bear on young children and may result in their deportation. In fact, few children are deported.

Sir John Wells: Is my hon. and learned Friend aware that about a million young people, including under-age children, come to this country every year as so-called language students and that about 10 per cent. of them do not return home? What does my hon. and learned Friend propose to do about that?

Mr. Waddington: I shall look into any cases that my hon. Friend brings to my attention.

I must revert to the question. I am sorry that we do not have the statistics that would enable me to give an exact answer to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Miss Maynard), but I hope that the House has got matters into perspective. Between 1979 and 1984, only 23 persons in all were deported as dependants under section 3(5)(*c*) of the Immigration Act 1971. Perhaps none of them was under 18, or perhaps one or two were.

Mr. Madden: Does the Minister agree that women with children are often placed in very distressing circumstances because of the sex discrimination in our immigration laws? Before the European Court tells him to do so, will he undertake to remove sex discrimination from within the existing immigration rules?

Mr. Waddington: We are talking about the power to deport children. Whatever the hon. Gentleman may be referring to, he is certainly not talking about anything which has the remotest connection with the power to deport children. He is suggesting that we should relax the immigration rules to allow young men to come here, using marriage as a device, and to go on to the labour market. That would not commend itself to the vast majority of the British people.

Mr. Terlezki: Does my hon. and learned Friend agree that the vast majority of immigrants, from wherever they may have come, are more than happy to be living in a free and democratic country? The Labour party is using immigrants, irrespective of colour, to gain cheap votes and to make propaganda in this House.

Mr. Waddington: I repeat what I said before. It is most unfortunate when the Opposition stir up the immigration issue, because the vast majority of those who have settled here are, as my hon. Friend has said, very proud to be members of our community.

Mr. Dubs: The Minister referred to a well-balanced policy. Is he seriously suggesting that it is well balanced if, in 1983, it resulted in 137 children who wanted to come into this country being detained at ports because the Minister wanted them to be removed? Is the Minister denying that, at least from time to time, both he and his Department seek to remove young children? In my constituency a six-year-old boy is under the threat of removal, not with his mother, but separately, because the Minister will not allow him to stay here while his immigration status is being resolved.

Mr. Waddington: Although the Opposition always wax so eloquent about these matters, they never tell even half the story. They talk about the number of people who are deported now, but they never mention the number of people who were deported prior to 1979. One finds that the figures are very alike. They talk about the number of people removed, but they never mention the number of people removed prior to 1979. Again, the figures are very similar. I wish that the Opposition would realise that this is a sensitive issue and would tell the House the whole truth.

Shops Acts

6. **Mr. Colvin** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to announce the Government's final response to the Auld committee report.

7. **Mr. Freeman** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received on the Auld report on Sunday trading.

16. **Mr. Dykes** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to be able to announce the Government's final conclusions on changes in the Shops Act 1950.

19. **Mr. Michael Forsyth** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to deal with the law relating to shop opening hours; and if he will make a statement.

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Leon Brittan): I have consulted my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House, and he has agreed that there will be a debate on the Auld committee's report as soon as possible after Easter, in which I shall announce the Government's intentions in respect of its recommendations.

Since the report was published, we have received 528 letters about the report, of which 166 favoured its recommendations and 362 opposed them.

I do not think that any significant conclusions can be drawn from these figures.

Mr. Colvin: Will my right hon. and learned Friend bear in mind, during his consideration of his response to the Auld report, that the introduction of universal Sunday trading may well result in the creation of many more part-time jobs? Will he therefore join the lobby for two other essential reforms: first, the extension of job-splitting and work-sharing schemes; and, secondly, the abolition of the wages councils?

Mr. Brittan: As I wish to retain my present job, I had better not join any lobbies for the moment. However, I understand the force of my hon. Friend's question and have some sympathy with it.

Mr. Freeman: We are very pleased to have news of a debate in the House of Commons. However, before that debate takes place, will my right hon. and learned Friend give thought to the alternative approach of allowing each local authority to make up its own mind about whether or not to permit Sunday trading?

Mr. Brittan: I shall bear in mind what my hon. Friend has said.

Mr. Dykes: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the number of letters he has received and the ratio for and against Sunday trading reflect the acute anxiety of the public that complete liberalisation will destroy the traditional British Sunday?

Mr. Brittan: I am not sure that I would draw that conclusion from those letters. It is always extremely dangerous to judge the effect of a proposal or the views of the country about it on the basis of such letters.

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Michael Forsyth.

Mr. Rhodes James *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Yes, Mr. Rhodes James. I am sorry. I have a lousy cold.

Mr. Rhodes James: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that although many of us would welcome changes which would remove anomalies in the present law, some of us would be strongly and wholly opposed to unrestricted Sunday opening?

Mr. Brittan: I respect and understand that view, but my hon. Friend will, of course, look at those parts of the Auld report which examined the possibility of partial changes and came down against them.

Mr. Coleman: As such legislation as might flow from this would have the result of allowing shops in Wales to open on Sundays, and as that would be a matter of controversy, will the right hon. and learned Gentleman consider introducing into any legislation a provision such as that for the Sunday opening of public houses—a referendum of the people concerned?

Mr. Brittan: I am not an enthusiast for referendums of any kind, but I shall bear in mind what the hon. Gentleman has said.

Mr. Andrew MacKay: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that many Conservative Members will be pleased that he is not taking too seriously the representations that he has received on the Auld report, because it is our clear view from our constituencies that the overwhelming majority of the people we represent are strongly in favour of Sunday trading and the reforms?

Mr. Brittan: I am aware of the extent of that feeling as well. It is not that I am not taking the representations seriously; it is merely that I do not necessarily regard them as representative.

Mr. Skinner: Is the Home Secretary aware that Labour Members have been inundated with letters from bodies such as the Lord's Day Observance Society? Now that the Government are beginning to wobble, the Home Secretary should beware of a combination of the Church and the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers.

Mr. Brittan: I am sure that that is a apt warning, and, coming from the quarter that it does, I shall take it in the spirit in which it was intended.

Crime Prevention

8. **Mr. Maclean** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how his Department intends to improve crime prevention.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The crime prevention unit, and the Home Office standing conference on crime prevention, which I chair, are actively engaged in the development and evaluation of a range of precise measures to prevent burglary, theft and auto crime. The results of those initiatives are disseminated to police forces and other local agencies involved in the prevention of crime.

Mr. Maclean: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply, but may I suggest one further immediate initiative that he can take? We are all grateful for the marvellous increase in police numbers in Britain, which the former Home Secretary instituted, but is not the time now ripe for a massive increase in the police force, as that is one of the most socially desirable increases in manpower that Britain can have?

Mr. Shaw: I appreciate my hon. Friend's remarks and his tribute to our noble Friend Lord Whitelaw for his achievement in increasing police numbers since 1979. I am sure my hon. Friend will recognise that the effectiveness of the police force depends not just on numbers, but on deployment and skills applies. I am sure

he will recognise that, for example, the use of civilians to allow more officers to be deployed on operational matters is also an important contribution.

Mr. Soley: Why will the Minister not be clear and straight with the House in the way in which he frequently is in other matters? He knows that the answer to the question is that the Government have no plans to improve crime prevention. They have cut back on just about every scheme designed to prevent crime in Britain that has ever been devised. It is no wonder that the crime rate is going up, and it is no wonder also that people are getting fed up with the Government's approach to law and order when it is so clearly an abysmal, dismal failure.

Mr. Shaw: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is well versed in dismal failures. However, I remind him of the range of activities that the Government have introduced. There are over 3,000 individual neighbourhood watch schemes and 200 crime prevention panels, including 60 schemes in Cumbria. The Government have a total commitment to the improvement of police establishments, conditions and pay, in order to continue the fight against crime. I regret to say that the hon. Gentleman would see that dissolve if he were in power.

Dr. Glyn: Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the most important things is neighbourhood crime prevention schemes? Will he give that idea every encouragement, as that is the only way in which the police can be adequately informed, and by which people can know exactly what is happening in their areas?

Mr. Shaw: My hon. Friend is quite right, and I fully support his view. It is vital that citizens, too, play their part in preventing crime.

Civil Defence

9. **Mr. Patrick Thompson** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to the number of full and part-time civil defence staff employed in Mid-Glamorgan.

Mr. Giles Shaw: There are two full-time emergency planning staff employed by Mid-Glamorgan county council on civil defence duties.

Mr. Thompson: Does my hon. Friend accept that the level of staffing that he has described in Mid-Glamorgan is quite inadequate? Although the levels in many counties, including my county of Norfolk, are higher, there must be a good case for my hon. Friend to take steps to increase the levels of civil defence staffing so that counties, including Mid-Glamorgan, can meet their obligations under the 1983 civil defence regulations.

Mr. Shaw: My hon. Friend is right, but perhaps I can enhance his comments by saying that the situation in Mid-Glamorgan is little short of lamentable. That local authority seems to take absolutely no precautions to provide some civil defence protection for its citizens. I assure my hon. Friend that we shall be taking steps to see that this matter is put right, not just in Mid-Glamorgan, but in every authority where there is a deficiency.

Mrs. Clwyd: Will the Minister confirm that the Home Office's senior civil defence organiser recently visited local authorities in Wales? What was the purpose of that visit? Did the organiser visit Mid-Glamorgan? Is the Minister aware that the whole of Wales is a nuclear-free zone? The Minister is wasting his time trying to convince local authorities in Wales to adopt such a stupid and irrelevant programme.

Mr. Shaw: I appreciate the hon. Lady's views, but I should inform her that the civil defence adviser visited Mid-Glamorgan to try to persuade that authority to complete the questionnaire, as it is the only authority in England and Wales that has not yet done so. Many nuclear-free zone authorities have returned their questionnaires and intend to make some provision for civil defence. I trust that the people of Wales will enjoy some measure of protection.

Mr. Terlezki: Does my hon. Friend agree that a nuclear-free zone in Wales is a big joke there, and is not, and never will be, accepted? It is purely Labour party political propaganda. [HON. MEMBERS: "Reading".] Will my hon. Friend tell me about his Department's allocation for civil defence in South Glamorgan for 1985-86?

Mr. Speaker: Order. The question is about Mid-Glamorgan.

Mr. Shaw: I am grateful to you, Mr. Speaker, for that correction, as it enables me to say that I cannot give my hon. Friend the figure for South Glamorgan. However, I shall write to him about that. Nevertheless, I assure him that we have every intention of seeing that a proper level of civil defence preparation is put in hand. Nuclear-free zones are entirely bogus.

Video Recordings Act

11. **Mr. Sumberg** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will take immediate steps to ensure that the classification of videos is completed without delay so that the Video Recordings Act can come into effect.

15. **Mrs. Jill Knight** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to bring into force the Video Recordings Act 1984; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The Video Recordings Act provides for the classification of video works under arrangements to be made by an authority to be designated by the Secretary of State. My right hon. and learned Friend proposes to designate the principal officers of the British Board of Film Censors.

Following the recent death of the president of the board, Lord Harlech, a successor is being actively sought. We hope that it will be possible for an appointment to be made very soon and for particulars of the proposed designation to be laid before Parliament shortly thereafter.

Mr. Sumberg: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that reply. In the light, in particular, of the judge's remarks in the case of the Fox, is my hon. Friend satisfied that sufficient staff are available at the British Board of Film Censors to complete this vital work so that the designations are on the record and on the statute book?

Mr. Mellor: Increased numbers of staff are being taken on by the BBFC in anticipation of designation. The video referred to in the trial of the rapist known as the Fox has already been declared obscene under the Obscene Publications Act 1959, so the availability of that video and the bringing into force of the Act are not linked.

Mrs. Knight: Does my hon. Friend agree that pornography is a drug, and a very dangerous drug at that, as it rots the mind and can persuade individuals to commit great violence and cruelty against innocent people? Will he note that it was not only the judge in the Fairlie trial who linked pornography with the crime, but that many other judges in similar trials in the last 20 years have made that link?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not think that that has a lot to do with the Video Recordings Act.

Mrs. Knight: With great respect, Mr. Speaker, it was the video which was linked in the Fairlie trial with the crime committed. I am merely asking my hon. Friend to bear in mind that all these factors mean that we need action very quickly indeed.

Mr. Mellor: As I said in answer to the original question, I am anxious that we should get this designation procedure completed as soon as possible.

Mr. Ryman: Does the Minister not appreciate that that will not begin to solve the problem? On the one hand, "tendency to deprave and corrupt" is a difficult matter to prove in prosecutions under the Obscene Publications Act. On the other hand, juries will not convict unless a more intelligent view is taken of the need to prosecute at all in this class of case.

Mr. Mellor: The hon. Gentleman referred to the Obscene Publications Act. One of the attractions of the Act is that the issue will be tried by magistrates. The content of the video is not a matter of which magistrates will usually have to take account. The question at issue will be whether the video has been certificated by the designated authority. Thereby, many of the difficulties which the hon. Gentleman has properly brought before the House are circumvented.

Civil Defence

17. **Dr. Blackburn** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether there is a civil defence emergency centre in Mid Glamorgan.

Mr. Giles Shaw: There is no civil defence emergency centre in Mid-Glamorgan.

Dr. Blackburn: Will my hon. Friend tell the House when we should expect operational centres to be available in Mid-Glamorgan, because it is important, in the context of civil defence, that they are there for any other disasters that may take place in the county of Mid-Glamorgan?

Mr. Shaw: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend that this is a disastrous state of affairs. There should be eight such centres in the county of Mid-Glamorgan. We have already taken the initial steps by contacting the local authority in order to put things right.

18. **Dr. Twinn** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he takes to monitor the implementation of the Civil Defence Regulations 1983 in the Principality of Wales.

Mr. Shaw: The civil defence questionnaire last year to all county authorities provided a basis for the development of further monitoring. This will be achieved primarily by visits from the civil defence adviser to the Home Office, but also by questionnaires, as appropriate.

Dr. Twinn: Will my hon. Friend announce minimum standards which must be reached within a set time limit within the Principality?

Mr. Shaw: My hon. Friend should know that we have agreed to require all local authorities, including those in the Principality, to set down their plans for implementing the 1983 regulations by the end of this year.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: In so far as the authorities are prepared to implement the civil defence regulations, will the Minister also make available to those authorities the details of what would happen in the event of the nuclear winter, which details I believe his Department is at the moment suppressing?

Mr. Shaw: I assure the hon. Gentleman that we have had discussions with most of the local authority associations on various matters connected with civil defence, including that particular theory. The hypothesis of the nuclear winter has yet to be properly validated, and until it is so validated the Government cannot take a view on it.

Industrial Disputes (Police Operations)

25. **Mr. Ashby** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for reports from chief constables about how they plan to review and learn from police operations during the coal dispute.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Chief officers of police are reviewing police operations during the miners strike both individually and collectively through the Association of Chief Police Officers. These reviews will be completed as soon as possible and the Department will be keeping in touch with their progress.

Mr. Ashby: Will my hon. Friend please also consider the financial aspects of policing in the different authorities?

Mr. Shaw: I understand that we have a lot to learn about the way in which financial consequences can properly be accounted for and dealt with.

Mr. Barron: Now that the miners's strike has ended —even officially it seems—will the Minister reconsider his Department's decision not to have a public inquiry into the strike? May we have a full public inquiry so that people can properly examine policing methods in the last 12 months?

Mr. Shaw: No, I shall not reconsider that decision. A full review of what occurred is being conducted by the Association of Chief Police Officers, and each area will receive its own report on the different aspects of the strike.

Shop Acts

27. **Sir Fergus Montgomery** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many representations he has received regarding the reform of shop hours' legislation.

Mr. Mellor: I would refer my hon. Friend to the reply given earlier today to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin).

Sir Fergus Montgomery: Will my hon. Friend take into account representations by people all over the country, because opinions on the issue vary in the different regions?

Mr. Mellor: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: As it is likely that Sunday trading will be introduced—I am sorry to say—will my hon. Friend consider insisting that stores which are allowed to trade on a Sunday close on another day of the week?

Mr. Mellor: All opinions will be considered.

Divided Families Campaign (Ministerial Meeting)

29. **Mr. James Lamond** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about the meeting of the Minister of State, the hon. and learned Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Waddington) with the Divided Families Campaign on 4 February.

Mr. Waddington: The Bangladesh Divided Families Campaign from Oldham requested the meeting to voice its concern that families are separated by the operation of immigration control. I listened carefully to the views expressed on this and other topics, but I had to make the point that families are separated not by the actions of the Government, but by the actions of those who choose to come here leaving their families behind.

I told the campaign that it was necessary for those claiming to be dependants to establish their entitlement and I could not set aside the requirement of the immigration rules and allow people waiting in the queue, or who had had their application refused, to come here when they had not shown their entitlement.

Mr. Lamond: Is the Minister aware that the Divided Families Campaign now operates on a national basis because so many families are affected? Does the Minister accept that we are talking about the humane treatment of families, which is quite separate from other immigration matters? Is the Minister aware that he could take a decisive step to help those families if he ensured that the queue to be interviewed was shortened and if he placed more interviewing officers in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan?

Mr. Waddington: Yes. The problem is intractable. There is a limit to the resources available to process entry clearance applications. I remind the hon. Gentleman that the year before last we sent an additional entry clearance officer to Dhaka. In the last two winters, two extra entry clearance officers have been helping with the preparation of appeals statements there so that entry clearance officers had more time to do the interviewing.

One must compare the situation today with that of a few years ago. Generally, queue lengths today compare favourably with the queue lengths back in 1979 and 1978. However, a real problem exists in Dhaka because so many people in the queue are reapplicants. We do our best.

Mr. Kaufman: How can the Minister say that these families are not divided by the action of the Government, when the document leaked to *The Guardian* shows that there is a conspiracy in his Department, led by him, deliberately to spin out the queues and get round the law which allows people to exercise their right to come here? By the leaking of that document, a copy of which I have, has the hon. and learned Gentleman not been shown to be deliberately pursuing a restrictive and racist policy?

Mr. Waddington: It is this intemperate language which proves the point that I was making half an hour ago. It does not help when, time and time again, the right hon. Gentleman gets up at Question Time, completely misrepresents the policy being pursued and completely obscures the fact that by and large that policy has been pursued by successive Governments. The truth of the matter is that the Labour Government realised perfectly well that there was a limit on the resources that could be dedicated to the job of entry clearance in Dhaka. We have followed exactly the same policy. We have recognised that there is that same limitation. Obviously, if we cannot devote unlimited manpower to doing the job there is a limit to the rate at which people will be admitted. It is as simple as that, and the right hon. Gentleman knows it perfectly well.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Malone** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 28 March.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I presided a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Malone: During the course of her day, will my right hon Friend consider some of the industrial success stories that are coming out of Scotland? Does she accept that the order for £40 million shipping for Govan shipbuilders, the £50 million order placed at UEI and the continuing expansion of the electronics industry in Scotland are examples of the fact that the Government's policy is working, that Scottish industry is becoming more competitive and that the dismal Jimmies on the Opposition Benches should be ignored?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I agree with what my hon. Friend says. Despite the coal strike, industrial production in Scotland was up 3 per cent. on a year ago and the Locate in Scotland office has now had £1 billion worth of inward investment. I add that to my hon Friend's good news.

Mr. James Lamond: If the Government have so many success stories to pick from, why was it necessary for them to select for the Saatchi and Saatchi Conservative party broadcast last night the firm of Ferranti in my constituency, which, far from benefiting from the Government's work, relied entirely on a £15 million cash injection by the Labour Government in 1975 to save it? The only contribution that this Government have made to Ferranti is to make it necessary for that firm to have widespread redundancies because of Government cutbacks in orders and a refusal to allow the firm, at the first request, to expand its high-tech training school by 20 places.

The Prime Minister: Ferranti runs a very successful operation. It is extremely efficient and has done well in getting defence orders here and overseas. It is to be congratulated on its performance under this Government.

Sir John Farr: May I ask whether my right hon. Friend noticed the press speculation over the weekend following the visit of my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to Dublin? In view of the speculation, can my right hon. Friend assure the House and the country that we have no intention of doing anything other than

strengthening the bonds that bind the United Kingdom together and, moreover, that in no circumstances will this Government contemplate another Sunningdale?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his comments. The position is exactly as set out in the communiqué after the Chequers meeting of the Taoiseach and myself. There will be no constitutional change whatsoever in Northern Ireland unless it has the full consent of the people of Northern Ireland, who are part of the United Kingdom.

Dr. Owen: Does the Prime Minister accept the advice in the report of the Social Security Advisory Committee that any overall reduction in social security expenditure would cause grave problems? Does it not strongly recommend that if there are to be any reductions in one part of the budget they should be channelled to areas of high priority need? Is not any simplification a costly move? Will the Prime Minister assure all those who are worried that there will be no overall cuts?

The Prime Minister: I understand that the report was only published today. I have not read it in its entirety—but I understand, of course, that the right hon. Gentleman may have done so. I have read a summary, and I am not prepared to give any undertakings before the full report of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services on his review is available. Any attempt to make us do so would be to deny both open government and a full discussion of matters which should be discussed.

Q2. **Mr. Frank Cook** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 28 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Cook: Can the Prime Minister spare a moment this afternoon to give this Chamber the benefit of her opinion on the disparaging comments made by her soul mate President Reagan in response to a considered statement by the Foreign Secretary on the star wars concept despite the fact that he admitted that he had not read it? Does she condone the abuse of the Geneva peace talks as a means of brow beating the President's opposition in the House of Representatives into authorising a budget allocation for just another means of delivering death to those who disagree with the United States?

The Prime Minister: The policy on the SDI is as I set it out after my meeting with President Reagan at Camp David, and as he set it out once again at a press conference when I was present. It has not changed in any way. Congress was right to reaffirm what President Reagan wanted for the MX missiles. It is right that the talks in Geneva are proceeding because of the strength and the will of the West, and not because of its weakness.

As the hon. Gentleman has criticised President Reagan, I must tell him that I thought that the United States acted with enormous restraint over the murder of one of its soldiers in Eastern Germany.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: Will my right hon. Friend find time today to reflect on the recent ballot of the National Union of Mineworkers? Is she aware that ever since Arthur Scargill became president every issue that has been put to the ballot has been lost? Is that not a wonderful example of how out of touch that man is with those whom he is supposed to represent?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend. During the present leadership of the NUM, every one of four ballots has been lost. The leadership has also deprived its members of one year's salary, which is utterly disgraceful.

Mr. Kinnock: May I commend the launch of the Britain means Business campaign, which is intended to secure a transfusion of foreign capital into this country? Is the right hon. Lady aware that it would be sensible for her to help Britain more by changing the policies which have led to a £12,000 million a year haemorrhage of investment capital from this country since the day that she became Prime Minister?

The Prime Minister: There was record investment in this country last year of £55 billion.

Mr. Kinnock: Is the right hon. Lady telling us that because there is an inflow we can do without the £50,000 million that has gone out of the country? Would it not be sensible to reintroduce policies—*[Interruption.]* I know that Conservative Members do not care about the betrayal of this country by people sending money out of it. Would it not be sensible to retain those funds so that we could generate much-needed investment and even more desperately needed jobs?

The Prime Minister: We had record investment in this country last year of £55 billion. We agree with the policy of putting some investments overseas — we need the income from them to repay the interest and dividends that have to go from this country because of the immense amounts of inward investment. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman believes in inward investment, because it creates many jobs. However, I do not think that he understands anything about it.

Mr. Kinnock: What I do understand, and what the British people understand, is that while the Prime Minister has let those precious funds leave the country, unemployment has gone up to over 3 million. When will she change policies to bring it down?

The Prime Minister: How does the right hon. Gentleman propose to pay for the interest that goes out?

Mr. Kinnock: By growth.

The Prime Minister: How does the right hon. Gentleman propose to pay for the dividends and interest that go out on investment that comes in here? It is not paid for by growth but has to be paid across the exchanges in cash. The right hon. Gentleman proves that he has not a clue.

Mr. Rob Hayward: Is my right hon. Friend aware that on 15 January the Leader of the Opposition asked my right hon. Friend the Chancellor to resign when the pound fell by 1·5 cents? As the pound rose 4·5 cents yesterday, does my right hon. Friend expect the Leader of the Opposition to ask my right hon. Friend to be reinstated three times over?

The Prime Minister: The world exchange markets are taking a different view of the dollar and are realising that the underlying strength of the British economy is very good for investment. They have noted record output, record investment and a record standard of living. That augurs well for the future.

Q3. **Mr. Freud** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for 28 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Freud: In the light of the new agreement and partnership between Government and education announced by the Secretary of State for Education and Science on Tuesday, will the Prime Minister say what she intends to do in her role as a partner in the case of the teachers' dispute?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman is aware, the teachers have been offered arbitration, but they have chosen not to accept it.

Q4. **Mr. Evennett** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 28 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Evennett: Does my right hon. Friend share the anxiety of many of my constituents about the rising crime rate in London? Although I accept that the Government have done a great deal to fight crime, will she consider introducing additional measures to deal with the problem in London?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend knows, the number of police has been increased considerably, equipment has been increased and the deployment of the police force has been improved. There are more bobbies back on the beat. Tackling crime is a task for the whole community — nobody can opt out. Everything that the Government can do is being done, and will continue to be done.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk: After her somewhat traumatic meeting with 25 young unemployed people from my constituency on Tuesday, does the Prime Minister accept that her suggestion that they move elsewhere and go into lodgings shows an amazing lack of knowledge of the level of unemployment in areas such as London and, if carried out, would be destructive of family life, which they value, and which the Prime Minister is supposed to support? In any event, are all of the 10,500 unemployed people in my constituency supposed to become industrial gipsies?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman is aware that these young people were told that in their area there would be 800 more community programme jobs. They also had an opportunity, which is afforded to few, to meet a manager in Vauxhall Motors Ltd., who told them that he was recruiting, a manager in I. J. Dewhirst, the clothing firm, who told them that he was recruiting, and a manager in Trusthouse Forte plc, who told them that he was recruiting. They also heard of a request that had come in while they were sitting there from another hotel group in Liverpool, which was recruiting, and they had the opportunity to meet the chairman and the area manager of the Manpower Services Commission. If they cannot take the opportunity provided by those interviews, it is very sad and a pity.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: Is my right hon. Friend aware that some of us were surprised to be told in the Irish media that Tory Members interested in Northern Ireland had been "squared" in connection with a forthcoming initiative? Is she further aware that we are glad to know that the speculation in *The Mail on Sunday* is entirely unfounded?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his comments. He will recall that the Secretary of State for Scotland was so worried about that report that he published a statement, which my hon. Friend no doubt read. The position is as I described it earlier.

Q5. **Mr. Simon Hughes** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for 28 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hughes: Does the Prime Minister accept that since her intemperate remarks against Church leaders last Saturday there has been mounting criticism of the personal attack that they imply? Is she now seeking to change the constitution so that bishops whom she appointed cannot speak out, or will she change her mind and for once listen to them, as they have a moral and spiritual duty to put her Government back on a sounder course?

The Prime Minister: In reply to the previous question, I should have said the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. I thought that the hon. Gentleman had a little sense of humour, but I now discover that I was wrong. Clearly, spring has not yet arrived in Southwark.

Business of the House

3.31 pm

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): May I ask the Leader of the House whether he will state the business for next week?

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): Yes, Sir. The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 1 APRIL—Consideration of a timetable motion on the Transport Bill.

Motions relating to the Housing Benefits Amendment and on the Housing Benefits (Subsidy) Regulations.

Consideration of Lords Amendments to the National Heritage (Scotland) Bill.

The Chairman of Ways and Means has named opposed private business for consideration at seven o'clock.

TUESDAY 2 APRIL—Progress in Committee on the Interception of Communications Bill.

Motions on the Supplementary Benefit (Requirements and Resources) Miscellaneous Provisions Regulations and on the Supplementary Benefit (Resources) Amendment Regulations.

WEDNESDAY 3 APRIL—Further progress on remaining stages of the Interception of Communications Bill.

Motion on the Road Traffic (Type Approval) (Northern Ireland) Regulations.

THURSDAY 4 APRIL—The House will meet at 9.30 am, take Questions until 10.30 am, and adjourn at 3.30 pm until Monday 15 April.

Mr. Kinnock: I am grateful to the Leader of the House. Will the right hon. Gentleman tell us why he has chosen Monday for the timetable motion on the latest monumental folly of the Secretary of State for Transport? Is he aware that on Tuesday people representing millions of bus users and workers will lobby Parliament? Could not the Government for once have had the decency to give those people a democratic opportunity to influence events before bringing down the guillotine on a Bill which has no friends among bus users, managers of enterprise or workers in the industry?

Why shall we debate the Interception of Communications Bill on two successive days? Given the importance and controversy of the measure, does not the Leader of the House think that it would be sensible to have a day or two in between the two days' consideration for proper reflection and consultation to enhance the debate that will take place?

On 14 March the right hon. Gentleman assured me that we could look forward to a foreign affairs debate in the near future. In view of the atrocious acts of the South African security forces during the past week, will he ensure that we have that debate directly after we return from the Easter Recess?

Finally, I understand that at 3.30 this afternoon the Government are publishing a White Paper on employment. It is the first time that such a document has been published in 40 years. Why have the Government not chosen to make a statement to the House on that White Paper? Does the right hon. Gentleman consider it, as I do, to be a dereliction of duty to the public and to Parliament?

Mr. Biffen: Perhaps I may take the points made by the right hon. Gentleman in the sequence in which they were delivered. I believe that Monday is a good day to debate the timetable motion on the Transport Bill. The Bill has been in Committee for well over 80 hours and has made only modest progress. There is a real requirement on the House of Commons, as a working body, to take the matter further. Of course, I am sorry that it does not coincide with the outside representations that will be made, but I know that they will still be seriously considered by those hon. Members who are considering the legislation.

Secondly, I believe that the House is entitled to take two successive days to deal with the Committee stage of the Interception of Communications Bill. It is an important matter and we should try to make progress on it. Of course there are disadvantages in taking days in succession—I do not deny that—but there will be a gap before Report stage when matters can be considered——

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): The third day of the Committee stage.

Mr. Biffen: I hear what the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) says from a sedentary position. Those matters can be considered through the usual channels.

As to a foreign affairs debate, I recognise the importance of the subject, which has been underlined by the recent tragic events in South Africa. I assure the right hon. Gentleman that we shall try to have a debate as soon after the Easter recess as can be arranged.

Finally, the White Paper on employment that is published today is an important statement of Government policy, but it follows a debate in the House within the past few days when the matter was dealt with exhaustively — [AN HON. MEMBER: "That was the Budget."] Anyone would think that the Budget was a book-keeping exercise——

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): It is.

Mr. Biffen: The Budget concerns economic management on such a scale that the Opposition believed it important to ask the shadow spokesman on employment to take part in the debate.

Notwithstanding his somewhat partisan interpretation of my statement of next week's business, I wish to conclude by wishing the Leader of the Opposition a very happy birthday.

Mr. Eldon Griffiths (Bury St. Edmunds): Although I appreciate the world-shaking importance of some of the matters that my right hon. Friend has announced for next week, is he aware that many of us who have studied the American proposals for the strategic defence initiative and who have read the extraordinary speech by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and the judgments arrived at by the Prime Minister, believe that it would be appropriate for the House to consider the strategic defence initiative before final decisions are made about it? Now that we have had an open invitation from the United States to take part —I hope that we will—should not Parliament have an opportunity to offer its judgment on the matter in the near future?

Mr. Biffen: I note what my hon. Friend says, and I give it due weight and significance, but I ask him to consider this in the light of the promised debate on foreign affairs.

Mr. A. E. P. Duffy (Sheffield, Attercliffe): The Leader of the House will recall that repeatedly in recent

years I have asked about the joint-venture, private steel-public steel Phoenix 2 programme, because one of its major components is the Tinsley park works in my constituency. Yet we learn today that that works will be closed. Does this not raise questions about the protracted length of the policy on joint venture programmes, which has undoubtedly cost Tinsley park investment and, therefore, modernisation; about this turn of events, which will enable the Treasury to swing costs onto the British Steel Corporation; about 1,100 jobs lost and the need for consultation between the Department of Trade and Industry and the Department of Employment; and about the future of Sheffield and south Yorkshire, which have been devastated since 1979 as a result of policies such as the one that has been before the House for the past four years? Does the Leader of the House believe that those matters should be discussed by the House at the first opportunity after we return from the Easter recess?

Mr. Biffen: I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's point. He has been a doughty fighter for his constituents' interests in this matter over a number of years. Clearly I have made no provision for the matter to be debated before the Easter recess, and I cannot hold out any hope of Government time thereafter. I shall take account of what the hon. Gentleman has said and will refer his remarks to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): Will my right hon. Friend scrap some of the tedious debates on orders next week and give us instead a debate on the multi-fibre arrangement, in view of its great importance to the textile industries and the unsatisfactory answers given from the Government Front Bench yesterday?

Mr. Biffen: I can understand those who wish to argue the virtues of a debate on the MFA. The orders that my hon. Friend is seeking to displace are of great significance to many hon. Members. I shall bear in mind the importance of a debate on the MFA.

Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport): Judging from the Budget debate, many hon. Members on both sides of the House do not believe that the Government have a strategy for employment. Will the Leader of the House make this document available, as it is rather surprising not to have any statement from the Secretary of State? There is a queue outside waiting for the document to be released, and many in it are Conservative Members.

Mr. Biffen: I understand that the document has been released. I shall look into the matter.

Mr. John Browne (Winchester): Will my right hon. Friend accept that the construction by the Soviet Union in Antarctica of no fewer than seven major camps, two of them with runways of 2 km and one with a runway of 3 km, and the conduct by the Russians of a major air shuttle from Minsk to Vostok in the Antarctic represents more than one would normally consider as peaceful geological survey? May we have a debate into this, which represents a possible serious military threat to the South Atlantic and the southern flank of NATO?

Mr. Biffen: This demonstrates one aspect of East-West relations that will feature in the debate on foreign affairs.

Mr. Alfred Dubs (Battersea): I ask the Leader of the House once more about the possibility of a debate on the report by the Commission for Racial Equality on immigration procedures. In doing so, I remind the Leader of the House that it is likely that in May the European Court will be pronouncing on certain immigration cases, in all probability to the embarrassment of the Government. Would it not be as well for the right hon. Gentleman if we get the CRE report out of the way before the European Court pronounces?

Mr. Biffen: I am grateful that the hon. Gentleman has my interests so much at heart in making this request. I shall give further thought to it.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Has my right hon. Friend seen press reports today to the effect that 90 per cent. of the 12,000 animals imported into this country die en route, and are brought over in conditions that are inhumane and disgraceful? Could we have an early debate or statement on this important matter?

Mr. Biffen: In the light of what my hon. Friend has said, I shall draw the matter to the attention of my relevant right hon. Friends, because I suspect that the matter touches on more than one Department.

Mr. J. D. Concannon (Mansfield): Is the Leader of the House aware that the timetable motion on the Transport Bill on Monday will be looked on with horror by the transport authorities? This is a contentious measure, described by various Ministers as a leap in the dark or as an act of faith. We have already had a report from a Select Committee with a majority of Conservative Members containing strong objections to the Bill. Would it not be better to withdraw the Bill, rethink it and bring it back next session so that we can give it the scrutiny that it deserves?

Mr. Biffen: I may be giving a disappointing reply to the right hon. Gentleman, but he may have an oppportunity to make a speech on Monday putting those arguments and persuading the House to agree with him.

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): Is my right hon. Friend aware that this morning a deputation of residents from the areas adjacent to Molesworth came to see my hon. Friend the Member for Huntingdon (Mr. Major) to express their anxiety about the disruption of their lives that is likely to take place at Easter through the actions of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament? As my right hon. Friend will know, many hon. Members have expressed their concern at the activities of CND. Would it be possible for us to have a debate before Easter so that the House can express its displeasure at the way in which CND has disrupted the lives of residents?

Mr. Biffen: I sympathise with the point that my hon. Friend makes, but I must confess that all Government time is bespoken.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): Is the Leader of the House aware that the repeal of section 10 of the Crown Proceedings Act is a matter of great importance to a number of severely disabled service men and ex-service men, as expressed in early-day motion 561? Although the matter was raised in the debate on the Easter recess, there was, understandably, no ministerial statement. Please may we have one?

[That this House calls for the repeal of section 10 of the Crown Proceedings Act, which provides total immunity against any legal action for negligence which results in the death or disability of a serviceman carrying out his day to day duties in peacetime; recognises that servicemen

[Mr. Jack Ashley]

accept the risks in action, but believes that at all other times they should have the same rights as everyone else, including other public servants such as police and firemen; calls upon the Government to provide these basic rights for servicemen; and recommends that they should apply retrospectively, so that servicemen who are at present disabled through possible negligence are not excluded from such rights.]

Mr. Biffen: I shall refer to the Secretary of State for Defence the right hon. Member's point about the Easter recess debate and his question.

Mr. Peter Fry (Wellingborough): Will my right hon. Friend find time before too long for a debate on road safety? The Select Committee on Transport recently produced a report which was received with considerable interest. It is time that the matter was discussed so that hon. Members on both sides may make their views known and the Government may come forward with their new thinking on this important topic.

Mr. Biffen: I note what my hon. Friend says and will draw it to the attention of the Secretary of State for Transport.

Mr. James Hamilton (Motherwell, North): It has been widely reported that Scottish Tory Back Benchers are meeting the Prime Minister today to protest about the revaluation and its effects on commercial and domestic consumers in Scotland. May we be assured that a statement on the subject will be made to the House before the Easter recess, and before the Scottish Tory party conference takes place, because hon. Members are entitled to know the facts before they are made known to that conference?

Mr. Biffen: I would not wish to choose between two such distinguished bodies. The hon. Gentleman will appreciate that the matter was debated at some length on the Consolidated Fund Bill. However, I shall draw the attention of the Secretary of State for Scotland to the point that he makes.

Dr. Alan Glyn (Windsor and Maidenhead): My right hon. Friend will be aware of recent Select Committee leaks. Will he consider initiating a debate on, or conducting an inquiry into, the matter and particularly into leaks in connection with the Privileges Committee?

Mr. Biffen: The report of the Privileges Committee is now available in the Vote Office.

Mr. James Lamond (Oldham, Central and Royton): The Leader of the House has referred his hon. Friends who asked questions about peace and disarmament to the forthcoming debate on foreign affairs. Is he aware that he cannot hide behind that strategy for much longer? He has used it on me on many occasions, suggesting questions to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the debate on the defence White Paper as suitable vehicles by which to raise questions about disarmament. Will he for once allocate a day to the discussion, not of foreign affairs or the defence White Paper but of peace and disarmament, an issue which is of crucial importance to the whole nation?

Mr. Biffen: I understand those who argue that the topics concerned with disarmament stand in their own right and merit debate in their own right. I have the task of trying to reconcile all the demands that are made with the time that is available. I have an obligation to point out that disarmament is a vital and integral part of the wider issue of foreign relationships.

Mr. Matthew Parris (Derbyshire, West): As the Standing Committee on the Transport Bill in nearly five weeks has reached only clause 9 in considering a Bill with 100 clauses, is my right hon. Friend aware that the sooner a timely and generous timetable motion can be agreed, the better it will be for all concerned?

Mr. Biffen: I note my hon. Friend's remarks. I hope, therefore, that the business set down for Monday is acceptable, and perhaps he will be able to contribute to that debate.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): As conflicting stories are circulating about the negotiations between the British and Irish Governments, will the right hon. Gentleman arrange for an urgent statement to be made? Is he aware that those such as myself, who hope that negotiations are taking place—one has the impression from Prime Minister's Question Time that the right hon. Gentleman knows rather more than what we were told by the right hon. Lady—feel that the House should be kept informed, in particular to avoid some of the rumours that are current?

Mr. Biffen: The subject of the Province is always redolent with rumours. I shall take note of what the hon. Gentleman says and draw the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to his remarks.

Mr. Robert McCrindle (Brentwood and Ongar): As on Monday we shall, for the second time in a relatively short period, be debating a timetable motion, will my right hon. Friend tell us how he reacts to the suggestion which has often been made before — that one of the more efficient ways of conducting our business would be to introduce timetables on Second Reading?

Mr. Biffen: As we have a Select Committee on Procedure which is examining precisely that subject, I think that it would be courteous to await its report before passing public judgment.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): As the Government's supreme achievement in education has been single-handedly to unite the teaching profession for the first time—something which many Labour Members have been trying to do for years—will they realise that, with that unity, there will be a long struggle, to the detriment of children's education—a struggle which has been forced upon the teachers by the Government's wretched policies? Against the background of this serious situation in education, can we have a full-scale debate on the education programme and the struggle that the teachers are waging for a living wage?

Mr. Biffen: I take note of what the hon. Gentleman says, but I cannot accept the premise on which he describes the present situation. I believe that a very fair offer has been made to the teaching profession. I shall of course refer the hon. Gentleman's comments to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Will my right hon. Friend find time to allow the House to offer its advice to the Cabinet upon the proposal that the banks and the building societies should be able to carry out conveyancing for their customers and not only for themselves? Is he aware that many of my hon. Friends —I expect that many Opposition Members take the same view — find it difficult to understand how the conflicts of interest that are inherent in the proposal can possibly be resolved?

Mr. Biffen: I have no proposals before me as yet to provide Government time for such a debate, but I shall bear in mind what my hon. Friend has said.

Mr. Stan Crowther (Rotherham): Is the Leader of the House aware that his non-committal answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Duffy) will be found unsatisfactory by the south Yorkshire steelworkers, whose jobs have been disappearing at a fantastic rate ever since the Government came to power? Does he understand that the terrible news this morning about the Tinsley park works is a direct product of the Government's disastrous industrial policy, which has reduced demand for engineering steels by nearly 40 per cent? Will he think again about the need for a debate on the steel industry in Government time in the near future?

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Gentleman has made a highly contentious interpretation of what has happened at Tinsley park. I think that I gave a fair answer to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Duffy), and by that I stand.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): Before all football stadiums in the country are ripped up, before every woman has been raped, before every child has been battered and before all old people have been mugged, will my right hon. Friend care to find time in the not too distant future to enable the House to have a full debate on law and order, sentencing policy and all related matters?

Mr. Biffen: Just occasionally, powerful advocacy and even mild exaggeration win points in this place, but I do not think that I am encouraged by the terms in which my hon. Friend describes law and order in Britain. Of course, he has raised a matter of major concern in the House and among our constituents. However, whatever debates we have in this place must be related to some realistic reappraisal of what we can do to resolve the problems.

Mr. Richard Caborn (Sheffield, Central): My hon. Friends the Members for Sheffield, Attercliffe, (Mr. Duffy) and for Rotherham (Mr. Crowther) have referred to the closure of the Tinsley park works, where many of my constituents work. Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that his answers to their questions were totally unsatisfactory? Does he realise that in the centre of Sheffield there are unemployment levels in excess of 50 per cent. and that the blow to the south Yorkshire steel industry of the closure of the Tinsley park works will not be taken lightly? The closure is extremely important to Sheffield, south Yorkshire and the steel industry as a whole. If there is any enlargement of the United Kingdom's manufacturing base, we shall sorely need the engineering steels which the Tinsley park works can produce. The works have better European and world records than any other comparable plant in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Biffen: I appreciate hon. Members' desire to express succinctly their deep distress at what happens to industries in their constituencies, but I have to say to the hon. Gentleman, as I have said to the hon. Members for Rotherham (Mr. Crowther) and for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Duffy), that I shall report hon. Members' anxieties to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. I thought that that was a reasonably forthcoming response.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): Two or three months ago, my right hon. Friend said that when the BBC licence fee was announced the House would have a chance to debate it. Will my right hon. Friend now give the House that time, because many hon. Members, and many more people outside the House, believe that it is a matter for discussion in the House?

Mr. Biffen: I do not think that my hon. Friend will be disappointed, because the Opposition have prayed against the order increasing the licence fee, as my hon. Friend will see on today's Order Paper, and a debate will take place in due course.

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): Why is the right hon. Gentleman bringing forward so early the guillotine motion on the Transport Bill? Is it because the Government are afraid that old-age pensioners will see threats to their concessionary bus passes, that rural areas will see threats to their weekend and evening services and that the transport industry will see the chaos that the Bill will create, or is it because the Government do not want to suffer the embarrassment of being unable to maintain a quorum in Committee, because they cannot get 50 per cent. of Conservative Committee members to attend the Committee's meetings? Is that the reason for the guillotine?

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Gentleman's engaging eloquence is one reason that might have deterred me from bringing forward the timetable proposals. The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that we have not been precipitate in bringing this measure before the House. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will be convinced of that when he hears the arguments on Monday.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): Is my right hon. Friend aware that those of us who have spent nearly 90 hours on the Transport Bill Standing Committee feel that the timetable motion is, if anything, overdue, bearing in mind that the Opposition spent 28 of the first 36 hours getting past clause 1 and that they have spoken for 80 per cent. of the total time? Is my right hon. Friend aware of the frustration of Government Back Benchers who want to make progress in examining the Bill properly?

Mr. Biffen: When I hear such battle veterans as my hon. Friend I realise what a rookie I am.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): Will the right hon. Gentleman arrange for the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for the Environment to make a statement soon about the threat of Merseyside county council's police committee not to provide a budget for the police authority in the forthcoming financial year and about the suggestion that commissioners may be sent into Liverpool? Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the position of the chief constable in Merseyside is undermined by constant calls from Labour councillors on the county council for his early retirement or resignation?

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Gentleman has outlined a most serious situation. I shall, of course, refer his remarks to my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Mr. Andrew MacKay (Berkshire, East): Since it has been suggested that the working party on football hooliganism, which was set up by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, has reported and since many Government Members would like to have the opportunity to point out that the latest outbreak of football hooliganism and violence is the fault not of the football clubs or the police, but of some magistrates who have been too timid in their sentencing, would it be possible to have a debate on this specific and important matter after the recess?

Mr. Biffen: I can offer no hope of Government time to discuss that matter in the period immediately after Easter. I suggest that my hon. Friend should pursue his chances with such other opportunities as there are.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Now that we have the employment White Paper, to which the Leader of the House referred some time ago, could the reason why no statement accompanies it be the fact that, on page 20, the Government are yet again blaming the low paid for the unemployment level? Does the Leader of the House accept the fact that, since the Conservative party took office in 1979, wages to school leavers relative to adult wages have fallen by 8 per cent. for boys and by 12 per cent. for girls, yet youth unemployment has trebled? Young people's wages do not cause their unemployment.

Mr. Biffen: I note what the hon. Gentleman says. He knows that this topic was available for debate in the recent past. I am certain that it will be a continuing feature of our debates in the months ahead, not least because we shall be taking the Finance Bill through the House. I would not wish to endorse any of the hon. Gentleman's remarks.

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): Will my right hon. Friend find time in the not-too-distant future to hold a debate on the whole structure of world trade so that we can compare fair trade with free trade and examine the idea advanced by certain Opposition Members that we should be looking towards some form of import controls — which would, of course, damage third world countries?

Mr. Biffen: I appreciate that this topic is of great importance and interest to the House. Alas, the Adjournment debate on Monday on overseas trade does not really present my hon. Friend with the opportunity that he seeks, but there is no immediate opportunity for a debate on the matter. Nevertheless, I would remind my hon. Friend at least that I answered encouragingly the request for a debate on the multi-fibre arrangement.

Mr. Robert Litherland (Manchester, Central): On page 27 of "Employment: The Challenge for the Nation" we read:

> "Since 1979 the long-term decline in Britain's economic performance has been halted and reversed, under the guidance and stimulus of clear and resolute Government policies."

If this is not a misprint or a distortion of the truth, is it not worthy of a statement or a debate?

Mr. Biffen: No. It is just an example of extreme political moderation.

Mr. Tim Yeo (Suffolk, South): In view of the very important contribution that small businesses make to the creation of new jobs in this country, will my right hon. Friend consider holding a debate on this topic rather than leaving it to be covered as a peripheral adjunct within the context of other economic and industrial debates?

Mr. Biffen: Given again all the pressures on the time available to the House, I think my hon. Friend will find that there will be ample opportunity for this topic to be considered within the ambit of the Finance Bill, particularly if he is prepared to sit on the Committee.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Can we have a statement from the Government on their decision to support the deletion of the principle of prior informed consent from the Food and Agriculture Organisation's draft code on the export of pesticides? Does the Leader of the House understand the significance of that deletion to Third-world countries? Can we have a full statement on this matter which, is causing a great deal of concern to many hon. Members?

Mr. Biffen: I will most certainly refer to the relevant Secretaries of State the point that the hon. Gentleman has raised.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): Will my right hon. Friend find time for a debate on house building and planning applications? In my constituency we face the strange difficulty that, although nobody wants additional housing, last night the county council passed an order which will result in the building of 4,500 unwanted houses in the last green belt area of my constituency.

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend has raised what I know is a very important point. However, I am sure he will agree that, in the context in which it was raised, it is very much a constituency matter. Therefore, I hope that he will feel disposed to try his luck with an Adjournment debate.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): I support my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs) by saying that there will be widespread disappointment that the Leader of the House has failed to provide time in yet another week for a debate on the report of the Commission for Racial Equality. Can he give a definite commitment that the usual channels will be extremely well oiled so that a debate may take place immediately after our return from the Easter recess?

Mr. Biffen: No. I cannot give the specific commitment that the hon. Gentleman seeks. However, the matter will be further considered.

Mr. John Ryman (Blyth Valley): The Leader of the House has been asked several questions on law and order by several Conservative Members whose politics are probably to the right of Genghis Khan. One of the suggestions was that there should be a debate on magistrates' sentencing policies. Will the Leader of the House kindly confirm that it remains the policy of the Government not to interfere in any way with the sentencing policies of the courts?

Mr. Biffen: The relationship between the executive and the judiciary is well known and still stands.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that when he replied to my right hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock), who had

asked for a statement on the employment White Paper, he introduced a strange kind of logic? His argument was that, because unemployment had been discussed during the debate on the Budget, the White Paper should not be defended from the Dispatch Box. Why, then, has there been a White Paper on education, notwithstanding the fact that we discussed education during the Budget debate? Does not the right hon. Gentleman realise that he has made a rod for his own back? He will be unable to defend this policy on future occasions. However, is not the truth of the matter that he is treating the unemployed with contempt? As a result of the policies of the Government, there are now 4 million unemployed in a nationwide Yosserland shouting, "Gissa job, gissa job." The right hon. Gentleman and his Ministers do not have the guts to defend and debate the matter as they should, in Parliament.

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that the use of the word "rod" implies a rigidity in these matters which is totally absent. Every topic is considered on its merits. If this matter is causing a deep sense of outrage, I have no doubt that it can be considered through the usual channels. However, it would also be perfectly reasonable for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to observe that, in view of the debate that has only recently been held on the topic, the course that he sought to follow was legitimate.

Mr. Ken Eastham (Manchester, Blackley): Since the Leader of the House does not consider that the employment White Paper is important enough for a statement to be made upon it today, may I advise him that the Select Committee on Employment has been advised that there is a great shortage of skills in industry. May I also remind the House that about three years ago the Government decided to abolish most of the industrial training boards? When the Select Committee on Employment has firmed up its report, will the Leader of the House give an assurance that a debate will be held on this important matter?

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Gentleman, who is a member of the Select Committee, will know only too well that the first sequence in the chain of events is for the report to be published and considered by the Government and for the Government's comments to be made upon it. After that, we can consider the further point that the hon. Gentleman now raises.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington North): Will the Leader of the House make arrangements for an urgent debate to be held next week on the situation facing rate-capped local authorities, so that we can discuss the very real anger that is felt in many of the poorest communities about the Government's denial of sufficient rate support grant and about their iniquitious Rates Act and the effect it is having upon local democracy? The Secretary of State for the Environment could then set out his proposals for dealing with the serious social problems that are to be found in many of the rate-capped authorities, which have led them to take action to defend services and jobs.

Mr. Biffen: I can make no offer whatsoever of Government time for a debate of the character the hon. Gentleman suggests. He may have to work his powers of persuasion upon some of his colleagues for Opposition time to be provided.

Mr. James Hill (Southampton, Test): It is not for me to inconvenience my right hon. Friend in any way, but does he realise the pressures that are building up for a debate on the strategic defence initiative? He may have noted the early-day motion that I put down yesterday drawing his notice and that of the Government to the fact that there was a 60-day warning from Secretary of State Weinberger on whether or not the European nations were going to participate in the research programme.

[That this House welcomes the United States' formal invitation made in Luxembourg on 26th March to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation powers to participate in Strategic Defence Initiative research; fully accepts that the 60-day limit set for response reflects the urgency with which so vast a co-ordinated multi-national enterprise must be promoted; and welcomes the Secretary of State for Defence's understanding of the need for a tight schedule.]

Is it not absolutely essential for a debate to take place at this time?

Mr. Biffen: I appreciate the gentle and constructive pressures that my hon. Friend seeks to apply, but I have to refer him to the reply I gave earlier this afternoon to his hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Mr. Griffiths). Of course I realise the importance of this topic, but it has to be considered with all the other claims on time in any debate that is held on our overseas relations.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I note that the Leader of the House shares the concern that has been expressed by hon. Members on both sides of the House about the appalling standard of the accommodation and facilities that are available to hon. Members. Will he arrange for a debate to take place at an early date on the second report of the Services Committee, so that a sensible decision can be reached?

Mr. Biffen: That matter is under consideration, but I cannot give an answer this afternoon.

Mr. Kinnock: At the beginning of business questions I asked the Leader of the House why there has not been a statement today on the employment White Paper. During the course of business questions, several of my hon. Friends raised the same matter. I regret that none of the answers of the Leader of the House has been in any way satisfactory, especially in view of the importance of the issue and the fact that the House will rise next week for the Easter recess. Can we therefore be given an absolute undertaking that early next week there will be a full statement on the White Paper, following the custom on the White Paper on education this very week, so that the Secretary of State can be properly cross-questioned and a long delay does not take place between the publication of the White Paper and its consideration by the House?

Mr. Biffen: I take the right hon. Gentleman's point. I have not sought in any sense to minimise the importance that I attach to the feelings that exist on this topic. I said in response to the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) that, given the level of concern, the matter could be subject to further discussion through the usual channels. I am happy to confirm that.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am sure that you will agree that we have had an unusual and bizarre Question Time today. We reached question 29 on Home Office questions; I think that you have established the word "lousy" as an acceptable

[Mr. Max Madden]

parliamentary term; two English Members asked uncertain questions about Wales; a Welsh Member read a question about an area which we, including yourself, could not identify; the Prime Minister said that the Secretary of State for Scotland had issued a statement about Northern Ireland; and we have received a White Paper on employment which many of us are surprised to find bears a bright blue cover.

Has there been a takeover of the Stationery Office by Conservative central office, or is this an early warning that Saatchi and Saatchi will become the privatised holder of the Stationery Office? There is great bewilderment that the Secretary of State for Employment has not seen fit to come to the House and tell us about its content. I am confident that it will be of little help and still less comfort to the unemployed, but to have that miserable document in bright blue is an insult to the 4 million unemployed in Britain. I think that all hon. Members would prefer a White Paper to have the conventional white cover.

Mr. Winnick: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it not perfectly understandable why no statement has been made? The Government's record on unemployment is so disgraceful that no Minister would wish to try to justify it by appearing at the Dispatch Box.

Mr. Speaker: Neither hon. Member will wish me to comment on the colour of a White Paper or anything of that kind.

If hon. Members are unable to be present at Question Time it is a courtesy to tell the Chair, so that they are not called. We did reach question 29.

Mr. Bruinvels: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Early-day motion 556—"Telegraphs"—in the name of the Leader of the Opposition quite properly contains a request that the regulations applying to the increase in television licence fees should be annulled. I know that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has the right to bring forward such legislation after his announcement yesterday, but in view of the fact that so many hon. Members are against the licence fee being increased and, as my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House has confirmed, there is to be a debate on that matter, may we have a debate before that fee is increased?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has been here long enough to know that I do not arrange the business of the House. He might have put that question to the Leader of the House when I called him.

Mr. Kinnock: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am not sure whether this matter falls within your general purview, but we are now seeing the habit developing of coloured covers on documents that we commonly know as White Papers. There is already something which is familiarly known as the Blue Book, and has been for many years. Will you consider, and perhaps make a recommendation on, the general policy that seems to be developing of giving different coloured covers, in view of the fact that, within common parlance in this democracy, as well as in Parliament, we attach particular importance and different status to documents called Green Papers, White Papers, Blue Books, Red Books and so on and it would be no help to public understanding to change the colour scheme at this stage?

Mr. Speaker: I appreciate what the right hon. Gentleman says. I share that view. We do have traditional colours, but it is not a matter for me if the Government issue a White Paper and change the colour of its cover. The right hon. Gentleman should take that up with those concerned.

Adjournment Debate

4.14 pm

Mr. Speaker: I wish to make a short statement about the Adjournment debate on Thursday 4 April.

I remind hon. Members that, on the Motion for the Adjournment of the House on Thursday 4 April, up to nine Members may raise with Ministers subjects of their own choice. Applications should reach my office by 10 pm on Monday next. A ballot will be held on Tuesday morning and the result will be made known as soon as possible thereafter.

BILL PRESENTED

Surrogacy Arrangements

Mr. Norman Fowler, supported by Mr. Secretary Brittan, Mr. Secretary Younger, Mr. Secretary Edwards, Mr. Secretary Hurd, Mr. Kenneth Clarke and Mr. John Patten presented a Bill to regulate certain activities in connection with arrangements made with a view to women carrying children as surrogate mothers: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 116.].

Orders of the Day

Local Government Bill

[2ND ALLOTTED DAY]

Not amended in the Committee and as amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

Clause 8

WASTE REGULATION AND DISPOSAL FUNCTIONS

4.15 pm

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): I beg to move amendment No. 80, in page 4, line 29, at beginning insert—

'This section and section 9 below shall not come into effect until the Secretary of State has laid before Parliament a report giving details of the arrangements for waste disposal which will obtain in Greater London and the metropolitan counties at the date on which those sections come into effect and those which are expected to obtain for the following six months.'.

As is often the case, the words on the Amendment Paper do not convey clearly either the meaning or importance of the amendment and the subject under discussion. We are talking about arrangements for waste disposal and regulation following the Government's proposal to abolish the GLC and the metropolitan county councils.

It has been clear since the Bill was published that the Government have no definite proposals or schemes worked out for that crucial area of policy in Britain's major conurbations and the City. As we have all agreed, the regulation and disposal of waste does not appear at first sight to many people outside the House to be of particular importance.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Or inside.

Dr. Cunningham: Yes, I accept that too. The fact remains that it is a crucial service for the well-being of Britain's capital city and metropolitan counties. Such a policy and services have major implications for health and safety and other such aspects.

When the matter was first raised in Committee, it was clear that the Government did not know what would happen following the abolition of the authorities. Subsequently, I wrote to the Minister for Local Government with a series of questions which we hoped would be answered before the conclusion of the Committee stage. Those hopes were dashed, as had been our hopes on many other questions to Ministers during the Committee stage. Clearly, holes and weaknesses remain in the legislative proposals.

On 7 March 1985, in Committee, I returned to the issue and in reply the Minister for Local Government said:

"I shall hold meetings with the London borough leaders who are talking to us before Report, at which time I hope and expect to report to the House on the proposals".—[*Official Report, Standing Committee G*, 7 March 1985, c. 1970.]

We have not yet had any report, and we have had no clarification of the muddle generated as a result of the Government's policies. I very much hope that we shall finally learn from the Government what their intentions are, and what detailed, worked-out, properly considered proposals they have to put to the House in that regard.

We are talking about a system which operates on the basis of a strategic service, and which operates across the metropolitan counties and the GLC. Of course, organisation on this sort of scale has many important advantages, such as the ability to attract expert teams, to promote technological advance, to implement recycling initiatives, to plan proposals for the long term and the ability to monitor and deal with pollution across small administrative boundaries. In addition, there are the economics of scale. Virtually all those important aspects of the present arrangements are placed in jeopardy by proposals to abolish those seven democratically elected authorities. Devolution to district councils working voluntarily together will be fraught with problems. Indeed, that was pointed out in the report commissioned by the metropolitan councils, and prepared by Coopers and Lybrand.

Waste disposal leads to an emotional and emotive response from communities. I refer not only to well-known environmental issues, but to the physical location of facilities, transport arrangements and so on. Many boroughs and districts are simply unable to resolve such difficulties within their boundaries. As a result, we believe that costs to the ratepayer will rise and that possible technological innovation will be stifled. Moreover, environmental conditions are likely to be inferior, and provision for the control, for example, of hazardous waste may be jeopardised.

So far nothing that has been said by the Minister for Local Government, by the Secretary of State for the Environment or by any other Minister with responsibilities in this area has convinced us that the Government have any clear and coherent solution to offer following abolition of the councils. To judge from the Minister's indication across the Dispatch Box a few moments ago, I understand that he is now in a position to answer those questions.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): About time, too.

Dr. Cunningham: My hon. Friend is quite right. The Minister's failure to respond cannot be for want of questions being put to him or for want of opportunities in which to answer.

We have no confidence in the proposals for joint arrangements. As I have said, they are likely to be less effective and less efficient, to cost more than existing arrangements and be likely to deal less satisfactorily with environmental problems and associated difficulties.

I hope—although I do not expect—that the Minister can provide us with some convincing answers. It is not only us but the boroughs, districts and millions of people who will be affected, to whom those answers are long overdue.

The Minister for Local Government (Mr. Kenneth Baker): Before replying to the speech of the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), I should like to comment on a point raised twice in the House yesterday by the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) concerning the delivery of letters in relation to the new financial controls that were agreed by the House yesterday.

In order to avoid accusations of legislation by press release, we went to great pains last Thursday to ensure that

[Mr. Kenneth Baker]

all concerned, and particularly the abolition authorities, were informed of the new controls before they came into effect at midnight. I shall outline the sequence of events. The regional offices have confirmed delivery of the letter, which enclosed a copy of the amendments to the Local Government Bill, and the 3.30 pm press release reporting my written answer, by 3.30 pm at the latest.

As far as the GLC and ILEA are concerned, we have established the following. The Department's messenger has confirmed that he took letters with pink "Priority" labels to Mr. Stonefrost of the GLC and Mr. Stubbs of ILEA, leaving Marsham street at 3.40 pm. He handed the letters to a "young cheerful man with brown hair" in the GLC basement post room—the normal delivery point—at about 4 pm. He then delivered post to Elizabeth house and was logged back into Marsham street at 5 pm. Mr. Stubbs' secretary confirmed by telephone this morning that she has the ILEA letter booked in as having been received on Thursday. Members of the press were called to county hall——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Does this have anything to do with the amendment?

Mr. Baker: Tangentially, yes, Mr. Speaker, in that yesterday I was asked twice about this issue. I suppose that I could have asked to make a statement, but I thought that it would probably be more convenient to clarify the matter in the context of this debate. I do not seek to abuse the procedures of the House—indeed, I am always anxious to help the House in its deliberations—but I believe that when I was asked about this matter yesterday the hon. Member for Newham, North-West was making a frivolous complaint. However, I set in hand inquiries — *[Interruption.]* A question will be answered setting everything out. The hon. Member for Newham, North-West should have known that the GLC—which, like us, gets leaked documents—held a press conference an hour before my press release, and implied that it would have people working all night to try to subvert our intentions.

Mr. Tony Banks *rose*——

Mr. Baker: As we wish to make progress on the amendment, I fear that I would be out of order if I gave way——

Mr. Tony Banks *rose*——

Mr. Baker: —but I give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Speaker: Order. We should get on with the debate on the amendment. However, as the Minister made a mini-statement, I shall allow the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) to intervene.

Mr. Tony Banks: I am grateful to you, Mr. Speaker, and to the Minister. I shall not detain the House for long, as we wish to debate the amendment.

My first point is that I do not make frivolous interventions on such serious matters. Secondly, I am satisfied that the letter was delivered to county hall on Thursday. I am equally satisfied that the director-general's office did not receive it until 9.20 am on Friday. One reason for that was that there was no one in the director-general's office when the letter was delivered, at 5 o'clock, or thereabouts, on the previous Thursday.

The Minister said that the letter was delivered to the director-general's office. It was not. That cheerful young man with brown hair is no doubt an admirable member of the GLC staff, but I should have thought that for such an important communication some other way could have been found of drawing it to the immediate attention of the chief executive of the GLC. Although I accept what the Minister said, he has not exonerated himself——

Mr. Speaker: Order. We should now move on to the amendment.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I shall observe your request, Mr. Speaker, and not make the comments that I was tempted to make about the inefficiency of the GLC post room.

It may help the House if I intervene at this early stage in the debate. I hope that what I have to say will convince the House that the report called for in the amendment is unnecessary and that the amendment should therefore be rejected.

As the House knows, the Government's intention, as reflected in the Bill, is to secure the transfer of waste disposal and regulation functions to the borough and district councils. To facilitate that transfer, successor authorities were asked to submit by the end of last month statements of the arrangements which they proposed for carrying out these functions, and in particular arrangements for co-ordinating action with one another, where appropriate.

I am pleased to note that proposals have been, or are due shortly to be, received from 20 London boroughs, and that, thanks to the co-operation between those authorities, they embody an outline plan for carrying out these functions over the whole of London.

4.30 pm

They envisage the formation of seven groupings of authorities for disposal and other purposes, with arrangements for co-ordinating certain regulatory and other non-operational functions, and the formation of a special unit to deal with hazardous wastes. I met the leaders of these 20 boroughs last week and was very encouraged by their positive and constructive approach to developing proposals for this service in London.

Other authorities in London have not so far seen fit to submit proposals or to take part in the joint discussions which have taken place between authorities. I now hope, however, that they will take a more realistic view of the situation. The Government believe that the functions can be successfully carried out on the basis of the proposals submitted. It is accordingly very much in the interest of the remaining authorities to make up for lost time and participate in the joint planning and discussions now necessary to finalise the arrangements.

No comprehensive proposals have yet been submitted for the metropolitan counties, although six districts have submitted individual statements of what they have in mind. In most of the counties the problems are less complex than in London, and the task of making the necessary arrangements is correspondingly simpler. It is none the less important that planning for the takeover of the new functions should proceed without further delay. To assist this process I am today issuing a guidance document which advises successor authorities further on the types of practical arrangement which may be appropriate, drawing on the experience in London. I am placing copies in the Library later this evening.

In all counties we shall be looking for arrangements which ensure a smooth transition, make optimum use of

existing assets, and relate satisfactorily to the pattern of needs in the areas covered. We will also want authorities to exploit to the full the opportunities for the use of the private sector, including joint public and private financing and management of facilities such as landfill sites and transfer stations.

Since the Committee stage, I have also met representatives of the private sector, and I was immensely encouraged by the particularly positive way in which they are looking at the transfer of functions and exploring ways in which they can help even further. The private sector is very important in this context. It handles about 75 to 80 per cent. of the work done in waste disposal.

The extent to which authorities will need to co-ordinate for operational purposes will depend on the extent to which they are dependent on the same facilities or contracts for treatment or disposal of waste either now or in the immediate future. In the case of regulatory and other non-operational functions, we shall look for some countywide co-ordination to ensure reasonable consistency in the application of standards for licensing waste disposal sites and effectiveness in the enforcement of the current controls. We also regard it as essential that there should be close co-ordination of control over, and services to deal with, hazardous wastes.

I am highly conscious of the importance of maintaining public confidence in the standards of hazardous waste disposal and control. I assure the House that the Government take their responsibilities in this area very seriously indeed. My right hon. Friend made the same point earlier this week in the Government's response to the House of Lords Select Committee on Science and Technology's report on hazardous waste disposal.

We therefore believe that proper arrangements for successor authorities to obtain specialist advice on hazardous waste and on its control must obtain from 1 April next year. These activities need to be fully co-ordinated between authorities and existing centres of specialist staff, facilities and equipment. Especially, computer-based records should be kept intact as far as possible. We take the view that it would make sense to employ the necessary staff in a common unit, probably based in one authority, but making its services available to the whole of London on a repayment basis.

The Government now look to successor authorities to draw up and submit to the Department as soon as possible more detailed proposals which can form the basis for decisions on staffing and for the necessary orders for transfer of assets and liabilities. It will be necessary for proposals to identify specifically to whom the assets and liabilities are to be transferred, and on what conditions. The best arrangements in general will be for transfer to a single authority, with that authority making separate agreements with other authorities involved, but there may be cases where authorities should be parties to contracts jointly and severally. In the cases that I have discussed with London authorities, both of those are possible arrangements.

The Government will not hesitate to use, if need be, the reserve powers under the Bill to secure——

Dr. Cunningham: On the specific question of all the assets going to one authority, is the right hon. Gentleman really suggesting that all the refuse carts in the GLC area should go to one authority?

Mr. Baker: That is not my proposal. As the hon. Gentleman will see, there is a proposal for seven groupings in London. In the meeting that I had with the boroughs last week——

Dr. Cunningham *rose*——

Mr. Baker: May I just explain to the hon. Gentleman? I shall give way in a moment.

There are various possible arrangements. On the assets — which are the transfer depots and the trucks and lorries that will be used—the groupings can decide to handle these collectively as a joint committee, if they so wish. Some have expressed a desire to do that. There is even the possibility — which I shall come to in a moment—of a joint board, which is the upper final solution, as it were. Then there is a joint committee, there are voluntary arrangements, and there are arrangements under which the contracts are continued on a joint and several basis.

The boroughs in London to which I have talked are well advanced in their plans for this. The principle is that the assets, such as incinerators and transfer depots, will be transferred to the boroughs in which they are situated, and the arrangements which the boroughs will come to, in which they will determine how many trucks they will use, can be vested either in one borough or in a group of boroughs collectively, jointly and severally.

The point that I am making all the time is that it is essentially for the boroughs and districts outside the London district councils to talk together and decide which is the best way forward.

What has happened so far is that the Conservative boroughs in London have put their plans on the table and discussed with us fully. The Conservative district councils outside London have done that. The Labour district councils are still taking the line of not wishing to talk to the Government at all. I very much hope that that attitude will change very quickly, because we know informally that many of the district and borough councils are making their own plans and talking to each other on this.

Dr. Cunningham: The right hon. Gentleman keeps using phrases like "we envisage", and "we have an outline plan". He said a few moments ago, "The point that I am making". The point that he is making over and over again is that there are still no clear, definite, agreed proposals in existence. That is what is very clearly coming out of what he is saying.

Mr. Baker: As I have made clear, as regards London the proposals are quite specific. There are seven groupings of boroughs——

Mr. Tony Banks *rose*——

Mr. Baker: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman in a moment. The groupings are set out in the paper on advice and guidance. They are: group 1: Kingston, Merton, Sutton, Croydon and Bromley; group 2: Bexley, Lewisham, Greenwich and Southwark; group 3: Richmond, Hounslow, Hammersmith and Fulham, Hillingdon, Ealing, Harrow and Brent; group 4: Barnet, Camden, Enfield, Haringey, Islington, Hackney and Waltham Forest; group 5: Redbridge, Havering, Newham and Barking; group 6: Westminster, City of London and Tower Hamlets; and group 7: Kensington and Chelsea, Wandsworth and Lambeth.

Mr. Tony Banks *rose*——

Mr. Baker: Will the hon. Gentleman listen to what I am saying? These are the proposals that have derived from our consultations with 20 boroughs—the Conservative boroughs and also the Liberal-controlled borough of Richmond. The hon. Gentleman will know that the Labour boroughs are still not talking to us—or to anybody, as far as I know, including himself. These are the groupings which both ourselves and the London boroughs are convinced will work on an operational basis and with regard to the contacts and operations that go on in waste disposal. I hope that the guidance notes published today, and the proposals, will encourage those London boroughs which have not yet started to talk to begin talks among themselves and with us.

Mr. Tony Banks: May we see the guidance notes, because they are important to the debate? It would be helpful if we could see them within the next 10 minutes. The seven groupings obviously have not been discussed with the Labour-controlled boroughs. Was the proposal made by civil servants, or by the 20 Conservative-controlled boroughs?

Mr. Baker: A series of discussions have taken place between my Department's waste disposal experts and members of the hazardous waste unit and the London boroughs. The pattern for waste disposal in London has been examined at a series of meetings. We know a great deal about waste disposal in London, as do the London boroughs, because their trucks convey most of the waste to the transfer depots.

I hope that discussions and reasonableness will prevail and that voluntary arrangements will be worked out. If that does not happen, I can use reserve powers to establish joint boards either for all the conurbations or for parts of the conurbations. I shall not hesitate to use those reserve powers if necessary to ensure satisfactory arrangements for waste disposal when the Bill takes effect.

I am firmly of the view that no occasion has yet been shown for the exercise of those powers. It should not be necessary to use them if authorities now prepare and submit plans for carrying out their new functions. Many Labour districts outside London are talking, and planning their own waste disposal arrangements. I believe that some Labour-controlled London boroughs are doing the same. It would be better if discussions were more frank and open and if the boroughs talk to neighbouring boroughs in the way that I have suggested.

Mr. John Cartwright (Woolwich): The Minister's statement was a disappointment. Many of us expected a clear, decisive statement on what the Government intend to do about waste disposal. If anything, we are even more muddled now.

The proposals have been discussed with 20 London boroughs, but 12 of the boroughs are not involved in the discussions. All that we have from the Minister is the promise of a guidance document, and, once again, an appeal for talks. He has been appealing to the boroughs to talk on this and other issues for a long time. I think that there is a grave risk that the boroughs will not talk, at least until the Bill is on the statute book. That means that more time will be wasted.

The proposals for the metropolitan counties are even less clear. No overall proposal has been submitted in respect of any of the metropolitan counties.

What happens if the co-operation of the boroughs which are not involved is not forthcoming? The Minister proposes seven groupings, but setting up voluntary groups of London boroughs for providing a variety of services has not been a total success in the past.

The grouping proposed for south-east London is much the same as that which was set up to deal with computer services for south-east London. That eventually broke down as a result of internal pressure from a number of the boroughs. At one time a number of consortia administered trading standards across Greater London, but that eventually broke down as a result of pressure from the boroughs.

The Minister's statement is not convincing and leaves us in doubt. The Minister says, "Don't worry. Trust me. I have powers, and a variety of opportunities are available. If the voluntary arrangements do not work we can use the concept of the lead borough or joint board." The proposals are vague. At what point does the Minister intend to use his reserve powers? When shall we have a clear statement about this important service?

4.45 pm

All the expert evidence and evidence from private waste disposal interests leads us to believe that waste disposal must be an overall responsibility conducted on a county-wide basis. It is far too important a service to be left to the type of cobbled-up arrangements which the Minister is still trailing before the House. On this, as on so many other topics, the Minister is saying, "Don't worry. It will be all right on the night." That is not an appropriate approach to a service as important as waste disposal.

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): I should not have been amazed at the Minister's statement, but I was. He heralded it as if he was about to reveal new schemes, plans, discussions and solutions which would allay all our anxieties and demonstrate that the waste disposal functions now carried out by the GLC and the six metropolitan counties can be carried out adequately by the London boroughs and the metropolitan districts. However, the Minister did not do that.

The statement proved that what we said throughout the proceedings in Committee and what everyone else has been saying is true. The districts and the London boroughs will not be able adequately to take over and run waste disposal functions effectively and efficiently. The fact that the Minister has taken reserve powers shows that the Government do not believe that the districts and boroughs will be able easily to provide an adequate service.

The statement, the proposals and the arrangements in the Bill prove that the function should not be handed to the districts, but that it should be run at a conurbation-wide level. The Minister shakes his head, but the function cannot be operated at district and borough level.

The Minister glibly talks about submissions from the metropolitan areas and claims that it is simple for the districts to get together. Sefton metropolitan district has made a submission which I have read. Its scheme is to start tipping on sites above the level already agreed for tipping by two planning bodies—the Sefton and Merseyside planning authorities. On two of the sites—Sefton and Fell lane—tipping will take place on top of landscaping. Waste mountains will be created instead of holes being filled. No holes are left in Sefton. The arrangements will be difficult in Merseyside because St. Helens has all the

holes and the other districts have all the waste. If I lived in Labour-controlled St. Helens, I should ensure that Sefton, one of the lowest rated authorities in the country, paid handsomely to tip refuse in my area. I would not particularly want Southport's refuse in St. Helens.

One private refuse disposal tip in the Wirral has not functioned properly since it was opened. I am sure that if I were in the Conservative-controlled Wirral, I would not want Conservative-controlled Sefton's refuse coming into my area. There is no agreement on Merseyside. Ron Watson, the leader of Sefton council, has not thrashed it out with Derek Hatton. They are not likely to, even when the Bill is on the statute book, if it gets there.

The whole thing is a hotch-potch. Since Merseyside county council took over waste disposal after local government reorganisation, there has been tremendous pioneering. There has been constructive and creative use of waste; public open spaces have been created; refuse has been tipped in underground caves in other districts, which would not have happened previously; a programme has been set up to manufacture waste into fuel pellets; and civic amenity sites have been established throughout the area. The same has happened in many other metropolitan areas. All that could go by the board when the metropolitan counties are abolished.

As the Minister said, the private sector works in partnership with Merseyside county council, the other metropolitan authorities and the GLC. If the private sector is anything to go by, it is not keen on the abolition of the metropolitan counties or on the Government's proposals for waste disposal. The National Association of Waste Disposal Contractors has said:

"The effectiveness of voluntary joint boards as an alternative regulatory authority for the disposal of waste has not been historically successful, as was demonstrated prior to the 1974 reorganisation."

I could give many other quotes. The Confederation of British Industry said:

"We have considered very carefully the Government's proposals that responsibility for waste regulation and disposal should be transferred to individual Districts and Borough Councils. The overwhelming majority of members consulted were of the view that voluntary co-operation is unlikely to work, and that statutory joint arrangements should be made from the outset."

The lie to the Government's arguments in favour of their abolition proposals is given when we consider waste disposal. Their proposals prove that they are not getting rid of one tier of local government and giving power to a lower tier. They are getting rid of a tier of democratically elected local government and setting up another tier, which is not democratically accountable, to run services such as waste disposal.

In the not-too-distant future I hope to see in Merseyside and elsewhere district heating schemes, with waste incineration providing some of the heat, because we shall not get the Marshall plan grand-scale scheme. That can be planned only on a conurbation basis. This legislation is sacrificing future experiments of that kind. I hope the Government will accept the amendment.

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): We have heard once again from the Minister the hollow answers that we received in Committee. We have made no progress. The substantive matters of concern that were raised about waste disposal, particularly in the metropolitan counties, have been answered in the same way by the Minister. He has heard from a few of the district councils, but he does not know what the rest are doing. He hopes that something is being organised, but he knows little or nothing about it. He says that, if necessary, he will rely on voluntary co-operation.

In my hand I have an exchange of correspondence, which was published yesterday, between the chairman of the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution and the Secretary of State for the Environment about waste disposal within the metropolitan counties and the GLC area. Sir Richard Southwood is obviously as worried as we are about the Government's seeming indifference to the future of waste disposal. Sir Richard tells us that he is concerned, in particular, about the comparison with the Welsh authorities—a topic raised on several occasions in Committee. The Welsh authorities failed abysmally to match the standards operating in the rest of the country. Those points were put to the Minister in Committee and they were put by Sir Richard to the Secretary of State in the exchange of correspondence. Yet, important though they are, there has been no response to them.

Sir Richard pointed out the need to build up professional expertise on waste disposal. He said that the expertise is in relatively short supply and needs husbanding, which the metropolitan counties have done successfully in the past. He said that this is unlikely to happen if waste disposal becomes the responsibility of districts. Yet, once again, the Secretary of State responded with deafening silence and indifference.

Sir Richard pointed to the link between waste disposal, minerals planning and land reclamation—all issues that were raised in Committee and to which there were no answers. Once again this afternoon the Minister refuses to make any comment on those important matters, and in his response to Sir Richard the Secretary of State failed to deal with them.

I could go on at considerable length, because these are important and detailed points, but I appreciate the ridiculous pressure on time today. I must draw the attention of the House to a press release about a speech made by the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment yesterday at a conference in London on waste disposal. He said that in some areas waste disposal is unsatisfactory, that there are many problems and that in some parts of the country waste disposal authorities have taken considerable steps towards a regional approach.

One Minister from the Department of the Environment is saying that we need larger authorities and a regional structure to organise waste disposal. That is the sensible way to do things. If he were sitting behind the Minister for Local Government now, he would be stabbing him in the back. Fortunately for the Minister, he is not here today to give him that kind of treatment.

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): Where is he?

Mr. Lloyd: My hon. Friend asks where he is. Clearly he has been exiled to a waste disposal conference elsewhere because of his damaging comments.

There is schizophrenia within the Department of the Environment. One Minister tells us that we need a regional approach, while another tells us that the best approach is that provided by districts and by the London boroughs. Surely the House is entitled to draw the conclusion that one Minister or the other does not know what he is talking about and, more generally, that the Department has no clear view on the problem of waste disposal.

[Mr. Lloyd]

We have no adequate answers to the waste disposal problem in my area, which has no landfill sites. Perhaps the tip in Stretford, which should have been consigned to history, will be reopened to become a major site for the disposal of waste. That would lead to massive resistance from the residents and cause anxiety and heartache to those who would suffer the consequences.

It is lack of knowledge about what will happen in the future that concerned the Opposition in Committee and concerns us again today. We have not yet received adequate answers and we are unlikely to receive them when the Minister replies to the debate. For those reasons, it is important that the amendment is accepted. Even though the amendment would provide minimum safeguards, it would mean that the Minister would have to take seriously the important problems that will affect communities.

5 pm

Mr. Tony Banks: Despite what the Minister has said, nothing has been finally determined. Therefore, I hope that the House will agree to the amendment. The debate underlines the fact that this is the most ill-thought-out part of the Bill—and that is saying something, given the nature of the Bill as a whole. We should have had this debate in Committee.

The Minister has put forward a series of thoughts about proposals, and that is quite inappropriate on Report. We want to know what the proposed seven groupings are, so that we can determine whether they make any sense geographically. I know that the Labour boroughs have not been involved in any consultation, so neither the Minister nor I know to what extent they would be prepared to go along with their Tory counterparts on any proposals.

Voluntary agreements will not work, as has been shown by historical precedent. Every significant independent study into waste disposal in London has come out against the sort of proposals now being made. Have any of the Tory boroughs argued that current arrangements should continue for two or three years after abolition? In that way, the boroughs could try to grapple with the problems that the Minister is about to give them.

The Minister mentioned lead boroughs and hazardous waste disposal. I think that he accepts that hazardous waste will be a Londonwide strategic matter. What will happen about site licensing, waste planning and research and development? All those matters have been identified as Londonwide strategic problems. Will the lead borough proposals be applied in those areas also?

Has the Minister yet been able to identify any savings? It was generally conceded in Committee that there would not be any savings of either staff or money. During the period of discussion between publication of the Bill and today, the Government have suggested 11 different forms of co-operation that they would be prepared to accept. Is the Minister prepared to accept a whole series of different proposals—for example, statutory groupings existing alongside voluntary groupings or individual boroughs going it alone if they so wish? We do not believe that an effective voluntary arrangement can be agreed by April 1986. Is the Minister thinking about what will happen after 1 April 1986 if he cannot achieve some voluntary agreement?

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I wish to add to the list of questions that we hope the Minister will answer. It is obvious that his proposals are only barely off the drawing board, yet we were led to expect a Government announcement of a plan.

When the Minister produced the analysis of responses to "Streamlining the Cities", he said that 15 of the London boroughs were in favour of the proposal that waste disposal and regulation should be transferred to the London boroughs and metropolitan districts. Was that a dishonest statement? If it was not, have those boroughs now changed their minds? It is clear that they do not now hold the view that they either can or are willing to cope with his proposals.

The Minister refuses to accept that there can be Londonwide arrangements. He has put forward a half idea for another form of grouping. This time it is not a joint board or a collection of joint committees but a wider grouping—just the sort of thing that we thought the Government did not want. The Minister should come clean about this.

The Minister told Tory leaders and my colleague Mr. David Williams, the leader of Richmond council, that he was unwilling to set up a joint board because it would be politically unacceptable. The leader of Croydon, who is also chairman of the LBA, wanted a joint committee as he thought joint boards would be politically dangerous for the Conservative party and would cause dissatisfaction among the Tory boroughs. That is what the Minister was told at the meeting that he hastily convened last week.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Hastily?

Mr. Hughes: Yes. It is ludicrous that proposals about such substantive and important matters should be decided on political considerations and not on objective local service considerations.

What will be the cost in penalties of breaking the three, four, five and 10-year GLC contracts? Surely it is better that the present arrangements should continue. The Minister should admit that he was wrong to say that the boroughs could take control. He should return to the current arrangements, which are working well and of which the GLC and the metropolitan counties can justifiably be proud.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: With the leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I shall reply to the debate.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) asked me to bring forward a Government plan. He is a member of a party with a great tradition of being against authority and centralisation, yet he urges the Government to lay upon boroughs and districts the exact details of how they should carry out certain functions. Such a plan would require a great deal more detail than rate capping. It sits ill with what I believe to be the hon. Gentleman's basic instincts—which are localist and a belief in placing more responsibility with local authorities—for him to suggest such a plan. I think that, on reflection, he would not wish to stand by the idea of Government telling districts and boroughs exactly how to handle waste disposal.

It is true that the leader of the Liberal council in Richmond came to see me with Conservative borough leaders. He said that that did not mean that he supported the Bill, but that he thought it sensible and wise to discuss the future. I applaud him for that. I only wish other

borough leaders would accept the fact that this Bill will reach the statute book within the next two or three months —as last night's vote demonstrated to those who have any doubts that the Government are determined to take the Bill through. Therefore, it would be sensible for those who will have functions and responsibilities devolved upon them on 1 April 1986 to get together and plan sensibly. That is what I am asking the boroughs and districts to do.

There is the fallback position of a joint board—either a collective board or individual boards. However, joint boards mean precepts and GREA expenditure would have to be allocated to them. When many of the boroughs and districts realise that, I am sure that they will prefer to operate with a joint committee. I believe that that will work effectively.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) asked me about some of the other functions. In the case of regulatory and other non-operational functions, we shall look for some countywide co-ordination to ensure reasonable consistency in the application of standards for licensing waste disposal sites and effectiveness in the enforcement of current controls.

The hon. Gentleman asked whether statutory groupings could work alongside voluntary groupings. If that position emerges in London, and if some areas want statutory groupings—for example, joint boards—I shall use the powers under clause 9. That does not mean that there will have to be a joint board for each area of London.

The hon. Gentleman's question about the boroughs was raised at the meeting that I had with them at which one or two said that they would be prepared to operate alone. Before agreeing to that, I must consider the impact that that would have on neighbouring boroughs as we have to take into account the availability of landfill sites and incinerators.

Those who have influence in the councils that are to be abolished, such as the hon. Member for Newham, North-West—the chairman-elect of the GLC—should be aware that I hope that there will be co-operation and discussion. Many discussions are already taking place informally and many Labour-controlled councils are planning for the inevitable—the end of the metropolitan councils and the GLC.

Dr. Cunningham: With the leave of the House. This all too brief debate has exposed yet again the fact that the Government have no definite proposals to put to the House. The Minister's opening speech was as abstract and convoluted as the design on his tie. He told us nothing that we were not told weeks ago in Committee. He had nothing new to tell us today, and it is clear that there are no new agreements on arrangements for the metropolitan counties or for London.

The Minister said that the Bill will reach the statute book. All the signs are that, if it does, it will still have no firm and properly worked out proposals for waste disposal in major conurbations and London. As he mentioned groupings, I can tell him that one of those which he mentioned — that which includes Liberal-controlled Richmond and several Tory boroughs—is already rent with divisions. I understand that the Tory borough of Ealing—a wholehearted supporter of abolition—believes that the transfer of waste disposal services to the successor authorities should take place without detriment to existing standards of service and that the most effective means of ensuring that is to maintain existing arrangements intact. Why is it calling for abolition?

The Minister was kind enough to give me, at short notice, a document that he has issued today. It contains revealing statements such as:

> "The nature and degree of co-ordination needed will hinge on the degree of dependence involved."

I wonder what that is supposed to mean.

Under the heading "Main Criteria," the document says:

> "The essential starting point is that all waste disposal functions can and should be carried out by borough and district councils."

That is clearly not the case. It has been demonstrated that they cannot carry out those functions on the basis of borough and district boundaries. That is the nexus of the Government's difficulties in this matter.

Because of lack of time and the need to press on to other important matters, such as the Inner London education authority, we shall not call for a Division on this amendment, but the debate has demonstrated that the Government's proposals on refuse are rubbish.

Amendment negatived.

Schedule 8

Miscellaneous Functions

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Giles Shaw): I beg to move amendment No. 49, in page 122, line 26, leave out paragraph 4 and insert—

> '4.—(1) In sections 17 and 18 of the Cinemas Act 1985 for the words "the Greater London Council" and "the Council", wherever they occur, there shall be substituted respectively the words "a local authority in Greater London" and "the authority".
>
> (2) In section 21(1) of that Act, in the definition of "local authority", for the words "the Greater London Council" there shall be substituted the words "a London borough council, the Common Council of the City of London".'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): With this it will be convenient to take Government amendments Nos. 50 and 60.

5.15 pm

Mr. Shaw: These are purely technical amendments. Amendment No. 49 is made in consequence of the recent enactment of the Cinemas Act 1985.

Amendments Nos. 50 and 60 concern section 12 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933, which deals with the safety of children at certain entertainments. They provide that responsibility for enforcing the requirements in respect of buildings licensed as cinemas or theatres or for music and dancing will pass from the GLC to the London borough council or the Common Council of the City of London as the case may be.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment made: No. 50, in page 122, line 41, at end insert—

> *'Children's entertainments*
>
> 4A. In section 12(5)*(a)* of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 for the words from "licensed by" where they first occur to "the Greater London Council" there shall be substituted the words "licensed by a local authority" and for the words "the council of the county or county borough in which the building is situated" there shall be substituted the words "that local authority".'.—*[Mr. Giles Shaw.]*

Clause 17

THE INNER LONDON EDUCATION AUTHORITY

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): I beg to move amendment No. 83, in page 13, line 3, at end insert

'and such enactments shall have effect subject to the provisions of Section 82 and sub-sections (7), (8) and (9) below.

(7) *(a)* In the principal Act, after section 141(2) there shall be inserted—

"(3) For the purposes of this section, the Inner London Education Area shall be deemed to be a county and the Inner London Education Authority shall be deemed to be the council of that county."

(b) The Inner London Education Authority shall be treated as a local authority for the purposes of sections 132, 136, 137, 138, 142, 144 and 222 of the principal Act.

(8) *(a)* In section 31 of the London Council Council (General Powers) Act 1921, references to the Council shall be construed as references to the Inner London Education Authority.

(b) The Inner London Education Authority shall be treated as a local authority for the purposes of section 32 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976.

(c) in section 20(6) of the Value Added Tax Act 1983, after the words "Isles of Scilly" there shall be inserted the words "the Inner London Education Authority".

(9) For the purposes of facilitating the proper performance of the functions conferred on the Authority by section 44 of this Act and for that purpose only—

(a) references to the Council in paragraphs 16 and 17 of Schedule 2 to the London Government Act 1963 shall be construed as references to the Authority;

(b) the Authority shall be deemed to be a local authority within the meaning of section 25 of the Public Libraries and Museumns Act 1964;

(c) the Authority shall be deemed to be a local authority to whom the order confirmed by the Ministry of Housing and Local Government Provisional Order (Greater London Parks and Open Spaces) Act 1967 applies;

(d) the Authority shall be deemed to be a local authority to whom section 15 of the Open Spaces Act 1906 applies.'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following amendments: No. 9, in clause 20, page 15, line 1, leave out from 'agree' to end of line 2.

No. 10, in page 15, line 6, at end insert

'but no such guidance shall have the effect of requiring the authority to change policies which it has itself determined, unless such policies are in breach of any later legislative requirement.'.

No. 11, in page 15, line 9, leave out from 'request' to end of line 10.

No. 12, in clause 21, page 15, leave out line 18 and insert—

'(1) Subject to subsection (7) below, the Secretary of State may before 31st March 1991,'.

No. 13, in page 16, line 6, at end insert—

'(7) No review shall be held under this section unless each House of Parliament agrees that the review is necessary'.

Mr. Straw: Amendment No. 83 provides that the Inner London education authority be treated as an ordinary local authority. The other amendments in the group are designed to constrain the Secretary of State's powers in the Bill to order a review of the operation of ILEA and to effect changes in 1991.

In theory, the Bill sets up an autonomous free-standing education authority for inner London. In practice, however, it will lack the powers necessary to function effectively. The Bill applies to ILEA all the powers and responsibilities in the Education Acts, but, because it is also a local authority, the Government have recognised that the new ILEA must have powers additional to its education responsibilities. Clause 82 and schedule 14 amend existing local government legislation to provide ILEA with some of those general powers.

The problem is that the range of powers that has been given to ILEA is incomplete. That flows from the haste with which the Bill has been drafted and perhaps the Government's intention to constrain ILEA's non-statutory educational functions, especially in regard to adult, youth and community education, for which it has always had to use the wider powers available to the GLC as the umbrella authority.

I should like to list the powers with which we believe that ILEA should be provided. I hope that the Minister will accept my comments in the spirit in which they are intended. We believe that there is a genuine problem which the Department has perhaps not fully anticipated. That happens with complicated legislation. If the Minister is not able to agree to our amendments, I hope that he will say that he is willing to take the matter away and have it raised in another place.

The powers that we believe ILEA should have are available to every education authority. We are not asking for anything extra. Section 141 of the Local Government Act 1972 gives authorities the power to conduct research and collect information. ILEA has power to carry out educational research under the Education Acts, but many education problems can be illustrated only by wider social research, for example, which seems to be constrained by the powers presently available.

Section 132 of the same Act enables local authorities to provide accommodation for public meetings. At the moment, ILEA will be empowered to provide accommodation in schools only.

Section 136 of the 1972 Act provides for the joint funding by local authorities of overlapping functions. It is of considerable importance to ILEA, especially in regard to social services provisions for the under-fives and children with special needs. ILEA has always been in special circumstances in that, unlike any other local authority in the country, it does not also provide social services in its area. There is an important overlap of service provision, especially for children under five, where the social services department provides day care and ILEA provides nursery education, and a desire, shared by the Government and the authorities, to make joint provision, to ensure effective delivery and to prevent a waste of resources. That power is needed.

Every authority in the country has the power under section 137 to raise up to a 2p rate to provide for services which it considers necessary in its area. That power will no doubt be further constrained by general legislation but, whatever the overall constraints, it should be available to ILEA. At present it uses that power for entirely legitimate community purposes — for example, to let education premises to non-education users, such as community groups.

I think that there must have been an omission regarding section 138. It gives a local authority power to take such action as it thinks fit in the event of a disaster or emergency. It would seem essential for a large local authority with more than 1,000 public buildings to have such a power. That cannot be in dispute, but it seems to have been overlooked when the Bill was drafted.

Section 142 provides a power which enables a local authority to publish information. That power and the

power provided in section 137 are the subject of the Widdicombe inquiry, which will no doubt make recommendations. Hon. Members will accept that, whatever final conclusion is reached by the inquiry and approved by Parliament, it should be applied in an even-handed way to all local authorities. Some of the use that ILEA has made of section 142 has been controversial between parties, and has been tested in the courts. However, a large part of its exercise of the power has been entirely non-controversial—for example, the publication of consultation documents about its budget. I hope that the Minister believes that ILEA should continue to have that power to publish information about its operations.

Section 144 provides the power to encourage visitors, and to provide conference and other facilities. The existing ILEA makes use of this power to let its colleges for conferences and thus to generate income and offset charges that would otherwise fall on ratepayers. I cannot believe that the Government are opposed to that sort of operation, which provides a return which is of benefit to ratepayers. I hope that the Minister will say something about that.

Section 222 gives local authorities power to prosecute or defend legal proceedings and to make representations at a public inquiry. I am unclear why that should not be available.

Section 31 of the London County Council (General Powers) Act 1921 is necessary to transfer to the authority the power to make payment to employees, former employees and their dependants in the event of the abolition of the GLC. Why has that not been included?

Section 32 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 enables ILEA to maintain premises outside ILEA boundaries. These include special boarding schools, a county boarding school, rural and residential centres, school sports centres, a mountain centre and field study centres. Other education authorities maintain such premises within their areas, but our advice is that they do so under the powers available to their parent authorities. Our advice is that ILEA would lack such powers.

Section 20(6) of the Value Added Tax Act 1983 does not apply to ILEA. Therefore, it would appear that the new ILEA would not gain exemption from VAT. There are also problems about powers relating to transfers of parks and museums.

Everyone accepts that almost all the powers to which I have referred should be available to an education authority. It is not a matter of controversy. I hope that the Minister will take on board what I have said, and give the House and the other place a detailed reply about each power.

The other amendments relate to the power within the Bill to require a review of the exercise of ILEA's function at any time before 1991, and, if a review does not take place before 1991, to make it mandatory in 1991. We discussed the matter at length in Committee, and there is no need for me to rehearse the arguments. It is extraordinary that after lengthy consideration the Government, having for once listened to what people have to say, decided that the single-purpose ILEA should be maintained and, having therefore accepted the worth of ILEA, should now say, "All that being so, we shall still point a pistol at ILEA for a further six years in case we disagree with how it operates."

The Government claim to be a Government of good managers, but that is not the way to manage. The children who are served by ILEA are what matter. The quality of service with which they are provided is bound to be adversely affected if the people who run the service are constantly facing uncertainty about the future of the organisation. They have already faced such uncertainty for many years.

Our amendments aim to provide that the review clause can be triggered only by an affirmative resolution of the House. If there is a good case for a review, it is reasonable that the House should accept it, and no doubt it will. That is the least that the Government should accept before triggering such a review and all the uncertainty following from it.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg (Hampstead and Highgate): The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) was in his most beguiling and treacherous mood, reminiscent of the days when he led the National Union of Students. One learns to read behind his gentle words. Only he could have said that in a non-political sense the Inner London education authority's consultative document on the budget was non-political. Anyone who looked at it would know that it was one of the many reasons why this provision, which permits expenditure on information, has been heavily criticised by people of all political persuasions. We should not listen too much to what he said on that point.

I shall confine my remarks to amendment No. 83. I am not sure whether my right hon. Friends have drawn the regulations that will cover the new ILEA sufficiently tightly. We have agreed that ILEA is to be a new directly elected body for the first time. When my hon. Friend replies to the debate, will he assure us that it will not be able to set up a police committee, a transport committee or a housing committee? Despite what the hon. Member for Blackburn said, it is not a normal education authority. Normal education authorities are committees of a major authority. That has always been the weakness of ILEA. As I said to the House yesterday, it was an afterthought of the Herbert commission. Herbert said that education should go to the boroughs, but Parliament decided otherwise. I do not criticise it for that. The decision put ILEA into an anomalous position. For example, the Greater London council could not decide the budgets that ILEA wanted; it always had to accept the precept.

5.30 pm

Now there is a separate body, and I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister can assure us that there will be no repetition of the appalling waste of educational money on matters that have nothing to do with education. I wish that parents would get the message by examining the facts instead of some of the half-baked stories that come from county hall. Although the cost of educating pupils in ILEA's primary and secondary schools is higher than in most of its peer authorities, such as Bradford, Manchester and Liverpool, its results are worse because it will not concentrate on what I understood an education authority was for—the education of children. The authority is involved in areas which will not stand children in good stead when they want employment. Sometimes they are taught nonsense. Most parents who think about these matters—I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will endorse this view—would much rather that teachers spent the full amount of educational money, instead of much of it being diverted to other purposes. That is the assurance that I want from my hon. Friend.

Mr. Alfred Dubs (Battersea): I wish to set the clause and the amendments in context, but before I do so I should say a word about the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg). He is not well known for his liking of education in London, and he has attacked ILEA and ILEA schools for as long as I have known him. He does the cause of education a disservice by constantly sniping at educational provision in London. He would do well to remember that many of his constituents send their children to ILEA schools, are pleased with those schools, and will not thank him for trying to knock the standard of education provision in his constituency and in London as a whole.

Since the 1979 general election the Government have pursued a vendetta against the Inner London education authority, and this clause is a further stage in the vendetta. Soon after the 1979 election, Tory-controlled Wandsworth council put forward a plan to break up ILEA and to give educational authority to the boroughs. The Minister for Local Government produced a report in support of the proposal. He was a Back-Bench Member at the time, and the report was his bid for ministerial office. Now that he is on the Front Bench, why does he not drop the idea? He knows that it is nonsense. Is he continuing with it simply to justify the report that he wrote some years ago?

What stopped the Government at the time was the enormous wave of public opinion in support of retaining the Inner London education authority. The public said, "We want ever-improved education for our children, but we do not want the complete dismemberment of the authority." The Government drew back. Then came the idea of a joint board as part of the package of proposals which we are now discussing. Again the public said, "No, we want an elected education authority for London." The Government gave way to the force of public opinion, and, at that point, many Londoners believed that they had won the day. Then we heard about the details of the Bill. There will be an elected ILEA, but the Government are taking powers to keep the authority under tight financial control. Moreover, there is a threat to the future of the authority in the form of a review. The Government are taking powers to abolish ILEA, if necessary, or to remove many of its functions.

The Opposition believe that to be unnecessary. The Government can introduce legislation at any time to change local government and to abolish the authority if they so wish. In this case, the Government are practising a dishonest subterfuge. By slipping the powers into this legislation, the Government can say, "Of course, it will not happen for the moment and everything will be fine." However, in future, they can say, "But the House has passed the Bill and given us full authority to dismantle ILEA. All that we need is a one-and-a-half hour debate late at night." That is dishonest, and the Government have not made out a case for such an approach.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Bob Dunn): The hon. Gentleman assumes that the review would have only one result. What would happen if the review discovered that, by 1991, the authority was behaving sensibly and was worthy of being continued?

Mr. Dubs: There are two answers to that. First, the Government do not need statutory powers to carry out a review of a local authority. They could conduct such a review at any time without seeking legislative backing. Secondly, we know what is in the Government's mind. I repeat that there has been a vendetta against ILEA, and the clause is a further stage in that vendetta. If that is not so, why does the Minister not accept the amendments and drop his powers to dismantle or dismember the authority? He could say that if the Government wish to do so in future they could introduce legislation, as they normally would with such major issues, but the Government do not want to do that. The Minister is being dishonest in seeking to take powers now to dismantle or dismember a major education authority by statutory instrument.

I share the view of my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) about limiting the effectiveness of ILEA through a sloppy piece of drafting or through malevolence — I am not sure which it is. My hon. Friend made a good case for saying that ILEA must have the same powers as other local authorities if it is to function properly.

Constant politicking by the Government against ILEA has added to uncertainty. It is bad for the morale of those who work in education, and of parents who want the best possible education for their children. Of course, we all believe that ILEA could do better — so could all education authorities — but I believe that it is doing a pretty good job. I want it to be given the opportunity to get on with the job of serving the children, young adults and adults of London. The Government should leave ILEA alone, drop their silly proposals, and allow ILEA to do its job as it wishes without Government interference.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I support the amendment moved by the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), but I shall address my remarks to amendments Nos. 9, 10 and 11, which relate to clause 20 and consultation. Hon. Members will know that the clause proposes that the Inner London education authority should consult on its main policy objectives. The bodies with which it must consult are the Common Council of the City of London and the boroughs of inner London. We have tabled the amendments because implicit in the Government's proposals is a substantial risk, which would not apply to any other education authority in Britain, that the Secretary of State could intervene or that agencies other than those responsible for education could have a say in, and be able to determine, the policy of the education authority of inner London.

You will know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that ILEA has been developing, and now has, the most widespread and comprehensive consultation of any education authority. Each year, it consults parents and their representatives, governing bodies, and many groups that are interested in and directly concerned with education in London, not least teachers and others employed by the service. The result of that consultation is that, each year, the public can judge the priorities for the development of the largest education authority in Europe.

We do not want the Secretary of State to hold for himself the reserve power set out at the end of subsection (4), that he may direct the form of consultation, or the power at the end of subsection (5), that he may direct the matters on which there may be consultation. Most important, far and away the greatest threat is the power given to the Secretary of State, who by issuing guidance to which ILEA will be obliged to have regard, will be able to determine and overrule the policy objectives determined by ILEA. Our amendment would add that no guidance

which the Secretary of State issues, and none of his powers, should require the authority to change the educational policies which it has been set up to determine, which it has elected members to determine, and which it should have exclusive power to determine.

This part of the legislation manifests the Government's willingness at all stages to concentrate power in themselves and allow their Ministers to intervene when they wish. We must resist this, and we must allow those who are directly elected to run the education service and be able to make the decisions on what the policy for education should be.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: This is different from waste disposal.

Mr. Hughes: It is not different at all. The Government should never have made these decisions without putting the propositions out to a proper, independent, public inquiry in the first place. If they had done that, they would have realised that education is too precious a plant to be subject to a directive of a centralising Secretary of State.

Mr. Dunn: It may be helpful if I intervene now and attempt to answer some of the points made by Labour Members.

Our purpose in this legislation is to allow ILEA to continue to be maintained as a single purpose education authority. The major change is that it will be a directly-elected authority, and members will be constituted by direct elections. I am glad that there is some agreement among hon. Members on both sides of the House that ILEA is there to serve the interests of the children, and that is of paramount and prime importance.

The hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs) was somewhat militant. We have no vendetta against ILEA. On a number of occasions we have welcomed some of the pioneering work that it has undertaken. However, we cannot and will not be indifferent to some of the perversities that are taking place in the name of education in inner London, on matters that are not educational and can only be against the interests of children in inner London.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): My hon. Friend says that he does not have a vendetta against ILEA, but it would appear that ILEA has a vendetta against children and the people who provide good money. Does my hon. Friend realise that ILEA spends £5 on every child, compared with £3 spent by the other metropolitan districts, and that for every 10 children who get A-level passes in the metropolitan districts, fewer than seven get them in ILEA? Is not ILEA a scandal and a disgrace?

Mr. Dunn: I welcome my hon. Friend's extremely low-profile intervention. I have all the statistics of all the local education authorities by my bed so that every night I can content myself with a perusal of them in order that I may know those which are good, those which are better and those which are downright bad.

5.45 pm

I welcome the speech of the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) in his first debate on education matters as a Front Bench spokesman. He listed a number of measures of which ILEA believes that it will not be able to take advantage under the constraints of the legislation. I understand that ILEA has alleged that the absence of the powers with which amendment No. 83 deals represents a serious deficiency in the Bill, because it would prevent the new ILEA from working as a full education authority if abolition goes ahead.

I should like to put the minds of both the House and ILEA at rest on two points. First, abolition will go ahead. Secondly, the absence of the powers in the amendment is not a serious deficiency, but the result of a reasoned assessment of the powers that will be appropriate to the new, single-purpose education authority.

We have deliberately not given the new ILEA the general powers covered in the amendment. Those general powers are appropriate to a general purpose local authority acting on behalf of the inhabitants of its area. They will continue and will be available for the lower tier authorities, the London boroughs. There is demonstrably no need for the new ILEA to have those powers for the same area.

Mr. Straw: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that at present many councils use these general powers for education purposes, and that therefore ILEA will be the only education authority that will not have those powers available for education purposes?

Mr. Dunn: As the hon. Gentleman knows, had we had time for this debate in Committee, I would have responded to the specific section headings that he again listed today. I shall address myself to the sections of the Local Government Act 1972 that would be extended to ILEA by the amendment. They are as follows: section 141, the power to undertake research; section 132, the power to provide accommodation for public meetings; section 136, the power to arrange joint funding of concurrent functions; section 137, the 2p rate provision; section 138, the power to deal with emergencies; and one or two others. In the available time, I shall try to deal with them in that order.

If the amendment were accepted, the power to undertake research would be too widely drafted to be appropriate to a single purpose authority. The new ILEA will have adequate powers to conduct research related to its education functions under section 82 of the Education Act 1944.

Section 132—the power to provide accommodation for public meetings—applies to any kind of public meeting and is too wide for the new ILEA. However, the new authority will have power, under section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972, to provide accommodation for meetings that are incidental and related to its functions.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: Will my hon. Friend confirm that, at election time, the new ILEA will be in a position, under section 111, to allow rooms to be used for public meetings?

Mr. Dunn: I am sure that that provision is maintained; but if there is any doubt, I shall make the matter clear to my hon. Friend.

Section 136 concerns the power relating to joint funding of concurrent functions. ILEA seems to think that without section 136 it will not be able to fund joint initiatives. However, section 136 is concerned only with concurrent functions—that is, where two authorities have the same function in the same area. An example is grants to voluntary bodies. ILEA, because it is a single-purpose authority, does not have functions which are concurrent with those of any other authority. Section 136 is therefore

[Mr. Dunn]

irrelevant to it. However, any joint initiatives and the joint funding of them are covered by section 101, which is being applied to the new ILEA.

As regards section 137 of the 1972 Act—the 2p rate provision — the Government have concluded that it would not be appropriate for the new education authority to have this wide power. It is suitable only for a general purpose authority acting on behalf of all the inhabitants in its area. That power will continue to be available to the London boroughs.

The hon. Member for Blackburn referred to the London County Council (General Powers) Act 1921. Amendment No. 83 would extend to the new ILEA the power in section 31 of that Act, to pay staff enhanced compensation for premature retirement in the interests of organisational efficiency. The 1921 Act is a local Act. In accordance with the precedents of the 1963 and 1972 Acts, the Government have not generally sought to amend local Acts on the face of the Bill. Appropriate amendments to local Acts will be made by order.

I cannot today give the House an assurance that we shall make an order to amend section 31 of the 1921 Act in the way proposed. However, I should be glad to consider detailed representations from ILEA about its successor's need for this power.

I appreciate the concern that has been expressed today and in Committee that the new ILEA should be exempted from the requirement to pay VAT on its non-business activities. That point was raised eloquently in Committee by the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley), to whom my right hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government subsequently wrote on 19 March.

As my right hon. Friend made clear in that letter, no amendment is necessary. The new ILEA—indeed, all the new authorities and residuary bodies — will be exempted from VAT by an order made by Treasury ministers under section 20 of the 1983 Act. That is a well accepted mechanism for extending VAT exemption to appropriate new bodies. I hope that the House will agree that that is the right course on this occasion.

A number of points were made by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes). Amendment No. 10 is based on a misunderstanding of clause 20(5). There can be no suggestion—indeed, I am sure that no hon. Member would entertain such a suggestion—that my right hon. Friend's guidance could have the effect of requiring the authority to change its policies. There is no power in the clause enabling my right hon. Friend to use his guidance to bring about that end.

The guidance will seek to help the authority and the councils by explaining what might be regarded as main policy objectives, should they be in doubt on that score. It will be no more than guidance, and the duty placed on them is no more than to have regard to it. I hope that that short, brief, terse, honest and robust explanation will satisfy the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey, who is not always easily satisfied.

I have attempted in the time available to answer all the points that have been made. I reiterate that the power of review, to come into force by 1991, is right. I must tell the hon. Member for Battersea in all sincerity that whoever controls ILEA following elections must take account of the needs of the children and behave sensibly to avoid being taken the type of route which he particularly dreads. It is, therefore, essential for Parliament to approve the provisions which will lead to review.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): In a recent speech at Newcastle the Prime Minister attributed virtually all the wrongs in Britain to people setting a bad example. The parents and teachers whom I represent, like parents and teachers throughout inner London, would consider that this House was setting an appalling example were they to hear this pathetic half hour's alleged debate which will determine the future of ILEA into the 1990s if this perverse bit of legislation become law.

Whatever the burblings of the Under-Secretary, since 1979 the Conservatives have pursued a vendetta against ILEA and everything that it has attempted to do to raise education standards in inner London. If Conservative Members do not think that it has been a vendetta, I assure them that parents in my constituency who are concerned about their children's education have told me that they would not like to live through a vendetta if this has been friendly treatment.

Since the Conservatives took office, they have taken money away from the ILEA and derided every effort that it has made to improve education standards. When the present Minister of State represented a London seat, he was cajoled into producing what I can only describe as the snide and nasty little Baker report in an effort to damage ILEA so that he could crawl on to the Government Front Bench, having stamped on the faces of the children whom he was supposed to represent.

Following that, the Government ordered a special inquiry to be made by the inspectors of education, who gave ILEA a clean bill of health. There was some more shuffling around, that was followed by another threat to the future of ILEA, and now we are faced with the threat all over again.

The Secretary of State, surprisingly, did the sensible thing and said that he would maintain a unitary authority, but instead of sticking by what people thought he had decided, he is now insisting that he should be able constantly to hover in the background, like the spectre that he is, threatening the future of the education authority with the passage of every day of every year.

The people of inner London are sick to death of their education authority being turned upside down, being threatened and being deprived of money so that it cannot do the job which the people want it to do, and provide a better education service for their children. The Government are depriving the children of inner London of a decent service and are posing a massive threat to ILEA.

Mr. Straw: The figures of the Department of Education and Science show that, adjusting for social composition and class, ILEA's examinations record is better than that of the Wirral, Ely, Surrey and 41 other education authorities. We are dissatisfied with the Under-Secretary's reply and will divide the House.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 164, Noes 305.

Division No. 171] **[8 pm**

AYES

Abse, Leo	Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*	Ashton, Joe
Alton, David	Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Anderson, Donald	Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Archer, Rt Hon Peter	Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*

Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Tony
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'rmline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carlile, Alexander *(Mont'g'y)*
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Cartwright, John
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Concannon, Rt Hon J. D.
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Cowans, Harry
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Ellis, Raymond
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
Garrett, W. E.
Godman, Dr Norman
Gould, Bryan
Hamilton, W. W. *(Central Fife)*
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr. Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
John, Brynmor
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
Mackenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Park, George
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Prescott, John
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, M.
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ryman, John
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'kl'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Straw, Jack
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wainwright, R.
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. James Hamilton and
Mr. Ray Powell.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Ames, David
Ancram, Michael
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bigg-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Hon Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(N Luton)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, E. *(B'y St Edm'ds)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(SW N'folk)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayhoe, Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(W Herts)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Gregory *(Derby N)*
Knight, Mrs Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*

Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Richard
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
McCusker, Harold
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marlow, Antony
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Moate, Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moore, John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parris, Matthew
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Powell, Rt Hon J. E. *(S Down)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spence, John
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(N Hertf'dshire)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, J.
Sumberg, David
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Carol Mather and
Mr. Robert Boscawen.

Question accordingly negatived.

6.12 pm

It being after Six o'clock, MR. SPEAKER *proceeded, pursuant to Order [11 February] and the Resolutions yesterday, to put forthwith the Questions necessary for the disposal of the business to be concluded at that hour.*

Clause 18

ELECTIONS

Amendment made: No. 8, in page 13, line 27, leave out from '1983' to '; and' in line 28. — *[Mr. Kenneth Baker.]*

Schedule 9

INNER LONDON EDUCATION AUTHORITY: ELECTIONS AND ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

Amendments made: No. 51, in page 131, line 36, leave out 'After section 36' and insert—

'in section 36—

(a) after subsection (3A) there shall be inserted—

"(3AA) Where the poll at an ordinary election of members of the Inner London Education Authority for an electoral division, or an election to fill a casual vacancy occurring in the office of member of that Authority for an electoral division, is to be held on the same date as the poll at an ordinary election of councillors for any ward of a London borough which is wholly included in that electoral division, or an election to fill a casual vacancy occurring in the office of councillor for such a ward, the polls at those elections shall be taken together."; and

(b) after subsection'.

No. 52, in page 132, line 35, leave out paragraph 2. —*[Mr. Kenneth Baker.]*

Clause 22

PRELIMINARY

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): I beg to move amendment No. 84, in page 16, line 10, at beginning insert—

'(1) Subject to the provisions of subsection (2) below,'.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following amendments:

No. 85, in page 16, line 15, at end insert—

'(2) The provisions of this section and of sections 23, 24, 25 and 26 of this Act shall not have effect until the Secretary of State for the Home Department has reported to Parliament on the arrangements he proposes to ensure that the police, fire and civil emergency planning functions in each metropolitan county or Greater London as the case may be are discharged no less economically, efficiently and effectively under the provisions of this Part of this Act.'.

No. 86, in clause 23, page 16, line 16, after '(1)', insert 'Subject to the provisions of subsection (2) of Section 22,'

No. 87, in clause 24, page 17, line 3, after '(1)', insert 'Subject to the provisions of subsection (2) of Section 22,'

No. 88, in clause 25, page 17, line 41, after '(1)', insert 'Subject to the provisions of subsection (2) of Section 22,'

No. 89, in clause 26, page 18, line 9, after '(1)', insert 'Subject to the provisions of subsection (2) of Section 22,'.

No. 90, in clause 41, page 25, line 4, after '(1)', insert 'subject to the provisions of subsection (2A) below,'.

No. 117, in clause 41, page 25, line 6, leave out paragraph *(a)*.

No. 91, in clause 41, page 25, line 24, after '(2)', insert 'subject to the provisions of subsection (2A) below,'.

No. 118, in clause 41, page 25, line 25, leave out paragraph *(a)*.

Government amendment No. 17 and the amendments thereto: (a), to leave out "police."

(c), at end, add—

'(4) No order under this section shall alter the boundaries of a Metropolitan Police Force unless H.M. Chief Inspector of Constabulary has recommended that such a change be made; and the Chief Constables, Police Authorities and Police Federations of the forces affected have been given an opportunity to comment.'.

No. 92, in clause 41, page 25, line 42, at end insert—

'(2A) No order shall be made under subsections (1) and (2) of this section until the Secretary of State has laid before Parliament a report, including an independent assessment, of the arrangements to be made, following the making of such an order, to ensure the more effective discharge of the functions that would otherwise continue to be exercisable by a joint authority constituted by this Part of this Act.'.

Mr. Soley: We seek to make the Government lay a report before Parliament to ensure that the police, fire and emergency services are efficiently run before the changes are brought about. We have debated this matter in Committee because the Opposition, and many people outside the House, are far from satisfied that the Government have given sufficient thought to the problems that they are creating in the metropolitan counties and for fire and emergency services in the GLC area.

The Government are centralising powers. The Bill is ill thought out. The Government claim that they are trying to pass powers to local bodies, but the evidence is that they are centralising, and taking powers from local communities. The joint boards will result in individuals in local authority areas facing difficulties in making effective representations to their elected representatives. We are talking not about localising but about centralising decision making and creating a semi-quango body. I believe that most of us feel that such a system is abhorrent to the idea of British local democracy. Wherever there is a case for setting up quangos, it is certainly not a case in terms of local democracy.

The Government claim that the measures will save money. That is one of the most interesting of the Government's arguments. The services concerned take up a great deal of the finances of the metropolitan counties. The Government claim that they will cut public expenditure by introducing these boards. That bizarre argument did not stand up to analysis in Committee. The Conservative party took power on the manifesto belief that if public expenditure were cut, the Government could regenerate the economy. When the Government discovered that they could not cut public expenditure because of increasing unemployment, they in effect said to local authorities, "Don't do as we do—do as we tell you." They imposed cuts on local authorities to try to cut public expenditure. This terrible hotch-potch of measures is unlikely to save money.

6.15 pm

This is happening when the Government are very much on the defensive about law and order. In 1979 and 1983, the Conservative party claimed that it was the great law and order party. What have we had? There has been more disorder on our streets than under any other Government in recent history and a dramatic rise in the crime rate. At the same time, the Government have cut funds, as I said during Question Time today, to all the local authorities that are trying to spend money on the sensible public services that prevent crime—caretakers, park keepers, toilet attendants, rehabilitation and renovation of council houses and grants to private owner-occupiers who need to do up their houses to prevent burglaries. The Government are not really interested in crime prevention.

When I even have *The Standard* on my side, pointing out that people are more afraid under this Government than they were before, I know that the Government are rattled about the effects of their economic policies, which are undermining the social fabric and doing so much to bring about the crisis in law and order.

The Government have had an opportunity to do something sensible to examine the way in which we control the police force. The system has grown up hotch-potch over the years. Odd situations have arisen, for historical reasons. Magistrates sit on police boards outside London because, last century, it was argued that those areas did not have the political experience of the urban areas and that magistrates were required to sit on those boards before the areas came under the control of elected politicians. One hundred years is a long time to be politicised, even for Government Members.

The Government have had an opportunity to do something about London. We are looking for evidence that all the services will be provided properly. The other day, *The Standard*—which is not by any means a Labour paper—ran headlines saying that Scotland Yard had bungled the siege at Philbeach gardens. Contrary to two televison news reports, I did not criticise the police at all. I criticise the Home Secretary.

Mr. Eldon Griffiths (Bury St. Edmonds): I am glad to hear it.

Mr. Soley: I did not criticise the police at all. I said that, if Mr. Baigrie's behaviour had changed significantly from the previous two days, the actions of the police might well have been justified. If his behaviour had not changed, an explanation was needed as to why the police decided to act as they did. Who is the police authority for London? None other than the Home Secretary. What does the Home Secretary do when asked about the incident by myself and the media generally? He says nothing. He is surprised when the press come out with headlines saying that Scotland Yard bungled it. Conservative, not Labour, newspapers have said that. This shows the mess involving law and order and control of the police in which the Government are involved.

If we had had proper accountability, as the Opposition would like—whether via the Home Secretary or, as I would prefer, through an elected authority — those questions would have been answered and the fears expressed by the media and other individuals could have been allayed, without criticism being thrown around in the way it was.

Mr. Giles Shaw: On the Baigrie incident, I want the House to be clear that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary, when asked about the matter, gave his opinion firmly in total support of the action of the Metropolitan police.

Mr. Soley: I wish the Minister would tell us something we do not know. Of course we know that. The people and the press were asking why the police had changed their tactics. That was a perfectly reasonable question. It was not a criticism. The senior police officer in charge said that

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he would wait as long as necessary. Two days later the police went in. On Friday, on breakfast television, I said that the man's behaviour might well have deteriorated and that that would explain and justify the actions of the police. Those were my words. It is no use the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Mr. Griffiths) looking puzzled. I was very clear about that. The Home Secretary afterwards ducked out of his responsibility as the police authority for London and refused to give an explanation. The result was that the senior police officer in charge had to issue a press release. That was a totally wrong way of dealing with the matter.

Most of these questions affect the police and the fire and emergency services of the metropolitan counties. There is a clear conflict between the Department of the Environment and the Home Office. Lord Whitelaw had this to say:

"I think it is going to be a difficult problem getting the Police Authorities right after the Metropolitan Counties are over. I think this is going to be difficult. I always thought that was one of the difficulties of doing this. It is, and I don't think you'd find anyone in the Home Office who doesn't accept that."

Even the Minister of State seems to accept it.

I can pray in aid not just *The Standard* but the chief constable of Greater Manchester, Mr. Anderton, who said:

"Serious disruption of the major metropolitan forces in this country at perhaps the most sensitive period in police history in modern times, makes no kind of sense at all."

It is very unusual for me to pray in aid the chief constable of Greater Manchester. It is a first offence and I shall probably never do it again, but let me make the best of it while I can. Other chief constables have registered their doubts.

Indeed, it is hard to find anybody who is in favour. In Committee the hon. Member for Pudsey (Mr. Shaw) said about savings:

"I doubt whether any would come from the fire services in relation to the money spent on manpower, equipment and services." — [*Official Report, Standing Committee G,* 14 February 1985; c. 1417.]

One week later, his right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker) said:

"Let me also make it clear that we see scope for savings in the fire service, and we shall use the powers in clauses 64 and 80 to secure those savings." — [*Official Report, Standing Committee G,* 21 February 1985; c. 1569.]

So what savings do the Government expect to make? They want to save money on administration, but at best the savings will be peanuts. However, the Minister for Local Government went on to say that they needed controls to prevent

"a great explosion of the bureaucratic and organisation sides of the fire and police services after abolition."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee G,* 21 February 1985; c. 1569.]

He is worried about the fact that the joint boards will be an administrative nightmare and will not result in public expenditure reductions. So there is a clash between the two Ministers.

However, it would be wrong of me to imply that the hon. Member for Pudsey is guilty of consistency, for he had this to say about savings:

"It is not our intention to secure savings in the number of police officers. It is hoped—no more than that"—

the Minister is a cautious man—

"that there may be a significant administrative saving in some authorities." — [*Official Report, Standing Committee G,* 14 February 1985; c. 1403.]

He had stated earlier:

"The amount currently falling on metropolitan counties for administrative services with the police is very low—10 per cent. or less of police expenditure—and there are about 3,000 administrators within the system of the metropolitan counties who are overseeing the police authority. Therefore, the figure does not include a very large number in the seven authorities concerned nor is it a very high sum in the police authorities' budgets. Therefore, while savings may be possible, they will not be large." — [*Official Report, Standing Committee G,* 14 February 1985; c. 1387.]

Indeed they will not be large. Coopers and Lybrand, among others, suggest that these services will cost more.

There is not only inconsistency between Government Departments but inconsistency in the Ministers' own contributions in Committee. It is yet another example of the way the Government talk about law and order and about the needs of the police, fire and emergency services, but all their actions are counter-productive when it comes to the efficient running of these services. That is why this amendment ought to be adopted. It is no wonder that Lord Whitelaw was worried. He had a right to be worried.

The joint boards will be responsible for three of the most important local services that are paid for by the metropolitan counties. Not only will the joint boards be undemocratic, but they will encourage a clash of interests. If an individual goes to a councillor and says that he wants to put a question to the fire board, the police board or another board, that councillor, if he is not on the board in question, will have to go to another councillor who is on the board, or he will have to refer the individual to that councillor.

What will happen if there is a clash of interests either between the two authorities or between the two councillors? They will be unable to work out their differences in a committee of which they are both members. Nor will it be possible for other councillors automatically to question the chief fire officer, the chief police officer or the councillor concerned. So there will be clashes of interest between local authorities and within local authorities. All this is being done in the belief that vitality will be restored to local democracy when in fact it is being undermined.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): Would this be any different from a constituent going to a councillor on a housing matter? If that councillor is not on the housing committee, he has to talk to another councillor who sits on that committee. I do not believe that there is any difference.

Mr. Soley: I would not expect it of the hon. Member, because he has not thought about it very much. If he had thought about it he would know that the councillor can go and see the chief officer and that he can also take up the matter on the floor of the council. That will not be possible with a joint board, or anything remotely like it. The members of those boards will not be elected, so if the hon. Member thinks about it he will realise that what he has said is nonsense. After three years, local authorities will be able to form their own police auhorities, if they wish to do so.

However, it was reported in *The Times* on 30 July 1984 that when the Home Secretary was approached by worried Members of Parliament he told them not to worry because the powers that would allow the break-up of the police authorities in the metropolitan counties will never be used. Although those powers are included in the Bill the Home Secretary is telling worried Back Benchers that they will

never be used. It is nonsense. I have never seen such a mess between two Departments, both of which dislike each other for going ahead with the Bill. We all know that the Home Office does not want the Bill but that it is stuck on this hook because the Secretary of State for the Environment has decided to push the Bill through with the backing of the Prime Minister. It is an incredible mess. It is undemocratic, expensive, inefficient and contradictory, yet we are dealing with services covering the police, fire and civil and natural disasters.

Speaking of natural disasters, I should like to know why the Secretary of State for the Environment is not here to answer the question and tell us where, having brought about this disaster, he thinks the savings will come from. If the Minister of State, Home Office, and the Minister for Local Government cannot agree, a Cabinet Minister ought to be here to tell us what it is all about. Therefore I strongly urge the House to vote for the Opposition amendment.

Mr. Eldon Griffiths (Bury St. Edmunds): I wish to speak to the amendments that stand in my name and I declare my interest, which is well known to the House, in the police service. I put down these amendments in the general context of the police service having gone through an exceedingly difficult period during the past few years. Above all, it needs stability and the support of this House. In my view, such now are the levels of crime and violence in our country that the Government would do well to address those problems rather than the future boundaries of the metropolitan police forces. Their priority is in the wrong place.

Secondly, the police service is now confronted with a whole series of changes, most of them, I think, desirable: for instance, the independent prosecution service that is soon to come into being and the videotaping of interrogations.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The taping of interrogations.

Mr. Griffiths: Yes, taping. Perhaps I am a year or so ahead of my hon. Friend the Minister. Those and many other changes arise from the Police and Criminal Evidence Act, including the new procedures for complaints, discipline, custody officers, powers, and so on. In those circumstances, I am sure that I will have the full support of all quarters of the House in saying that stability is what the police service needs above all else.

6.30 pm

Therefore, it came as a surprise to me that the Government should have felt compelled in the Bill to give the Secretary of State power to dismantle any of the metropolitan police forces outside London whenever he wants to do so. I understand that previous police legislation has always given the Secretary of State power to alter police boundaries. There is nothing new about that. But, at a time when the police service is going through this enormous series of changes, I am surprised that it should be confronted by the Government with the possibility that the force boundaries in all the big metropolitan forces could be up for grabs.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): The hon. Gentleman said that that power is always included in police legislation. Given his relationship with the Police Federation, can the hon. Gentleman say why the Government want the powers in this legislation when they are already in the Police Act 1964? That is the way in which amalgamations and changes have taken place before. Frankly, I do not understand it, but the hon. Gentleman may well have sorted it out.

Mr. Griffiths: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman, who speaks with enormous authority on these matters. I should have thought, and my advice is, that the power is unnecessary, but we all know that the Government have their own legal advice and parliamentary draftsmen. It may be that there is some reason for its inclusion. We shall be interested to hear from the Minister on that.

My objections can be put fairly simply. Aware as I am that several of my hon. Friends want to catch your eye, Mr. Speaker, I shall try to be briefer than perhaps I should be. First, we should be turning the clock back if we were to open the door to the breaking up of the metropolitan forces. It is not 11 years—the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) will remember this—since we were amalgamating the small force areas, and that has not been an easy task. Bringing together the previous city force areas into the new metropolitan counties has been difficult in all sorts of practical ways—putting together the command systems, headquarters, computers, arrangements for police housing and promotion, and so on. But on the whole the metropolitan police forces have been a success. Their performance over the past year is testimony to that. Therefore, it is wrong now to open the door, which is all that the clause does, to the confusion that there was before.

My second objection to the clause is that, as soon as it is passed, it will usher in a period of confusion, scene shifting and job hunting within the metropolitan police force areas. It is impossible to imagine that the great cities of Birmingham, Liverpool or Sheffield, once they have back all the other powers that the Bill provides to them—I confess that I am a supporter of that—will not demand, if they can, control of their police forces. Indeed, there is already some evidence from Birmingham that the city fathers, backed by a number of people, possibly including even the former chief officer, will start to demand the return of control over the Birmingham force.

Once that happens, hon. Members, whether Labour or Conservative, will feel bound to support their local authorities in demanding that the large metropolitan forces shall be broken up and that control shall return to the cities. So there can be no doubt that, once the Bill is passed, it will usher in a period of uncertainty and of grabs for jobs.

The third and perhaps the strongest objection that I have is an operational one. It simply does not make sense in contemporary policing terms to have two, three, or possibly even four, police forces in the same bricks and mortar area. Policing today has to be done over a fairly large area. Matters such as training, policy, equipment, and the general attitudes of the police and their chief officers towards the many problems that they confront, must be handled within the same conurbations on a broadly consistent and coherent basis.

Once the metropolitan forces are broken up into three or four, as they were before, there will inevitably be overlaps and differences; some chief officers will take one view and others another. Equipment arrangements may be different and there will be different police authorities, perhaps under different political control, within the same

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bricks and mortar area. That is a recipe not for better policing but for worse policing, and it is a retrospective move at present.

I want to give my hon. Friend the Minister, whose judgment in these matters he knows I respect, one or two examples. If there were to be a return to the old arrangements in south Yorkshire whereby Sheffield, and possibly Rotherham, had their own force, the police training school would be in one district and the headquarters in another. In the west midlands, assuming we went back to a Birmingham force, the command and control computer would be in one district and the main headquarters functions in another. They would all have to be reshuffled. In Northumbria the computer unit and training school would be in one district and the stores and equipment in another. So it goes on.

One of the advantages of the large metropolitan forces is that they can patrol motorways in their areas consistently. If we went back to the old arrangements, for example in the Greater Manchester area, the old Salford force would be responsible for about 19·5 miles of the M62, what was Rochdale for 20·7 miles and Bury for 8·4 miles. It makes no sense to have the M62 separately patrolled in the same conurbation by three forces. Similarly, three jurisdictions would cover the M63 in that area.

I could easily quote similar figures that have been provided to me by the Police Federation. The M1 in south Yorkshire would pass through three different jurisdictions, as would the M18. In the west midlands, in one remarkable case, we would probably find that the M6 was within the jurisdiction of no fewer than five different police authorities as a result of the break-up of the west midlands force area.

I am bound to quote, as the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) did, the chief constable of Manchester. I sometimes have a different view of life from Mr. Anderton, but I think that he put it well when he said:

"I cannot understand why this clause is in the Bill. Serious disruption of the major metropolitan forces in this country at perhaps the most sensitive period in police history in modern times makes no sense."

Who is against this arrangement? All branches of the police service are against it. Superintendents are against it. The chief officers, with possibly one exception, are against it, and possibly one or two of those who are looking upwards can see that there would be more chief officer jobs. The federation is strongly against it and it is right to say that most Members, certainly of the Committee, and I imagine of the House, will have received a well-argued document from the federation which makes clear its objections to the clause.

It would be wrong to quote it in full, but the Police Federation's conclusion is that such an arrangement would be a retrograde step that would lead to more inefficiency, and should not be carried through on any kind of operational grounds. Those against the proposal include the police and a Select Committee. Indeed, a Select Committee considered the amalgamations as long ago as the mid-1960s, and the metropolitan forces were put together on the basis of its recommendations. We are now opening the door—my hon. Friend the Minister will know why I keep using that phrase—to their possible break-up.

At that time, the Select Committee said that it believed that many economies would result from the single headquarters that would emerge in the new force areas. It said that there would be benefits in beat and patrol work, in motor patrols, in economies of scale and in equipment. Thus, the police and the Select Committee were against that suggestion.

Who is in favour? *[Interruption.]* It is not for me to judge the views of my colleagues. I speak only for myself, but those in favour include several hundred ambitious local councillors who would like to get their hands on the police service. This is neither the time nor the place to go into the politics of the issue. I wish that we were debating accountability and the powers of police authorities, but we are not. However, those in favour include quite a few ambitious local councillors who would like to get their hands on the police. That is my central point.

I am anxious to ensure that the police are kept out of politics and that politics is kept out of policing. The danger is that, if we open the door, we shall find many local councillors demanding back control of their police, and there will be a tendency to start throwing stones at the existing metropolitan police forces in order to justify breaking them up and returning them to what will be described as "local control". The metropolitan forces are criticised enough as it is. If the clause is accepted as it stands, interest will be generated at local council level in criticising the metropolitan forces so that their return to local control can be justified.

On those grounds, I very much hope that the Government will reconsider the position. I greatly welcome the undertaking that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has given, that he does not intend to take advantage of the powers in the Bill. I know that he plans to fulfil that undertaking to the letter, because he knows probably better than I do that such a provision would not make operational sense. My hon. Friend the Minister was good enough, in Committee, to quote a letter written to me by him or by my right hon. Friend in which those undertakings were set out in some detail.

My hon. Friend the Minister will no doubt tell the House that there is nothing to worry about, because the Government do not intend to use the powers in the Bill. But if he does not want to use them, I am not sure why they are there. In any case, when the House passes legislation, it cannot simply have regard to the intentions or statements of Ministers. It must have regard to the powers that will exist for future Ministers in future circumstances. I do not wish to make any sort of political point—I am trying to be as objective as possible—but undertakings given by any Home Secretary are not sufficient for the police service. The police service cannot operate just on the basis of one Government's undertaking. It must have consistent policies over a long period of time. The police service deserves better of the Government, and I ask them to think again.

6.45 pm

Mr. Terry Fields (Liverpool, Broadgreen): I rise to speak in support of amendment No. 85 to clause 22, with particular reference to the fire service. As someone who spent 26 years in the fire service before becoming a Member of Parliament—20 years of which were spent being active in the Fire Brigades Union—I think that I speak with some authority. I shall concentrate on the part of the amendment that refers to functions being discharged

"no less economically, efficiently and effectively."

The Government have not blundered into the present situation, nor does their planning have anything to do with democracy, "economy", "efficiency" or "effectiveness". Therefore, they must be aware of all the implications of their undemocratic and philistine actions. The implications for the fire service, the jobs of firemen and the service given to the community are, to my mind, one of the most serious and criminal aspects of this legislation, and need exposing.

I have no illusions, and those outside Parliament should not have any illusions, that the so-called "debate" on this and other clauses is anything other than a charade. Conservative Members will faithfully troop through the Government Lobby like sheep, despite the implications that the Labour party's amendment seeks to avoid. For working people, the attack on those services, which is implicit in the Government's proposals, has to be explained, and needs to be set against statements made by the Home Secretary to the chief fire officers' conference last year, and against the review of standards of fire cover, as well as current surveys of risk categories.

At the chief fire officers' conference last year, the Home Secretary referred to the fire service having to become more cost-effective and spoke of it

"not being exempt from the rigorous financial scrutiny which has to be applied to all Local Authority services".

Moreover, the role of the fire service inspectorate is to be changed in order to allow it to comment on what it sees as the "over-provision" of fire cover, when it makes its annual inspection. That is a departure from its previous role.

After the Brighton bombing, the Home Secretary said:

"Before the dust of the explosion had settled, the Fire Service had begun its task of rescuing the survivors and searching for the dead."

To the Fire Brigades Union, it is amazing that within 15 days of that tragic incident the Home Secretary should have expressed his wish to oversee the destruction of the fire service as we know it.

The standards of fire cover that the Government have embarked upon are intended to reduce the cost by cutting the number of men and appliances, and running day and night cover with fewer men and fewer fire services. Firemen, in particular, need to understand and prepare for the attacks on their jobs. But perhaps more importantly, the public, who sometimes take it for granted that a fire engine will be there when required, are in danger of having that provision removed.

The setting up of joint boards is but a prelude to the fragmentation of the fire service through the transfer of services to the metropolitan district councils. It is difficult to see how the withdrawal of part of an integrated unit will not damage the whole, although it may appear attractive for certain district councils to do that. The Coopers and Lybrand report on the breakaway option stated:

"Cost increases could be expected to arise as a consequence of breakaways . . . There is no clear evidence to suggest that a breakaway would improve the overall effectiveness of police or fire in any area."

The consultants estimated that Wirral's bid to run its own fire service would add 1 per cent. to the revenue cost of the proposed Merseyside joint fire board. The Government's attempt to create joint boards is undemocratic, and must be set against the Government's policies on other issues that are disastrous and devastating for working people.

We must also ask why all this is happening. We need to explain the position to workers. The answer is that it is part of the Government's overall attack on services, which has been brought about by the crisis in the economy and which bears a direct relationship to the attack on local authorities, on civil servants' jobs and pay, and on coal, steel, shipping and other nationalised industries. The Government have been unable to embark on the spending programme that they have a duty to undertake because of the crisis in the economy.

Since 1979, the Government have been responsible for creating a slump out of a recession, with 20 per cent. of industry being closed down as Britain becomes for the first time a net importer of manufactured goods. Against that economic background, the Government attack the social services, the fire services and the other services that they have a responsibility to finance.

Between 1979 and 1983, manufacturing investment in this country fell by 41 per cent. and at the beginning of 1983 was only at 1959 levels. *The Economist*, which is hardly a militant publication, says that a 40 per cent. increase in investment is necessary to keep pace with our competitors abroad. The investment rate, which is conditioned by some of the policies of this Government, is only 3 per cent., while investment of money abroad has trebled since 1979 to £375 billion, or £1,800 for every working person in this country.

Workers need to understand the entirely new situation in this country and what the Government are doing with their tax on jobs. After the slump in 1929, by 1933 this country had recovered and output exceeded the 1929 level. In the third quarter of 1983, we still required in this country a 15 per cent. rise in manufacturing output even to regain the 1979 level. British capitalism, through the policies of this Government, is thinner and a hell of a lot sicker, and we shall not have recovered from the first years of Thatcherism before we are overtaken by another world recession.

These are economic points which the workers need to understand, in particular members of the fire service, because in the Fire Brigades Union we equate what is happening to our service with the Ridley report on the coal industry. After the strikes in the early 1970s, the Ridley report was brought into being to deal with the coal industry. After the firemen's strike in 1977-78, firemen achieved a formula on pay, thanks to the services of the then Home Secretary. That formula, which equated firemen's pay with that of male manual workers in industry, is a millstone around the neck of this Government and of local authority employers. Metropolitan areas in general were the most militant during that dispute and Merseyside and Cheshire, my own area, were the most militant in the struggle for wages and conditions.

Since then, there has been an attempt by this Government to intervene directly in pay negotiations on behalf of firemen. A survey was done during that period of the most militant areas that would need to be tackled if the Government were to have their way. The Government believe that a break-up of the metropolitan areas and fragmentation in those areas would reduce opposition to those pay policies and this attack on jobs.

For the fire service, the effect of these attacks will be a diminution of services and a loss of jobs. Insurance losses on property and goods will increase. Also, of course, loss of life will ensue from the reduced service and

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the reduced ability of the fire service to fulfil its commitments, including the loss of firemen's lives. We give the Government fair warning that their attacks on our industry will be met with resistance by firemen and tne Fire Brigades Union.

The Government, through some aspects of their policy, are raising the spectre of privatisation of the fire service. The public must understand what will happen when firemen and special appliances are not available, when fire prevention in hotels and boarding houses is reduced by the attacks that will of necessity take place with the fragmentation of our metropolitan areas. We shall have spiv organisations attempting to sell so-called smoke masks, like the one I have here, for protection, because the fire service will not be there to look after the interests of people in boarding houses, hotels and indeed, prisons. This will be part of the spiv's paradise with privatisation within the fire service.

The Fire Brigades Union and its members will not permit the decimation of their industry. A campaign will be waged in the metropolitan areas such as Merseyside on a par with the Liverpool campaign against the Secretary of State's intentions. We will take our campaign out to the trade unions and the communities and on to the estates.

This amendment is intended to prevent the disastrous results of the Government's intentions. We give fair warning that, even if this amemdment is defeated and the Bill becomes law, the fire service, the Fire Brigades Union and the people who rely on the dedication and self-sacrifice of the firemen will not stand idly by and allow the Government to implement such disastrous, dangerous and objectionable legislation. Industrial action on behalf of the Fire Brigades Union will ensue to save jobs and save lives. I say again, we give fair warning that firemen will not stand idly by and see their industry decimated.

Mr. Fred Silvester (Manchester, Withington): I intervene briefly because this subject of the joint authorities as they affect the police relates to part of the arguments against the Bill which I find particularly difficult to understand. I cannot see why such intense opposition has been aroused. Those who support the Bill have been moved by a desire to give the district authorities as much power as possible. That is the fundamental principle underlying the Bill. It is recognised that, of necessity, many functions will have to be carried out jointly by the districts. That is not a new proposition. That has been going on in local government as long as anybody can remember. To say that doing things jointly and nominating somebody from a council to a joint authority is undemocratic seems to me to be to use the word very oddly. It is a different form of democracy, but clearly persons elected are still responsible for the service.

I have quoted this example before, and it is not a silly one. In Manchester, representation on the police authority will increase by one councillor under the Bill. That will make sure that the representation covers more than one party. It could be argued that the nature of the democratic control, as far as the ordinary elector is concerned, is enhanced. What matters—we keep coming back to this point — is not the refinements as defined by the councillors, but what is recognised by the ordinary elector. That is not the structure. Whether it be someone from the city council or the Greater Manchester council, it is a person who is identifiable on a local council or a city council. People go to the city council for functions that are not even within its purview simply because it is an identifiable unit. I think, therefore, that the democratic argument has always failed in this case.

The argument which I think has more weight—this is where my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Mr. Griffiths) has pitched his case—is the one about efficiency and effectiveness. We have all received representations from various people in the police force about clause 41; and I listened with great care to what my hon. Friend said, because he knows a lot about the police force. I was mystified, however, because, as I understand it, he claims that the powers already exist to make changes in police boundaries, and to that extent the Bill does not add to them.

The second argument is that this is a difficult time for the police, and therefore not the time to disturb the boundaries. But we already have the undertaking from the Government that such disturbances will not take place in the immediate future. If they do take place, it will not be immediately. Therefore, two of my hon. Friend's arguments seem to fall.

In the rest of his argument, which was very well put, as always, he gave examples of what would happen if the service were chopped up. This comes back to the main point about local authorities. They work together when it is in their interests to do so. If, as my hon. Friend quite rightly said, a countywide service is of benefit to the boroughs and the districts, it will continue to operate. It is not possible for him to foresee whether that will always be the case.

To take his political argument, if a group of boroughs were confronted with an authority which became highly politicised and, despite the presence of the magistrates, extremely bad in its treatment of the police, it could well be argued that it would be in the interest of the citizens of a district to opt for their own police force and to decide, in the interest of putting down crime in that area, to have a less politicised police force. We are assured that the Government do not have that in mind now, because it does not seem necessary or desirable, but we cannot say that such powers might not be necessary at some time.

7 pm

Mr. Eldon Griffiths: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for the courteous way in which he has put his case. I hope that he will address his mind to two matters. First, we are putting in the shop window of the Bill an invitation to the successor authorities to ask for the return of their police forces. I find that public invitation particularly unfortunate. Secondly, some people politically want control of the police. They make no bones about that. This is an invitation to them to assert what I believe to be a dangerous aspiration.

Mr. Silvester: By simply reasserting powers that already exist, the Bill does not undermine the police.

Mr. Merlyn Rees: The first time that I spoke in the House was on the Police Bill in 1964. On that occasion, or just before, I listened to my first debate in the House when a Conservative Member said that he did not want to be political. I thought that strange considering the reason why I tried to become a Member of Parliament. The hon. Member for Manchester, Withington (Mr. Silvester) made

much the same point about politicising. Most of the issues with which police and fire committees deal are political but by "political" most people think of the rubbish that passes for politics at general election time, which is spawned by public relations experts who over-simplify matters. I wish to be political and to discuss issues about which the electorate should be concerned.

We need answers from the Minister on several matters. The hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Mr. Griffiths) talked about boundaries. Amalgamations occurred before 1974 in connection with the Police Act 1964. In 1974, the changes were the result of local government reform and were forced upon the Government of the day.

I do not pretend that the areas are right. I used to think it odd that the west midlands police force should have so many policemen, when Warwickshire, with an excellent chief constable who went to Lancashire and to London, should have only 800 policemen.

We do not need a boundary commission—we know what boundary commissions do — we need another Royal Commission on the police, as we had in 1960, to examine all the issues. The matter must not be dealt with piecemeal by means of a hurried and short debate. It is vital that Parliament should receive reports. The Opposition are not making a revolutionary request by asking for that.

When I was Home Secretary I worked with joint boards for north and south Wales. I did not like them. I say that not because they were Welsh joint boards, and I intend no reflection on the people who operated them. Joint boards represent the wrong approach. We were forced into them in south Wales because of the decision to break up south Glamorgan. That was a political decision in the sense that the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds used the term. The decision was made not for rational reasons, but to provide south Glamorgan with a Conservative majority once in a blue moon.

The chief constables do not like joint boards. The chief constable in west Yorkshire does not like them. He believes that they give more power to Whitehall. No one could be less political than that chief constable, but he makes a political point by saying that he is against the joint boards. Lord Whitelaw has made the Home Office view clear.

Who will take the lead in the services? Will it be west Yorkshire? Leeds has eight members on the police authority. Will it take the lead because it provides the most money? Will the treasurer from Kirklees, the secretary from Bradford and the solicitor from somewhere else be involved? What about the financial arrangements? Leeds is the richest authority in these terms. The chairman of the police authority is a county councillor, and he has examined the needs not only of Leeds, but of Calderdale. They will be precepted separately, and the people of Leeds will not take kindly to extra money going to Calderdale in the west riding. The break-up will cause problems.

In order to pay for real growth in police and fire services in west Yorkshire, it has been necessary to cut back or shelve new developments in other county council services. I am worried when the Secretary of State for the Environment talks about saving manpower and having more centralised control over the next three years over financial arrangements.

We are asked what difference it makes whether a person goes to a district or a county councillor. Morley and south Leeds has four county councillors, one of whom is chairman of the police committee. That is fortuitous. Things will not be the same. Members of the Leeds Labour, Conservative and small Liberal groups will be told that eight members are needed for the joint board. In the early days the younger, inexperienced councillors will be appointed, because the current chairmen and vice-chairmen of the council committees will not want to give up their posts to be mere members of the police authority. Problems are inevitable.

An ad hoc measure has been slipped into the Bill to deal with the police. The miners' strike has caused the constitution of police authorities to be questioned. One is afraid to open one's mouth, because if one says anything about the police one is accused of attacking them. Some problems of organisation and accountability are long term. Who likes what is going on in Merseyside? It reveals that something is wrong.

The role of the Home Secretary and the question of finance have been brought into question. The Bill cannot deal with such issues. We need a Royal Commission on the police to examine all these matters over two years and to report back to the House. Until that happens we ask for reports to the House.

Mr. Geoff Lawler (Bradford, North): I should like to add to the remarks by my hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Withington (Mr. Silvester) about the democratic element of joint boards. My hon. Friend made a most important point, but other matters must be taken into account following remarks by Opposition Members. It is absurd to argue that joint boards are not democratic, because the councillors involved will be fully accountable to the electors and to their councils. If a person wishes to take up a problem about transport, fire or the police, he will approach his district councillor. If that councillor is not a member of one of the joint boards, he or she can raise the matter directly with the member of the joint board or at a council meeting.

Many people are unaware of the separation of functions. People are not aware of how the system works, so they will go to the person whom they know best—usually their district councillor. That councillor can raise the matter at city hall and question the person responsible directly. At the moment the district councillor would have to say, "That is not my responsibility. You should speak to the county councillor." Therefore, the constituent will have to write another letter or approach another person. Under the new arrangement, the councillors will be in the same building and people will be able to question them directly. It will be a simplified system, and it will be of great benefit to people in the metropolitan areas and in London. They will be able to deal with one council whose representatives cover every service from housing through to police and fire.

The district councillors will bring an extra dimension to the joint boards, because they will have sat through discussions on housing, education and social services. Therefore, when considering police, fire and transport, they will be able to relate to them what they know about the other services. For example, in Bradford the five councillors will be fully aware of the race relations initiative when they serve on the joint police board. Therefore, it is absurd to argue that the move is undemocratic. Far from it. It is highly democratic and it will make the joint boards more responsive to the public.

Mr. Allan Roberts: I shall try to be brief, although I wish to make some important points about the joint boards, costs and the conflict between the Home Office and the Department of the Environment about savings in the police and fire services as a result of the abolition of the metropolitan counties.

The hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Mr. Griffiths), representing the Police Federation, made what I thought was a good argument for keeping the metropolitan counties and directly elected police authorities. He argued that under the proposed abolition many services will be given to district councils but that because the police will not, district councils will demand responsibility for the police service as well. I have news for him. We sat in Committee on the Bill for hour after hour and we heard that not many services are being given to district councils. Most are being kept at county level with joint boards or trusts. In most cases the Minister will have reserve powers, as he will in respect of the police joint boards. He will be able to alter by order the representation from the district and the political complexion of the board, without an election.

Mr. Cyril Smith (Rochdale): Since the amendment standing in my name will not be called, I should like to make a point about democratic representation on the joint board. I support the Bill, but is the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) aware that in many authorities we do not get democratic representation? We get two seats, not three. In the Government's White Paper "Streamlining the Cities", they said specifically that minority or opposition parties which have three seats or more would be represented on authorities. Therefore, by saying that Rochdale will have only two seats on the joint board, including the police board, they are effectively denying for all time to opposition parties in that council, be they Labour, Liberal or Tory, the right to serve on the joint board.

Mr. Roberts: That is just one anomaly. The way the joint boards are made up gives political control to one party in every case, the magistrates' party, because they will be the only people who will have a majority. They will determine policy. It will be very political. The magistrates will be able to control what happens. The proposal that magistrates, who are supposed to adjudicate independently between the police who prosecute and citizens who are brought before police courts, should have the majority on joint boards and on running the police authority in their area is the height of foolishness. That will happen under the joint board proposal.

Of course the police are involved in politics. I oppose the amendment moved by the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds and I support the amendments in the name of my hon. Friends. If the Government wish to justify the abolition of the metropolitan counties and if they wish to have a police authority that is not democratically elected and accountable, they must give responsibility for the police to the district council, which will be democratically elected and accountable.

7.15 pm

There was nothing wrong with the old watch committee and the system whereby the bobby was on the beat and the local chief constable had grown up in the area and had probably married someone who lived in the locality. That system worked well, as will be evident from statistics that I shall quote in a moment.

Of course, the chief constable for Greater Manchester, Mr. Anderton, does not want a system that might break up his empire. Of course, he is against the possibility of the local watch committee being re-established because he, along with six other chief constables meeting jointly under the direction of the Home Secretary, runs what has become the equivalent of a state police force. He has a great deal of power and he is very political. All the chief constables are. Mr. Anderton has become a cult figure of the right because he makes so many political speeches. If the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds wants politics out of the police force, he should have a word with some of the chief constables whom he purports to represent and advise them to stop making political speeches.

Whether we like it or not, if police authorities are abolished in the metropolitan counties there will be a demand from the general public to councillors and MPs for the establishment of police monitoring committees in every district council in the metropolitan areas and in the London boroughs. In committee the only arguments we got from Conservative Members in favour of abolition were based on prejudice against black groups and against women's organisations because they are given grants by the GLC.

Conservative Members have the audacity to criticise police monitoring committees set up by local authorities, but there would not be a police force if local authorities had not developed the system in the days of the peelers. Policing is traditionally a local authority function. One of the greatest things about having lived in Britain for the past hundred years or so is that we have police forces that have been locally accountable and not a state police force which is a first step towards a police state.

In regard to expenditure on policing and the crime rate, the hon. Member for Pudsey (Mr. Shaw) has said that there will be no savings in the police service as a result of the Government's proposals; the Department of the Environment says that there will be savings. That contradiction may be accounted for by the fact that the savings the DOE is talking about are being made before abolition of the metropolitan counties because, for example, Merseyside county council is rate-capped. That is affecting the police service now. The rate cap is taking £16 million away from the police budget.

For 1984-85 the police budget in Merseyside is £103·8 million. That means that the police authority will lose 693 vehicles. The only alternative was to cut manpower, but the public want the bobby back on the beat. One way of achieving that is to get rid of motor cars. The police cannot drive round in them if they have not got them. They cannot be on the beat if they are playing in the police band. Of course, Conservative politicians and chief constables may like police bands but my voters, who want their communities properly policed, want to see the bobby on the beat.

Hon. Members may be amazed when they hear these statistics. In 1974 in the seven districts of Merseyside only 10 bobbies would have been on the beat at any one time because of the manpower problem. Since 1974 the number of police and vehicles has gone up by one fifth, the number of civilians employed by the police has gone up by a quarter, the police budget has increased by a quarter in real terms and recorded crime has increased by almost 50 per cent. A recent crime survey shows that three and a half times as many personal and property crimes take place as are reported.

Despite our being administered by the party of law and order, the crime wave continues to rise, even taking account of the increases in efficiency, vehicles, manpower and pay. If the police forces had still been controlled at local level by a local chief constable, accountable to a democratically elected watch committee sensitive to the needs of the community, the crime rate would be much lower. We must defeat this legislation and ensure that the police are controlled by a democratic committee directly elected at county level.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The debate on the amendments has provoked a fair discussion about the problem of the joint boards and cessation, with particular relevance to the police. In addition, one Opposition Member devoted his remarks to the fire service.

These aspects of the Bill had a substantial airing in Committee, as the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) acknowledged. It has been suggested that there would be less accountability to council if joint boards were established. Clause 40 requires councillors who serve on joint boards to report their activities to their councils. Therefore, the connection between joint boards and constituent councils will be strengthened. It may be greater than the existing connection. There will be an improvement, not a reduction, in the contact between the police authority, as exemplified in the joint board, and the councils.

Opposition Members were concerned mainly about obtaining what they called more democratic control over the police. They spoke not only about the reports that would be required if the amendment were passed, but about the possibility of a greater exercise of direct control over the police through appointments. There was a great deal of discussion in Committee about direct election. The hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) and others made clear what their intention is at the end of the day.

The general concept of how policing should be handled in relation to local authorities' responsibilities is laid down in the 1964 Act, which provides for total operational independence for chief constables. That is at variance with some of the comments made in Committee.

The central issue in this group of amendments is the question of reports. A second issue is involved in the amendments tabled by my right hon. Friend about cessation consultation. My hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Mr. Griffiths) argued against any prospect of a police joint board being broken up into constituent districts.

Fundamentally, the Bill is about powers being taken from the present structure of metropolitan counties and the GLC and brought back into the borough or district council structure. Therefore, it is not surprising that, as a matter of equity, there should be a provision in clause 41 for further power to be deferred to the boroughs in the general context of the principle of the Bill. In some cases—for example, transport undertakings — there is a realistic prospect that that might be a good thing to do, and something that has needed to be done for the district services.

On the question of the police and fire services, it has been and remains our firm policy not to encourage any break-up of police force areas. That is fundamental to the commitment we made at the outset of this legislation. We recognise and respect the continuity that is crucial to the effective planning and efficiency of the modern police force.

In a letter to my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds, my right hon. and learned Friend said:

"We made it clear . . . that no application would be entertained before the joint boards had been in operation for a reasonable time and that district councils would be required to satisfy me that they would administer the service more effectively and that provision in the rest of the metropolitan area or nationally would not be adversely affected. In assessing effectiveness I would of course have in mind both operational efficiency and cost."

That commitment was not just to examine an individual case that a district might seek to make, but the consequences of that case on adjacent authorities and nationally. It would be rare that such a case would be found beneficial to the operational efficiency of a police force.

That statement is strengthened by the amendment tabled by my right hon. Friend, which requires that my right hon. and learned Friend or my right hon. Friend should consult the relevant joint authority, its constituent councils and any other authority that appeared to be affected before making an order under the clause. That is a further strengthening of the legislation and it deals with the suggestion by my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds that this clause would provide an easy route out for district councils. I hope that we have strengthened the view that there should not be an easy way in which cessation could take place for police services.

The Opposition amendments are an attempt to delay matters. They require that a report should be presented to the House. We do not believe that is necessary. There has been enough reporting and discussion. What is required now is a clear statement of where we stand under the powers available in clause 41. If amendment No. 17 found favour with the House, the position would be strengthened even more. There would be a requirement for statements to be made and consultations to be held. That would ensure that there was no easy way out that would allow cessation to take place. The hon. Member for Liverpool, Broadgreen (Mr. Fields) spoke about the fire service, and I have taken his points on board. He wanted to get on record the views of the Fire Brigades Union about the clause. He knows that the Bill will not seriously threaten the provision of fire services in London or anywhere else. Their operational standards must be maintained. The responsibilities of chief fire officers to designate areas to ensure that standards are applied will remain. I hope that he recognises that there are no grounds for the fear that he has expressed about the Bill's provisions.

I advise the House to reject the Opposition amendment, and I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds will not seek to press his amendment in the light of the assurances that I have given.

Amendment negatived.

Amendment proposed: No. 85, in page 16, line 15, at end insert—

'(2) The provisions of this section and of sections 23, 24, 25 and 26 of this Act shall not have effect until the Secretary of State for the Home Department has reported to Parliament on the arrangements he proposes to ensure that the police, fire and civil emergency planning functions in each metropolitan county or Greater London as the case may be are discharged no less economically, efficiently and effectively under the provisions of this Part of this Act.'.—*[Mr. Soley.]*

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

[Mr. Giles Shaw]

The House divided: Ayes 155, Noes 301.

Division No. 172] **[7.29 pm**

AYES

Abse, Leo
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Begier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Tony
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'rmline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Rt Hon J.
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Cartwright, John
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Concannon, Rt Hon J. D.
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Corbett, Robin
Cowans, Harry
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Duba, Alfred
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Ellis, Raymond
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freud, Clement
Garrett, W. E.
Godman, Dr Norman
Gould, Bryan
Hamilton, W. W. *(Central Fife)*
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr. Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
Mackenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, M.
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Straw, Jack
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wainwright, R.
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. James Hamilton and
Mr. Ray Powell.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Hon Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(N Luton)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, E. *(B'y St Edm'ds)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(SW N'folk)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayhoe, Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Straf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey

Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(W Herts)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Gregory *(Derby N)*
Knight, Mrs Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
McCusker, Harold
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marlow, Antony
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Moate, Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parris, Matthew
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Powell, Rt Hon J. E. *(S Down)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spence, John
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(N Hertf'dshire)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, J.
Sumberg, David
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Mr. Carol Mather and
Mr. Robert Boscawen.

Tellers for the Noes:

Question accordingly negatived.

7.40 pm

It being after half-past Seven o'clock, MR. SPEAKER *proceeded, pursuant to Order [11 February] and the Resolutions yesterday, to put forthwith the Questions necessary for the disposal of the business to be concluded at that hour.*

Clause 28

NUMBER OF MEMBERS

Amendments made:

No. 14, in page 18, line 35, after '(2)', insert 'Subject to subsection (3) below,'.

No. 15, in page 18, line 38, leave out 'but' and insert—

'(3) In making any alteration in the number of members to be appointed to a joint authority by any of its constituent councils the Secretary of State shall have regard to the number of local government electors in the areas of those councils respectively; and'.—*[Mr. Kenneth Baker.]*

Clause 41

REORGANISATION OF FUNCTIONS

Amendments made:

No. 16, in page 25, line 15, at end insert

'or, as respects any functions exercisable by a metropolitan county passenger transport authority otherwise than by virtue of section 38 above, the exclusion of the council of any such district from the authority's constituent councils'. — *[Mr. Kenneth Baker.]*

No. 17, in page 25, line 42, at end insert—

'(3) Before making an order under this section the Secretary of State shall consult each of the following bodies which appears to him to be affected by the order, that is to say, any police, fire or passenger transport authority, the council of a county, district or London borough and the Common Council.'.—*[Mr. Giles Shaw.]*

Clause 47

GRANTS TO VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS

Amendment made:

No. 18, in page 28, line 28, leave out clause 47.— *[Mr. Kenneth Baker.]*

Clause 51

COMPENSATION FOR LOSS OF OFFICE OR DIMINUTION OF EMOLUMENTS

Mr. Speaker: We now come to amendment No. 19 and those amendments grouped with it.

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Will you confirm that the operation of the guillotine now means that the whole of the discussion on clause 43 and the attendant amendments is excluded absolutely, which means that the House will have had no opportunity to discuss the future of the arts? There has been major controversy about those matters, and many hon. Members have received representations from the Pedestrian Association, the Sports Council, and the Heath and Old Hampstead Society. Will you confirm that

[Mr. Michael Foot]

all those matters are excluded because of the guillotine, and that it will not be possible to return to them before Third Reading?

Mr. Speaker: That is indeed the case. I can only suggest that the right hon. Gentleman could raise some of those matters on Third Reading.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I beg to move amendment No. 19, in page 34, line 22, leave out 'period' and insert 'fixed term'.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Government amendments Nos. 20, 23, 24 and 67.

Mr. Baker: I heard the protest of the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) about the fact that debate has been curtailed on the matters that were of interest to him. I must remind the House that as Leader of the House he moved five guillotines in one day.

Mr. Foot: I am happy to recall those events. All the measures were excellent. However, I assure the right hon. Gentleman that a measure with major constitutional changes was never introduced in that manner. The right hon. Gentleman should be thoroughly ashamed of himself.

Mr. Baker: It only goes to show that views change when positions in the House change. On Second Reading we had two days of debate——

Mr. Speaker: Order. It seems that we are moving away from the debate. I ask the right hon. Gentleman to speak to the amendment.

Mr. Baker: I shall resist the temptation to stray.

This group of amendments is intended to clarify the provisions of clause 57. Amendments Nos. 19 and 20 are, respectively, consequential amendments to clauses 51 and 53. In particular, amendment No. 19 makes it clear that subsection 51(4) relates to fixed term contracts. Hon. Members and people outside the House have queried that point.

The substantive amendments relate to clause 57. They are intended to clarify its provisions. They do so by specifying more closely the payments that the residuary body will make, and by making it clear that GLC or MCC staff in post at abolition will be treated as if they had been made redundant by their employer. This will place beyond any possible doubt their eligibility for a redundancy payment, subject to their meeting the other criteria laid down in the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978. The matter was raised in Committee, and this clarifies it and protects workers in that position.

7.45 pm

I shall now deal with redundancy provisions, as this is the only occasion when we can touch on them. I made it clear that we hoped that redundancies would be kept to a minimum. That is possible only if there is co-operation by the staff associations and the various unions. I was frequently asked in Committee about the future work of certain common specialist services. It may be appropriate to mention the central purchasing unit. I said that its future was in the hands of successor authorities but that my Department would use its good offices in considering how worthwhile services could be maintained, if there was a demand for it. Clearly, there is a general interest in the provision of a central purchasing service, probably under the aegis of the Inner London education authority. However, equally, other practical arrangements are being considered. The Crown suppliers could provide similar services.

The new ILEA will need to make its own purchasing arrangements. It could well be in its interests to supply others, including London boroughs which have been using the unit. It will take some time for those authorities to set up other purchasing arrangements, and they will soon need to start taking decisions. The Government hope that ILEA will open discussions with them as soon as possible in the interests of the staff concerned and before the viability of the present unit comes into question. My Department and that of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science continue to stand ready to use their good offices to that good end.

Mr. Tony Banks: I am pleased to see that the Minister at last recognises the great value of the GLC's central supply service. It has provided a valuable service, not only to Labour authorities, but to Conservative authorities which want good value for their rates money. The Minister said that he wants redundancies to be limited. How can he say that when one of the stated intentions of the Bill is to bring about at least 9,000 redundancies? What does he want — 9,000 redundancies, 7,000 redundancies, or none?

Mr. Baker: It is not a question of my wanting a specific number of redundancies. As the hon. Gentleman has followed these matters closely in Committee, is knowledgeable about them, and is involved in the GLC, he knows that it will be up to the successor authorities to determine their own staffing requirements for all the devolved functions. They must decide how to do that. I know that Conservative boroughs in London are doing that, but I do not know whether Labour boroughs are. The hon. Gentleman may have better information about that than I do. It would be sensible for all of them to do that, and to talk to the staff commission. I am pleased that the GLC's staff association wrote to us this month to thank us for the booklet that we sent it, and attached some questions, generally about the legal branch staff of the GLC, and contracts of employment. One of my officials has replied to that list of inquiries.

I hope that the hon. Gentleman will use his influence to ensure that there will be co-operation. I have no doubt that it is in the interests of GLC staff that there should be more co-operation.

Mr. Banks: I made this point in Committee and I shall repeat it now. The GLC has never attempted to prevent the dissemination of circulars from the staff commission to the staff, in the sense that they are sent to the trade unions, which are independent and affiliated to the Trades Union Congress. It is entirely within their area of responsibility to decide whether they then circulate the circulars to their members. The GLC cannot and would not intervene in any way whatsoever.

Mr. Baker: I understand that, but no doubt the hon. Gentleman will advise the union officers and the shop stewards in the GLC to pass the information to their members. That is happening outside London, and I shall say something about it later, possibly on Third Reading. I repeat that it is in the interests of the staff that discussions and co-operation should start as soon as possible.

Mr. Harry Cowans (Tyne Bridge): I appreciate that the Minister is trying to clarify the position—there was much discussion of this matter in Committee—but I am afraid that many matters have still not been clarified. The words "before the abolition date" cause some problems, because all sorts of things could happen. The magic date of 2 March 1984 also raises problems. For example, someone who had worked there for some time but who renegotiated his contract after 2 March might be adversely affected. Will he forfeit his cover under the clause? As the Minister knows, many people change jobs and renegotiate their contracts. How will they be affected by the inclusion of this magic date?

Another case that has been raised is that of a person who is made redundant two to three weeks or a month before the abolition date, but who has not received his redundancy payment by the abolition date. It would seem to be reasonable for the Minister to consider the matter.

Amendment No. 67 also causes anxiety, because, after the Bill leaves the House, it becomes open to interpretation. The House will wish to get the wording right so that the Act can be interpreted only as the House wishes it to be interpreted. Amendment No. 67 refers to "an amount". We are talking about compensation, and the Minister will know that it takes many forms, including redundancy payments, enhancements, pensions and lump sums. The words "an amount" may mean the lumping together of all those forms of compensation. If that is not the intention, the Minister owes it to the House and certainly to those outside to clarify the position. As at present drafted, the clause could be interpreted in that way.

The Bill has been drafted shoddily. I appreciate that the Minister is trying to put it right, but many points still need clarification. I hope that if there is any possibility of misinterpretation, the clause will be redrafted more tightly in another place to ensure that none of the staff suffers because of the Bill.

I echo the words of my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks): the body of the Minister's case on cost savings was the fact that there would be redundancies. I believe that the Minister does not want them, but his Bill will inevitably create them. Therefore, it is even more vital that he tightens the clause to ensure that people do not suffer.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: May I briefly answer some of the questions which the hon. Gentleman asked. New contracts made after 2 March will be caught by the clause. If a contract made before 2 March is varied, the clause does not exclude compensation payments which were in the contract at that date. The hon. Gentleman also asked about the obligation to give redundancy payments to staff who might become redundant two or three weeks before abolition. I shall check on this, but I am sure that if the obligation is not fulfilled, it will pass to and be paid for by the residuary body.

The hon. Gentleman asked me a few other questions, and the best that I can do is to write to him. He was most helpful in Committee on this admittedly complicated and arcane provision. He asked about the definition of the word "amount". It is clearly defined in amendment No. 67, but I shall check on that and on the other points that he raised.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 53

OFFERS OF EMPLOYMENT BY SUCCESSOR AUTHORITIES

Amendment made: No. 20, in page 36, line 8 leave out *'(a)'.—[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

Schedule 13

RESIDUARY BODIES

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I beg to move amendment No. 54, in page 144, line 8, at end insert—

'Access to documents of councils

7A.—(1) Any person authorised in that behalf by the London Residuary Body or the residuary body established for a county shall be entitled on producing, if so required, evidence of his authority—

(a) at all reasonable times to inspect and make copies of any document belonging to or under the control of the Greater London Council or the council of that county, as the case may be; and

(b) to require copies of any such document to be delivered to him.

(2) Any person have custody of any such document who without reasonable excuse—

(a) obstructs a person in the exercise of his rights under sub-paragraph (1) above; or

(b) refuses or fails to comply with any requirement imposed under that sub-paragraph,

shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding the third level on the standard scale and to an additional fine not exceeding £40 for each day on which the offence continues after conviction thereof.

(3) References in this paragraph to copies of a document include references to copies of any part of it.

(4) In this paragraph "document" includes any record of information and, where the record is not in legible form, the rights conferred by sub-paragraph (1) above include the right to require the information to be made available in legible form for inspection or copying and to require copies of it in that form to be delivered.'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): With this it will be convenient to take Government amendments Nos. 55 and 56.

Mr. Baker: In the period before abolition day, the residuary bodies will have to acquire a close working knowledge of the authorities whose residual affairs they will take over. Without that knowledge, they will be unable to make detailed preparations for the responsibilities this Bill will lay on them, and without such knowledge they could not ensure that important activities such as computer systems, pensions payments, and payments to external creditors continue without interruption.

I regret to say that there are still those in some unions and in some expiring authorities who consider that they can disrupt such preparations after the Royal Assent to the Bill. Amendment No. 54 should make it clear to all concerned that the residuary bodies will have every right to get to grips beforehand with the task they will inherit on abolition day.

The amendment will have a further effect. In the run-up to abolition, GLC and MCC employees will, as a matter of professional pride, be working towards a smooth handover of services. I am confident that they will do that. Moreover, some of them could hold dual appointments where their current work is to go to a residuary body. In such cases, this measure will protect staff from any improper pressure to withhold vital information from the residuary bodies.

[Mr. Baker]

Amendment Nos. 55 and 56 make a minor adjustment to the powers of residuary bodies. They enable the bodies to enter into agency agreements with central Government for the discharge of functions. This is a necessary complement to their general role of facilitating the transition to the new structure.

Mr. Cowans: This is once again an example of the Secretary of State taking draconian powers without recourse to the House. I remind the Minister that no such power was dreamt of during the passage of the Local Government Act 1972. The power will entitle officers appointed by the Secretary of State, answerable not to Parliament but only to him, to demand information, much of which may be confidential. Indeed, it could relate to the pension rights of members of an elected body.

Moreover, through the residuary body, the Secretary of State will transfer all those services to himself. One can visualise how those services will be used. It is an unnecessary provision; indeed, it is government by bludgeon. The Secretary of State cannot argue the case and obtain the co-operation of the staff, so he takes everything to himself. The provision is also one-sided, because the penalties for failure to supply information do not take into account staff being ill or having to conduct other extremely important work. They must do as they are told, and, if anything gets in the way, they will have to pay considerable fines.

The amendment also means that the Secretary of State —I am sure that he will enjoy this—will become a public body. While the draconian powers that he has unto himself now may make him look like a divine body, he does not need to become a public body as well. There is a bare-faced, unnecessary transfer of power and services to the Secretary of State. Here he is—judge, jury and executioner. Through this amendment he seeks to make that legal. It is nonsense.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment made: No. 55, in page 144, leave out line 44.—*[Mr. Kenneth Baker.]*

Clause 57

REDUNDANCY AND COMPENSATION PAYMENTS

8 pm

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I beg to move amendment No. 22, in page 38, line 40, leave out subsection (1).

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Government amendment No. 27.

Mr. Baker: During the Standing Committee's consideration of the Bill, Labour Members—notably the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett)—were concerned that clause 51(5) did not preserve the statutory rights of the GLC or MCC employees against their employers that might arise or already have arisen out of actions before abolition. The right to compensation for unfair dismissal is an example of this kind of right.

As I explained then, clause 51 does not affect such rights. I undertook to consider whether the drafting of clauses 57 and 60 might unintentionally have extinguished those rights. This indeed was the case, and this group of amendments is intended to restore those rights to former GLC and MCC staff after abolition. Its effect is to ensure that the residuary bodies can inherit the GLC's or MCCs' liabilities—and rights—arising under or in respect of contracts of employment. This answers the specific point raised by the hon. Member for Tyne Bridge (Mr. Cowans). The latter liabilities include any liabilities in respect of the statutory rights of staff such as Labour Members raised in Committee.

However, the amendment to clause 60(3) has a wider effect. It includes any vicarious liabilities of the employer for the torts of his employees—something which I know has been concerning district surveyors. In addition, the liabilities which this amendment passes to residuary bodies include the making of statutory redundancy payments to former GLC or MCC staff made redundant but not paid before abolition.

Mr. Straw: Do I understand the Minister to be saying that if there is a liability arising in respect of a tortious act by a district surveyor now, that liability will be inherited by the residual body, not the successor councils?

Mr. Baker: That is the position.

These are essentially technical amendments to improve the drafting of the Bill. Several points were raised in Committee at which I undertook to look. I have fulfilled that obligation.

Mr. Straw: We are grateful to the Minister for introducing these amendments.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 23, in page 39, line 11, leave out from 'date' to end of line 17.

No. 24, in page 39, line 19, leave out '*(a)*'.

No. 67, in page 39, line 25, at end insert—

'(4) Any person who immediately before the abolition date is in the service of the Greater London Council or a metropolitan county council under a contract of employment made before 2nd March 1984 and who is not designated for the purposes of section 50 above shall be entitled to receive from the appropriate residuary body—

(a) if the contract provided for his employment for a fixed term extending beyond that date without any provision for its prior termination by that council, an amount equal to any damages which he would have been entitled to recover from that council if it had not been abolished but had dismissed him immediately before that date; or

(b) if the contract (whether or not for a fixed term) provided for its termination by that council on payment of compensation for loss of employment, an amount equal to the compensation which he would have been entiled to receive from that council if it had not been abolished but had terminated the contract immediately before that date.

(5) In paragraph *(b)* of subsection (4) above "compensation for loss of employment" does not include any payment to be made under the contract in lieu of notice; and where the amount of compensation payable under a contract differs according to the reasons for its termination the amount payable under that paragraph shall be determined on the assumption that the contract was terminated by reason of redundancy within the meaning of the said Act of 1978.'.—*[Mr. Kenneth Baker.]*

Clause 58

PAYMENT OF PENSIONS

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Sir George Young): I beg to move amendment No. 26, in page 40, line 11, after 'service', insert ', death, injury or disease'.

This is a technical amendment widening the definition of pension in subsection (5). Subsection (2) provides for the transfer to the appropriate residuary body of certain continuing pension liabilities of the GLC and the MCCs. The definition of pension in subsection (5) does not include compensation and allowances paid in cases of death, injury or disease resulting from employment. The amendment ensures that these continuing liabilities would be included in the transfer of pension liabilities to the residuary bodies.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 60

CUSTODY OF RESIDUARY PROPERTY ETC

Amendment made: No. 27, in page 41, line 17, leave out from 'section' to end of line 21 and insert

'shall not be construed as continuing in force any contract of employment made by the Greater London Council or a metropolitan county council but the rights and liabilities to which this section applies shall include any rights and liabilities attributable to anything done or omitted under or in respect of such a contract before the abolition date except any liability to make a payment prohibited by section 51(2) above.'.—*[Sir George Young.]*

Clause 64

DISCHARGE OF CERTAIN RESIDUARY FUNCTIONS BY DESIGNATED COUNCILS

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I beg to move amendment No. 28, in page 44, line 5, leave out from 'whereby' to end of line 8 and insert

'any rights, liabilities, property or functions which by virtue of section 56, 58 or 59 above would otherwise be vested in or fall to be discharged by the residuary body established for that county are vested in or discharged by one of those councils (a "designated council") instead of that body.'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Government amendments Nos. 29, 30 and 31.

Mr. Baker: These are technical amendments. Amendment No. 28 makes it clear that the matters which may be passed by order to a district council under this clause include rights, liabilities and property covered by clauses 56, 58 and 59 as well as functions. The other amendments are simply drafting ones.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 29, in page 44, line 12, leave out from first 'the' to second 'to' in line 13 and insert 'designated council'.

No. 30, in page 44, line 19, leave out from 'to' to 'liabilities' in line 21 and insert

'section 56, impose on the designated council'.

No. 31, in page 44, line 24, leave out 'under' and insert 'falling to be discharged by virtue of'.—*[Mr. Kenneth Baker.]*

Clause 78

TRANSITIONAL PROVISIONS RELATING TO BLOCK GRANT

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I beg to move amendment No. 32, in page 53, line 5, at end insert—

'(3) Notwithstanding subsection (2) of section 3 of the Rates Act 1984 the principles in accordance with which the Secretary of State exercises his power under that section to determine a level for the total expenditure of a relevant authority in the year beginning with the abolition date may differ from those applied by him in the case of any other relevant authority.'.

This amendment fills a gap in the application of the Rates Act to lower-tier authorities taking transferred functions which are selected for rate limitation for 1986-87.

We have always recognised that in allocating the abolished authorities' spending among successor bodies for rate support grant purposes generally, we cannot rely on any simple indicator such as the successor authorities' present expenditure or population. For example, in the case of the costs of the GLC's transferred housing stock we clearly must take into account that some boroughs took very much larger transfers than others. That is why clause 78(2) confers power, for one year only, to make adjustments to successor authorities' targets without regard to general principles. I believe that that is supported by both sides of the House.

The same arguments apply to the expenditure levels which have to be set for successor authorities selected for rate limitation. Without this amendment, we could face the situation where it was obvious that one selected authority needed to spend more than another on transferred functions, but we could not allow for this because there would be no general principle to describe it. I should stress that we shall still have to apply principles to each authority, which will have to be reasonable. We shall have to justify the reasonableness; we cannot pluck figures out of the air.

I commend the amendment to the House as a sensible precaution to ensure that we can set reasonable expenditure levels that take proper account of the costs of transferred functions.

Mr. Straw: The Minister said that the Secretary of State would have to apply principles in relation to each authority and to act reasonably. Will those principles be published, because in this case the Government will be acting on an authority-by-authority basis? The Minister knows that problems arose because some of the yardsticks that the Government were following were not published until late in the day and it was recognised that that was a mistake, as they were published in the end, and simply added to the mutual suspicion that had built up.

Applying principles across the board is one thing. We can object to principles, and often do so, but there is rough justice as between one authority and another. However, where different principles apply to different authorities, it is of crucial importance that they should be published, so that those authorities and others can judge whether the Secretary of State has acted fairly. I should be glad if the Minister would reply on that point.

Mr. Tony Banks: This may be the only opportunity to put in a few other questions that the Minister may be able to answer. The first concerns rate limitation for certain successor bodies. It is a pity that neither the Minister nor the Secretary of State suggested that there should be rate limitation on London Regional Transport. I note that that successor body, in anticipation of abolition, is about to put up its fares and make its precept at whatever level it wishes. Can the Minister guarantee that the level of contribution of each of the London boroughs will be matched by a similar amount of GREA in respect of whatever they are required to pay to the London residuary body?

Can the Minister assure us that the London boroughs will not attract block grant penalties as a result of

[Mr. Tony Banks]

overspending by the residuary body? Will he remove any doubts that Labour Members and boroughs may have by making the residuary body responsible for its block grant and for any penalties that might be attributable to it?

Will the levy of the residuary body, or of any of the successor bodies, appear as a separate item on the rate demand? No doubt would exist on that point if it were a precept instead of a levy.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The answer to the last question asked by the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) is that the levy from the residuary body will have to be determined by December of this year for the following year. That is one reason why the residuary body will have to be appointed in shadow form relatively soon. It will have to take up its preparatory planning responsibilities from 1 September this year and determine the levy.

We do not envisage the residuary body's levy appearing, as it were, as a separate item in the make-up of the rate demand. That will be a matter for the individual local authority to determine, though it will probably want to itemise it separately so as to show its ratepayers the element that comes from the residuary body.

To the extent that I followed the hon. Gentleman's question about penalties and targets, I have explained that the clause allows us to vary targets. Under clause 78, the Secretary of State can vary targets to take into account a variety of matters. That is on the assumption that targets will still operate in 1986-87. I explained in Committee that I am still actively pursuing the matter at various meetings. I emphasise that the change to which I am referring will be transitional and for one year only. Ministers are not absolved from exercising their powers reasonably.

Mr. Tony Banks: Reasonably?

Mr. Baker: We have always acted reasonably, as the various court cases show. When the GLC and ILEA take us to court, we win time and again because the court vindicates us in view of the reasonable way in which the Secretary of State for the Environment exercises his judgment.

We have had a remarkable victory this week in cases which the GLC and the ILEA brought. I do not know how much they have cost their ratepayers and whether they have been awarded our costs as well. The GLC does not seem to think that any week passes well without taking action against my Department.

Mr. Tony Banks: You ain't seen nothing yet.

Mr. Baker: That statement comes from the chairman-elect. I cannot wait until he is in his frock coat, tails and pinstripes, presiding over the GLC, to see what he proposes to pass through.

The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) asked if I would publish the principles as they apply to different authorities. I shall examine that point, but I cannot give an undertaking on it now because it pertains to the whole regime of rate capping and the powers and responsibilities we have under the Rates Act.

Mr. Straw: Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that it would be difficult for anybody to judge whether the Secretary of State had acted reasonably if the principles on which he had acted were not made available?

Mr. Baker: I do not necessarily accept that, because this year, as the hon. Gentleman knows, we have not made the considerations available publicly. Under the Rates Act, an obligation was placed on rate-limited authorities to argue about expenditure levels, but none of them did so. In addition, they had the right to discuss actual rate levels. That is the way in which the legislation is drafted. I have noted the hon. Gentleman's request, but I do not intend to make a definitive statement about it tonight.

Amendment agreed to.

Schedule 14

New Authorities: Application of Local Authority Provisions

Sir George Young: I beg to move amendment No. 57, in page 150, leave out lines 19 to 23.

Mr. Deputy Speaker Mr. Ernest Armstrong): I suggest that it is convenient for the House to discuss at the same time amendment No. 58.

Sir George Young: These are technical amendments to schedule 14, which extends to the new authorities the appropriate powers currently available to local authorities generally.

Amendment No. 57 has the effect of no longer extending to the new ILEA and the metropolitan county PTAs the provisions of section 240 of the Local Government Act 1972 as regards expenses in respect of provisional orders. That extension had been intended to cope with circumstances where those authorities wished compulsorily to purchase land belonging to a local authority or statutory undertaker, common and or open space. The appropriate way forward in such circumstances, however, would be not by provisional orders but by special parliamentary procedure. Extension tc those authorities of the arrangements for provisional orders is therefore unnecessary.

Amendment No. 58 corrects a typographical error. The reference to be inserted into the Housing Act 1980 is, of course, to this Bill, once enacted: the "Local" not the "London" Government Act 1985.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment made: No. 58, in page 155, line 1, leave out 'London' and insert 'Local'.—*[Sir George Young.]*

Clause 87

GLC Housing Transfer Orders and Nomination Rights

8.15 pm

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): I beg to move amendment No. 100, in page 59, line 8, after 'order' insert 'and after the publication of a report by the Secretary of State setting out arrangements after the abolition date in relation to housing functions exercised before that date by the Greater London Council, and in particular for the continuation of housing mobility in London, the renovation of former GLC estates, the future of Thamesmead, and the effect of abolition on holders of former GLC mortgages, and the distribution of capital receipts.'

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss the following amendments: No. 37, in page 59, line 13, after 'date' insert

'provided that no such order shall prejudice the programme to renovate housing accommodation transferred under the said section 23 or shall result in any net additional revenue cost to the council of any London borough.'.

No. 101, in page 59, leave out line 20 and insert—

'*(c)* substitute for a liability to carry out works by the Greater London Council an equal liability on the Secretary of State or the London Residuary Body.'.

No. 102, in page 59, line 8, leave out clause 87.

Mr. Fraser: We now discuss in a matter of minutes the destruction of the greatest house-building authority in Britain today. We cannot debate the general, house construction, responsibilities of the GLC. Anybody who considers the overall problem of housing in London will agree that the capital has an overwhelming need for a strategic housing authority. I shall concentrate on the restricted number of issues contained in the amendments.

I wish to consider, first, the GLC homes which were transferred to the London boroughs. All told, 155,000 houses were transferred, most of them voluntarily. By 1981, eight London boroughs refused to transfer houses from the GLC—they refused to take 54,000 homes—and they made that decision for good reason.

Those boroughs knew that they could not take on the responsibility for the estates, some of them in my constituency. The houses concerned were in a poor state at the time and they knew that they could not take on the responsibility, financially or physically, unless they received help from the GLC. They knew that many of the estates which they had refused to take over were not assets but liabilities.

They were right because they were aware of the problems that taking over the GLC estates would create —many of the estates were in housing—stress areas and they were prudent to hold out against a voluntary transfer because they believed that such a transfer could easily bankrupt their housing revenue accounts. They held out, they negotiated and, at the end of the day, they did a deal. The deal was agreed between the boroughs and the GLC, and was eventually blessed by the Government.

The contents of the deal were fourfold. First, every home that was to be transferred to a London borough—one of the eight boroughs — would be improved to improvement grant standard under the Housing Act 1974, Thus, they were assured that the homes would be put into a modern and improved state.

Secondly, they sought a completion date for that obligation of 1992. Thirdly, they obtained the promise that the capital that was needed to fund those improvements would be provided by the GLC. That amounted, including the houses that were voluntarily transferred, to an obligation of about £1 billion. Fourthly, they obtained a guarantee that the deficit — the revenue deficit on running the transferred housing, which amounted to about £65 million a year—would also be funded by the GLC.

They were were right to hold out for all those conditions because the GLC, with its resources taken from the whole of London, could muster the revenue necessary to enable the transferee boroughs to carry out their responsibilities. It was appreciated that each borough could not individually guarantee renovation if left alone to do the work. It was accepted that, without that agreement, the authorities would be under an intolerable strain, not just in respect of the tenants of the estates that they were taking over but for their existing housing stock.

Over 2,000 dwellings were taken over in my constituency of Lambeth. It was known that intolerable strains would be placed on housing departments if the guarantees were not secured. At the end of the day, the authorities had the stock and a 10-year guarantee. It is wise for a purchaser, as it were, to obtain a 10-year guarantee on what he is taking over. Accompanying the stock and the guarantee was a fund of £1 billion to pay for improvements, which was extended to include voluntary arrangements. The deal was agreed between the boroughs and the GLC. Indeed, it was signed, sealed, delivered and legislated upon.

The Government are proposing a breach of the sanctity of the contract which was entered into between the boroughs and the GLC. Secondly, the Bill will breach the sanctity of the legislative blessing which was given to the arrangements which I have described. Thirdly, the Bill involves a breach of the sanctity of arrangements reached between local authorities and an interference in the way in which the sanctity of someone's home can be guaranteed from the funds provided by local authorities. The deal was attractive but now it is inconvenient to its sponsor and it is to be snuffed out. In a sense, the Minister is performing the legislative equivalent of someone who drowns kittens. What was originally attractive has become inconvenient and must be snuffed out. This means an abandonment of obligations.

There has been an outcry from tenants associations throughout London. Many of them lobbied the House of Commons last month and London Members of all political parties asked to see the Minister. The Minister refused to meet them on the issue, but he allowed them about 20 minutes to discuss the matter towards the end of the Bill's consideration in Committee. He wrote to me and part of his letter read:

"I appreciate that there has some concern on the point."

That is an underestimate. He wrote that in his opinion the concern was "misguided". The letter continued:

"After abolition,"—

the letter was written by the Minister for Housing and Construction—

"the Boroughs will become responsible for whatever renovation and repair works . . . they consider necessary, in the same way that they are already responsible for dwellings which they originally provided for themselves."

The boroughs know that. They know that they will be responsible in the same way that they are responsible for their existing housing stock. That is why they resisted the transfer.

The letter states that the boroughs will get

"the 'top slice' of London's HIP now allocated to the GLC along with all the rest of the capital's HIP allocation."

The letter adds:

"Future allocations will take particular account of liabilities inherited from the GLC."

We are not allowed to comment on the truthfulness of Ministers but if the Secretary of State and the Minister for Housing and Construction were called Pinocchio, their noses would have grown a good deal over the past couple of years. Whenever they have made forecasts about the money to be provided from capital receipts and housing investment programmes, and every time they have given any kind of assurance or denial that there will be a moratorium — the same can be said of the occasions when they have denied that there will be a cut in housing

[Mr. Fraser]

capital allocations—they have been proved wrong. The Opposition, who have accused them of wanting to cut in future, have turned out to be right.

We do not believe that the Government will provide the housing investment which is necessary or reallocate capital receipts from the assets of the GLC to make good the promise which was given. To transfer housing to the boroughs without transferring the obligations which were solemnly accepted in statutory instruments means that the obligations are likely to be abandoned, which will cause the virtual bankruptcy of some local authority housing departments. A commitment was entered into and now the Government intend to abandon it. There will be little chance for anyone to complain about these consequences once the Bill has been enacted. This will be a serious breach of an obligation and we believe it to be financial irresponsibility as well.

The eight boroughs which held out for the guarantees and conditions which they eventually secured knew what they were taking on. They held out for a statutory guarantee and that is to be removed from them. The least that the Government could do would be to accept the amendment to restore the guarantees and the sanctity of the agreements which were reached in 1981 and 1982.

The Greater London mobility scheme arranges about 6,000 moves a year in London. For many tenants there is no possibility of mobility from one part of the capital to another—this includes the elderly and disabled who want to move outside London or to the seaside—unless it is provided by local authorities under mobility schemes. The campaign for homes in central London has underlined the hopelessness of many who have rented accommodation in London. That is the position unless they have a chance to move into rented accommodation in some other part of the capital or outside the capital.

I accept that the Minister has conceded a statutory scheme and provided for more generous nomination rights. We know that because the information was contained in a letter. This is not legislation by debate in Parliament. Instead, it is the enactment of legislation by telex, letter or press release. A letter was delivered—part of it was inaccurate and it was corrected later—to my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley). That is no way to legislate for the serious housing problems of Londoners. However, the Minister has made some concessions, which are revealed in the letter.

The hon. Member has introduced some amendments, but we want to know why the Government are arrogating to themselves the function of running the Greater London mobility scheme and the meaning behind the amendments which the Government are introducing, which will introduce restrictions. The scheme should be expanded and not restricted. There should be a more generous allocation available to those who want to move from one part of London to another.

What is the future of Thamesmead, which was a brave and bold experiment on the part of the GLC? It was constructed, often on reclaimed land, in Greenwich and Bexley and it has provided thousands of homes. Viability is still at issue in some parts of Thamesmead. We want to know from the Government the nature of their long-term plans for the future of Thamesmead. We do not want to be put off by being told that Thamesmead will be transferred in the meantime to the residuary body.

An enormous sum is locked up in the GLC in mortgages which have been given to individuals to purchase their houses with GLC mortgages. A great deal is tied up in capital receipts. It is not good enough for the Government to say that the money will be allocated pro rata to the boroughs according to their housing investment programme or rateable values. The capital receipts and the other assets which are available could be used for housing purposes. They should be allocated and concentrated where there is a need for housing. They should be allocated and concentrated in areas where the GLC had a responsibility, a responsibility which is being abrogated in the Bill. It is not good enough to allow some of the money to be given to boroughs such as Ealing, which will take the money and do nothing with it. They will take the money but will redirect the homeless to other parts of the capital.

London's housing problems are far too serious to enable us to accept the Bill. The problems amount to a scandal. We have the most expensive bed-and-breakfast farce in Europe. There are about 250,000 on waiting lists in London and 2,000 are living in bed-and-breakfast accommodation. Some of these people are in inner London and the cost of providing them with bed-and-breakfast accommodation is about £20,000 a year. That sum is being spent to keep them in sordid and dangerous accommodation. Some of the homeless are suffering from malnutrition and disease. Some of them even suffer the penalty of death because of their homelessness. The proposals in the Bill are damaging and irrelevant to London's housing. The least that the Government could do would be to accept the amendment.

Mr. Simon Hughes: The Under-Secretary of State will know that if he continues to defend his Government's proposals he continues a most disreputable approach to thousands of residents of this capital city. He will remember that one of his departmental predecessors—the present Secretary of State for Defence—said that the order entitled people, when their properties were transferred from GLC ownership to borough ownership, to look to the GLC to make sure that within ten years of the transfer their properties were brought up to an acceptable standard. That statement is contained in the *Official Report*. The order was part of a package deal agreed by the Government, the GLC and the boroughs, and the Government propose to do away with it—for no better reason than that they are unwilling to do what any of these amendments would permit—to transfer the obligation to successor authorities, even if the Government go ahead and abolish the GLC.

8.30 pm

The hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) represents Lambeth, the borough next to mine. My borough of Southwark contains the highest number of properties owned by the GLC. Nearly 24,000 properties were transferred only four years ago—about a quarter of all the properties in the borough. In my constituency, more than 25 per cent. of all families live in such properties. The Government promised them that if, within 10 years, their property was in a foul state, they could take someone to court to put it in a decent state.

The Government say, "We never promised that the GLC would have the money." Of course the Government did not give that further undertaking, but that was not necessarily the problem. People had the right in law to sue

the GLC, through their borough council, if that necessary renovation work was not done. The Government propose to take away that right of the councils to sue on behalf of the thousands of ordinary, hard-working and respectable families in London.

Of course people came angrily to Parliament, because there was no need for the Government to break their word. They came here angry because the Government told them that, if the Government sustained this obligation, they would be made a privileged class and their housing would be made privileged housing. Those people live in old, often pre-world war 1 or pre-world war 2 estates in lousy conditions where, by no stretch of the imagination could their housing be described, anywhere in the western world, as privileged. They look to the Government, who have little favour with them to start with, to do something at least to live up to their promises. It is not as though the promises were made by another party not in government — they were made by the Conservative party whose members are now members of this Government.

If the Government, through the Under-Secretary of State, are going to come up with the same bland comment, "The boroughs will be given the money and, because we are about devolving authority to the boroughs, we are about devolving responsibility too," let them first accept that they are, without any doubt, breaking their word to the boroughs and the GLC that they would provide a remedy for those people. Let them say, secondly, how they propose to compensate in cash terms to enable people to deal with the dampness, lack of space and lack of renovation from which they will suffer tonight, tomorrow night and every night, until the promised work is done. Let the Government explain how they can justify the continuance of what, for any capital city in Europe, is the most appalling housing condition that anyone could imagine and one that is worsening by the month.

I hope that the Government will realise that they have no justification for their actions. I hope that they will realise also that, whatever the success they achieve in the Bill, they can at least retrieve for themselves a scintilla of decency and give some hope to people for whom this abolition Bill means that their hopes of decent housing will be gone. I hope that the Government will hold out some prospect that they will do away with banging their heads together and will come up with a proposal to replace the totally negative, unhelpful and abusive response that their proposals have so far implied.

The amendment is one of several that the Government could accept. We look for nothing less than an assurance that no one's housing will be prejudiced as a result of this clause and that the Government will keep the promise that they gave to the people only three or four years ago. That is all we look for, and nothing less will be acceptable to those thousands of people who are residents of this city and who are the Government's responsibility.

Mr. Tony Banks: Yesterday during discussions on other amendments, one Government Member said that the GLC had lost its housing functions, its ambulance services, water and sewerage responsibilities and its transport, as though somehow county hall had misplaced those functions while going about its day-to-day business. All those functions were taken from the GLC. In that sense, the GLC should not be described as having lost those functions.

Housing was one aspect that was thought to have been taken away from the GLC, but, although the Government might try to pretend otherwise, housing is still a major function of the GLC. The GLC has the largest housing programme in the country — not because it is an extravagant authority but because it is pursuing housing responsibilities which the Government imposed on it as recently as 1981.

In Committee, the Government failed lamentably to point to any GLC housing activity that was wasteful or unnecessary. They produced no evidence of savings that might be secured through abolition.

There is no logical basis whatsoever to these proposals. Although some of the housing functions are to go to the boroughs and the district councils, others are to go to a quango, which is the London residuary body, to a semi-quango, which is the national mobility office, and probably to a private trust at Thamesmead. Once again, the Secretary of State will take great powers. Could the Government come up with a more absurd idea than to allow the Secretary of State to allocate individual bungalows at the seaside to London pensioners? That is a power that the Secretary of State is taking for himself.

A most crucial part of the Bill is the fact that it contains nothing to help the tens of thousands of homeless Londoners, the half a million people on the waiting lists and the hundreds of thousands of Londoners living in the capital's decaying housing stock. One London home in four is in an unsatisfactory condition, according to the Government's statistics.

In Committee, I directed a series of questions to the Under-Secretary of State. I do not believe that I received a reply to them, so I shall try again at this late hour. Can the Minister name any GLC activity which he believes is wasteful or unnecessary? Can he name any major report on London's housing during the past 30 years that did not see the need for a London-wide strategic housing authority? How many professional bodies, institutes, academic centres, voluntary housing groups and housing associations support the Government's housing proposals? Why is the Minister proposing to transfer some GLC functions to the boroughs, when most of those people who have commented on the issue, and certainly those with the greatest housing problems, have not supported the Government's proposals at all? How will abolishing the GLC help London's homeless and upgrade the 650,000 unsatisfactory homes in the capital?

As all sensible and aware people know, London needs a strategic housing authority to deal with these massive problems, to supplement the efforts of the boroughs, which clearly cannot cope with their housing problems, and to run services which can best be carried out on a Londonwide basis. The Government's plans simply pave the way for more housing cuts. The easiest way to make them is to abolish the body with the largest housing programme in the country. As my hon. Friend the Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) and the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) said, in this Bill the Government are reneging on the assurances that they gave to the boroughs and Parliament about the modernisation of transferred GLC property. The tenants are being robbed of the commitment to renovate their homes. They will have no guarantee whatsoever that their homes will ever be renovated. In Committee and elsewhere the Government have shamefully tried to slide away from their responsibilities and have denied ever

[Mr. Tony Banks]

giving such assurances. It is a deplorable state of affairs which reflects nothing but discredit and dishonour upon the Government.

The Greater London mobility scheme means a great deal to those who live in the London borough of Newham. The Under-Secretary of State for the Environment knows about the housing problems in Newham; he has been there a couple of times. There are a number of problems over the decanting of people from Ronan Point and the TWA blocks. The result is that we cannot offer as many transfers as we should like to those on our housing waiting list and to those who are in council houses which now are not suited to their needs. We desperately need the GLMS. To put it at risk is highly irresponsible.

My last point was dealt with in Committee but we received no satisfaction from the Government. I refer to GLC mortgages. The GLC still holds 50,000 mortgages that were given some years ago to first-time buyers. Their loans, we understand, are to be transferred to the residuary body without their consent. Before it is wound up, the residuary body will attempt to finance those loans from the private sector. The Government appear to have made no plans to deal with the loans that will still be held by the residuary body when it is wound up. Many of those loans were given on fixed interest rates which are well below building society rates, yet the Government say that the loans could be transferred at less than face value. Who will cover the cost of that debt? Will it be the boroughs? If so, how much will it cost the boroughs? These questions are still unanswered, although the Bill is moving-inexorably towards the statute book. May I again ask the Under-Secretary to answer some of the questions that he has failed to answer?

Sir George Young: Of course I shall try to answer some of the questions—indeed, all of them. If the hon. Gentleman looks at the debates that we had in Committee, he will find that he posed a large number of the same questions and he will also find that I gave quite a few answers. Towards the end of his speech the hon. Gentleman implied that in some way the Greater London mobility scheme was in danger. We have made it quite clear that it will be a statutory Greater London mobility scheme. The tenants of Ronan Point have nothing to fear from the Government's proposals on the GLMS. That was made perfectly clear in Committee and I repeat that assurance now.

The hon. Gentleman implied that responsibilities had been taken from the GLC. But the GLC voluntarily transferred its stock. It was not taken from it by the Government or by the boroughs. His concept of the GLC's housing role does not stand up to examination. If he will look at the report of the Herbert commission, he will find that the commission made it perfectly clear that housing was primarily a borough function:

"Our conclusion is that housing is so closely connected with personal health and welfare services that it must be essentially a borough service."

Furthermore, the 1963 Act clearly foresaw the transfers, because section 23 confers wide powers for the transfer of GLC housing to the boroughs. Subsection (4) required the council to prepare by 1970 a programme for the transfer of its housing to borough ownership. Therefore, I immediately take issue with the hon. Gentleman about the role of the GLC.

The hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) said that it was the largest house-building agency in the country, but once its stock is transferred to Tower Hamlets in July, the GLC will be left with about 15,000 houses—less than the average holding of a London borough.

Mr. John Fraser: What about the role of the GLC in construction?

8.45 pm

Sir George Young: I shall turn in a moment to construction.

Therefore, it simply is not the case that the GLC is a powerful house-building agency in London. It was always envisaged that housing would be a borough function. I wrote to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) in November 1984 and made it absolutely clear that the role of the GLC was essentially related to its statutory and other obligations, such as those which have been dealt with this evening, a number of specified new build projects and the operation of the Greater London mobility scheme. I said:

"In our view, the boroughs are best fitted to assess and deal with all other housing requirements in their areas. They are the primary housing authorities to whom we would expect to distribute in the first instance all the HIP resources available to London other than those essential to your Council's limited role."

Therefore we are debating, to some extent, whether the GLC should have a role, which I believe it was never meant to have and which I do not think it has operated for the past few years, or whether the responsibilities should be devolved to the boroughs.

The hon. Member for Norwood made some offensive remarks about the London borough of Ealing. He implied that it would not spend its housing investment programme allocation. The London borough of Ealing spends all of its HIP allocation very responsibly and far more effectively than the London borough of Lambeth. It is not the case that all the London boroughs want the GLC to do this work. At least one London borough has already asked the Government to transfer to it the resources which currently go to the GLC for the transferred stock. It has made it quite clear that it thinks that it could use the money more effectively, and I have a great deal of sympathy for that view.

I cannot advise the House to accept these amendments. They seek to maintain after abolition a mandatory programme for the renovation of ex-GLC housing to be carried out either by the London residuary body or by my Department. Inevitably, however one phrases it, this will be at the expense of other local authority housing and tenants in London. That is the direct implication of the amendments.

I have already written to all right hon. and hon. Members who represent London constituencies to explain why, in my view, it is misguided to insist on such a requirement. We have repeatedly made it clear, and I make it clear again this evening, that abolition will leave London's housing capital resources essentially unchanged. The housing investment programme resources which would have been made available to the GLC will instead be distributed among the boroughs. That will take full account of the distribution of expenditure needs which they inherited from the GLC. The prescribed proportion of virtually all the housing capital receipts generated by the

London residuary body will be distributed in proportion to the HIP allocations which, as the hon. Member for Norwood knows, reflect housing need.

At the same time, the arrangements which we shall make under rate support grant will ensure that the broad financial effect of the GLC's obligatory revenue deficit payments is preserved, subject to the outcome of the review that the GLC is currently undertaking and allowing for the ending of the GLC's precept. These new arrangements, together with those which already exist, mean that abolition will have little, if any, effect on the net revenue cost to individual boroughs of the renovation works which they undertake and which otherwise would have been carried out by the GLC. Therefore, on the capital and revenue responsibilities of the boroughs in relation to the transferred stock, the position should be neutral.

We are consulting the local authority associations about the detailed technical arrangements. I very much hope that they will all choose to respond constructively. In any case, the effects which I have outlined will apply, irrespective of the authorities' current spending position in relation to their grant-related expenditure assessments or their targets, should targets continue to be set. Therefore, the arrangements will be ring-fenced and will not be adversely affected. The financial position of the dwellings that they have provided will be irrelevant.

We are therefore ensuring that the individual boroughs will be able to continue the GLC's renovation programme, if they wish. They will suffer little, if at all, from the ending of the GLC's obligations to make deficit payments and to carry out works. As I have already said, at least one borough positively welcomes the changes.

Mr. Banks: The Minister said that the renovations will go ahead, if the boroughs wish. Does he not feel that this is in conflict with the assurances that were given at the Dispatch Box by the previous Secretary of State for the Environment, who made it clear that there would be a requirement to carry out these renovations? It has now become not a mandatory but a permissive requirement.

Sir George Young: If the hon. Gentleman will look at the debate in Standing Committee G, he will see that at column 1113 I said that my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) the previous Secretary of State for the Environment had been asked specifically for that assurance, and that he had made it quite clear that he could not give it. I quoted him as saying that the hon. Member who had asked the question

"knows full well that I am not able to commit this or any future Government over a period of 10 years with the degree of precision implied by the hon. Gentleman's question." — [*Official Report*, 31 March 1981; Vol. 2, c. 156.]

It is definitely not the case tht a cast-iron guarantee was given by the Government that the resources would be made available to carry out the work to the transferred stock.

I am happy to leave those decisions to the boroughs. They know the position in their local authorities far better than I do. Rate capping is not a relevant factor. We are talking here about capital allocations, not revenue. In any case, as I have made clear, the revenue impact is neutral.

There is no case for requiring the boroughs or anyone else, least of all my right hon. Friend, to undertake those works, irrespective of the relative needs for expenditure between the ex-GLC stock and the dwellings which the local authorities have provided. That must be a decision for the local authorities. Their members have knowledge of local circumstances and local priorities.

If I am unable to deal with all the points that have been made, I shall write to hon. Members, but I understand that the House would like to come to a conclusion on this debate. There has been a lot of misleading talk about guarantees and tenants' rights under the transfer orders. The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) implied that the tenants in some way had rights. They do not. The rights under the orders are held by the boroughs or, in some cases, by the GLC as, in effect, a condition of transfer. The tenants in residence at the time were not a party to the orders and they did not receive any rights under them.

The GLC was to undertake certain works for the boroughs, but clearly it could do so only within the resources at its disposal. As I have explained, my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley explicitly refused at the time to guarantee that resources would be available. If one looks at what the GLC has spent its money on, it can be seen that it has chosen to use part of what it had for other purposes — for example, housing association loans and improvement grants. Therefore, I cannot accept the accusation that our proposals involve any breach of assurances. Indeed, by devolving power to the boroughs, they ensure that full responsibility for all local authority stock is held at as local a level as possible.

Let me deal briefly with Thamesmead, GLC mortgages and the mobility scheme. We may come to some Government amendments later which are entirely unsinister and give no cause for anxiety. I have explained that we are committed to ensuring that the statutory mobility scheme is maintained. That is the basis of sub-sections (2), (3) and (4). We have announced that our first preference for Thamesmead is the establishment of a non-profit making trust for the area, but I have made it clear, and I do so again this evening, that we shall not impose one against the clear wishes of the majority of the residents should they prefer transfer to borough ownership.

As I have already said, GLC mortgages will be transferred to the London residuary body on their existing terms and conditions. The residuary body will seek to refinance them, but only with the borrowers' consent. I have made it clear, and I will make it clear again, that our intention is that the prescribed proportion of virtually all the housing capital receipts generated by the LRB should be distributed in proportion to HIP allocations.

I have tried to deal with the points that have been raised in the debate. We have already had this debate in Committee, and no new arguments have been adduced by Labour Members to make me change my mind. I am convinced that the arrangements are right and that the London boroughs will discharge their new responsibilities efficiently and responsibly. I ask the House to reject the amendments.

Mr. John Fraser: Because we are so short of time and because I do not want to prevent hon. Members from making their last contributions on Report, I shall not press the amendment to a Division. However, I repeat our dissatisfaction that the Government do not recognise that a promise is a promise is a promise.

Amendment negatived.

Sir George Young: I beg to move amendment No. 38, in page 59, line 33, after 'delegate', insert ', with or without restrictions,'.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Government amendment No. 39.

Sir George Young: Amendment No. 38 is a technical amendment. As the clause stands, it could be said that the Secretary of State may delegate the entire exercise of his nomination rights or not at all. Thus, where the nomination rights were not already part of a statutory scheme—for example, in relation to lettings of housing association properties — it might not be possible to ensure that the delegate exercised them in conformity with whatever new scheme had been agreed. The amendment simply rectifies that deficiency.

Conversely, amendment No. 39 is aimed at ensuring that the delegate may have powers wide enough to carry out the functions that might be needed in the conduct of the London mobility scheme. There has been some concern that, on occasion, it might not be possible for the scheme to operate invariably by consensus and that it might be necessary for the nomination rights to be enforced. I hope that that will not be the case, and, given good will, I see no reason why it should be.

The clause, as drafted, enables the Secretary of State to create nomination rights corresponding to those held by the GLC which are conferred by the statutory housing transfer orders. It is our firm intention that the operation of the scheme should be delegated to local level, and we hope that it will be possible for its operation to be in the hands of, for example, a committee of the boroughs and districts concerned. But it is right that it should be possible for the delegate to enforce the nomination rights to the same extent, for example, as the GLC is able to do.

The amendment simply puts the delegate's powers beyond doubt. Therefore, it could form a valuable element in the statutory Greater London mobility scheme which has all-party support among the boroughs. Therefore, I commend the amendments to the House.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment made: No. 39, in page 59, line 35, at end insert

'(and accordingly such an authority, body or person may take any action necessary for the enforcement of those rights)'.—*[Sir G. Young.]*

Clause 95

TRANSFERS OF PROPERTY RIGHTS AND LIABILITIES

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): I beg to move amendment No. 40, in page 66, line 23, at end insert—

'(3A) Prior to the making of any Order relating to the functions of the Greater London Council specified in subsection (3B) below the Secretary of State shall consult with the statutory bodies, user representatives, and persons principally concerned with each specified function.

(3B) The specified functions in respect of Section (3A) above shall be:

(i) Ownership, operations and control of the Thames Flood Barrier and associated flood control structures and facilities.

(ii) Ownership and operations of the Woolwich Free Ferry and its associated plant and facilities.

(iii) Ownership and operation of piers on the River Thames.

(iv) Ownership and maintenance of bridges over the River Thames.

(v) Ownership, maintenance, and control of pedestrian and vehicle tunnels under the River Thames.'.

It is entirely appropriate that this may be the last Opposition amendment dealt with on this unsatisfactory Bill, because it deals with the powers and responsibilities of the GLC in respect of the River Thames. The Thames is London's major natural feature and all good government has to do with its control and use.

The GLC, with Government assistance, having spent £800 million of public money on matters such as flood control, on the operation of which it spends over £36 million a year, the Government have made no provision in the Bill for what shall happen to that basic fundamental function. In doing that they show their lack of consideration and understanding for the basic principles of government within Greater London.

My amendment would give the Government power to transfer to any body or person responsibilities currently under the control of the GLC. My amendment makes mandatory on the Government the responsibility of consultation in respect of functions relating to the Thames, in particular, the flood barrier and the Woolwich free ferry, both of which have one end in my constituency, and all its bridges, piers and tunnels. The importance of all those features is that they connect either side of the river or provide features which are common, particularly piers, along the length of the river.

The Government have made one move in that direction. Late last night the Minister of State, Department of Transport handed me a letter which told me that the Government were proposing to the London boroughs of Newham and Greenwich that they should jointly run the Woolwich ferry. There was no mention of how much it would cost. It is a trunk road facility, and relatively few of the vehicles that use the Woolwich ferry originate in either Woolwich or Newham. There is no information about how the existing facilities, which also deal with the Thames water authority vessels, should be used or managed. That is typical of the way in which the Government have dealt with fundamental facilities in London. Flood control and prevention are just two of those facilities. In the closing minutes of the proceedings on the Bill we still have no real idea of what will happen.

If there had been consultation, even with those who know something about the matter, the relatively ludicrous idea of splitting control of the important Woolwich ferry into two would not have been put forward. Moreover, are the Government suggesting that Westminster bridge, for example, should be controlled by the Cities of London and Westminster, on the one hand, and by Lambeth, on the other? Are the bridges to be dealt with borough by borough when a coherent and unified department has been running them not just since the creation of the London county council, but since before 1889? The Metropolitan Board of Works built bridges prior to the creation of the LCC.

As the Bill moves towards the final guillotine, we are faced with the ludicrous possibility of London's bridges being guillotined by the Government so that there are boroughs on either side. I am glad that the Minister of State, Department of Transport shakes her head at that. I am very relieved. But the situation illustrates the parlous state into which parliamentary democracy has fallen. We have £40 million or £50 million of revenue expenditure on London's basic services, and on its flood control, bridges, ferries, piers and tunnels, yet we do not know how they are to be run or controlled, or what will happen to the staff. Therefore the guillotine——

9 pm

Mr. Speaker *then proceeded to put forthwith the Questions necessary for the disposal of the business to be concluded at Nine o'clock.*

Clause 98

ORDERS ETC

Amendment made: No. 41, in page 68, line 12, leave out '2(1) of Schedule 3' and insert '10 of Schedule 5'. *—[Sir G. Young.]*

Clause 100

INTERPRETATION

Amendment made: No. 42 in page 69, line 2, at end insert—

'(3) Any provision of this Act enabling a power to be exercised or anything else to be done before the abolition date so as to take effect on or after that date is without prejudice to section 13 of the Interpretation Act 1978 (anticipatory exercise of powers).'.*—[Sir G. Young.]*

Schedule 17

REPEALS

Amendments made: No. 109, in page 161, line 13, at end insert—

'20 & 21 Geo. 5 c. 43.	The Road Traffic Act 1930.	In section 121, the definition of "Highway authority".'.

No. 60, in page 161, leave out lines 14 and 15.

No. 61, in page 166, line 2, column 3, leave out 'Sections 30 and 34(9)' and insert 'Section 30'.

No. 62, in page 166, line 39, leave out

'paragraphs 1, 4, 5(2), 7A, 7B'

and insert

'paragraph 1, in paragraph 2 the words from "such other matters" onwards and paragraphs 4, 5(2)'.

No. 63, in page 174, line 12, column 2, leave out 'Areas'.

No. 64, in page 175, line 16, column 3, leave out 'paragraph 13(1)*(a)*, *(b)* and *(c)*' and insert

'in paragraph 13, sub-paragraph (1)*(b)* and *(c)* and in sub-paragraph (2) the words "*(b)*, *(c)* and".'.

No. 65, in page 179, line 54, at end insert—

1983 c. 55	The Value Added Tax Act 1983.	In section 20(6) the words "the Greater London Council".

No. 66, in page 183, line 14, column 3, leave out 'and 13(1)' and insert ', 10, 11 and 13.'.*—[Sir G. Young.]*

Order for Third Reading read.

9.1 pm

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

We are now concluding one of the most extensive examinations of any Bill in recent times. We had a full two days on Second Reading; two days on the Floor of the House discussing clause 1; and then 35 Committee sittings upstairs with 176 hours of debate. We have spent 216 hours discussing the Bill. That is more than twice the amount of time that the House spent considering the London Government Bill in 1963. Today, the GLC took full-page advertisements in several of our national newspapers—I have one of the advertisements with me —to complain that a ridiculously short time limit had been set on debate.

The GLC clearly does nor understand how the House works. It singled out ILEA. But the time that we spent in Committee on ILEA, some five and a half hours, is exactly the same length of time as was spent on the ILEA clauses in the 1963 Bill, which set up ILEA from scratch. The GLC also said that we spent little time on fire and civil defence. But we spent a considerable amount of time on those subjects in Committee upstairs, whereas in the 1963 Bill only 10 minutes was spent on them.

The GLC claim that we spent four hours debating the funding of voluntary bodies, whereas we spent 12 hours debating that. Indeed, the Bill has broken another record —for the amount of public money spent on misleading advertising. By the time that the GLC is abolished it will have spent more than £10 million of ratepayers' money on its awareness campaign alone. The metropolitan county councils have also joined in the bonanza.

Today, the GLC excelled itself. Two separate full-page advertisements and one half-page advertisement on the Greater London Enterprise Board appeared in *The Times*. There were full-page advertisements in *The Guardian*, the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Express*. The total cost to London ratepayers was £63,348. It is absolutely scandalous that such money should be spent by the GLC. It would have bought some 30,000 meals on wheels and would have given support to many of the voluntary bodies that the GLC always tells me that it must save. What sticks in the gullets of many of London's ratepayers is that the GLC has not spared spending money on the best advertising agencies and the best public relations firms that money can buy.

Mr. Straw *rose*——

Mr. Baker: Representatives from the public relations firms attended our Committee sittings and have been very active. No doubt they will again be very active. Indeed, I hope that they will be active, because the GLC has spent a lot of money on them. As I have said before, no tin of caviar has been left unopened and no bottle of champagne has been left uncorked in the attempt to persuade people of the virtues of the survival of the Socialist GLC.

Mr. Straw: I have not had any, and neither have my hon. Friends. It is a fantasy. As the Minister is talking about misleading things, will he have the guts to admit that he gravely misled the House and the country when he claimed that he had believed in the abolition of the GLC throughout the 1960s and the 1970s, when year after year he actively supported the GLC?

Mr. Baker: The hon. Gentleman has raised this consistently and has quoted from my collected works. I have answered the point on many occasions and I will say now what I have said before, that I supported the GLC when it was a matter of having a strategic body for land use planning. As I made clear in my speech last night, I have always maintained that view and I continue to maintain it. The strategic over-view needed for land use planning and roads is indeed an essential part of this Bill.

I was dealing with the advertising campaign of the GLC. I note with interest that the GLC still includes on its advertisements the assertion that "74 per cent. say no" but I have also noticed that the size of the "74 per cent." saying no has been shrinking and it is now tucked away in the corner of the advertisements. Could it be that the GLC are backing off this particular statistic?

[Mr. Baker]

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) admitted that there have been other opinion polls, and I have discovered that further polls have been commissioned. We understand that in fact the figure was more like 60 per cent. or 50 per cent., and the opinion polls are being fudged and fiddled. We have a right to know what the opinion polls say, because it is the ratepayers of London who are paying for them.

I do not really expect the hon. Member for Newham, North-West to answer any of our questions because he has now been elected, by 26 votes to 20, chairman-elect of the GLC for its last year. I have asked him on several occasions and the House is still waiting to hear from him whether he is going to collect his chairman's allowance of £8,000 or is he going to give it up. [HON. MEMBERS: "Cheap."] It certainly is not cheap; the hon. Gentleman is not to be had as cheaply as that.

People are now beginning to ask how these authorities can find the time and the money to devote to publicity campaigns on this scale. Why are they not devoting their energies to giving ratepayers better value for money?

There is certainly no doubt about the view of the House on the Bill. In December there was a majority of over 130 for Second Reading of the Bill. Last night there was a majority of over 124 against an amendment which Mr. Ken Livingstone had welcomed as

"the biggest breakthrough in the battle against the Bill".

He claimed that the amendment showed

"the overwhelming disquiet in the Conservative party about abolition".

Once again Mr. Livingstone backed the wrong horse.

Last night the House made an emphatic statement—that it wants to see the end of the GLC and does not want to see a directly elected successor body with executive functions and a power to raise money. The majority was substantial. In effect, 61 per cent. of those voting said yes to the end of the GLC and yes to no successor authority.

It is four months since we introduced the Bill. Many of those affected by the change have chosen to act as though it would never happen. I have news for them—it will. Mr. Livingstone may not recognise this, but many other people do.

The more responsible successor councils with the real interests of staff and ratepayers at heart are well on in their detailed consideration of what needs to be done in their areas. Getting on for half of them have discussed their plans with my Department. Even authorities which remain formally opposed to abolition are making preparations in this way.

Good progress is being made in planning the transfer of services to the London boroughs, the district councils and other successor bodies. The point is well illustrated by the statement which I made earlier today.

The independent staff commission has begun to make its contribution to smoothing the transmission for staff. The Government shares the commission's aim to keep redundancies to a minimum, to retain expertise in local government and to maintain services to ensure the smoothest transition.

I understand that even the GLC, despite its refusal to enter into discussion and to accept abolition, has submitted formal comments to the commission. I am glad that it recognises that the interests of staff must be properly considered.

Outside London, I welcomed the decision by the West Midlands county council's NALGO branch to enter into discussions with the Commission and the Government. It recognises that abolition will happen and that it would be unwise to wait until Royal Assent to discuss staffing issues. By then it will be too late to change the Bill. I have also just had an approach from the midlands region branch of TGWU requesting a meeting. I shall see them as soon as I can.

At this stage in the progress of the Bill it is worth pausing to consider why there is now a much more positive approach to abolition by the successor authorities. It is because the MCCs have failed to create and define a role for themselves. It is because, as we saw in our debate yesterday, those who want an overall body in London have no coherent view on why there should be such a body, what it should do, or how it should be constituted. It is because the GLC and the MCCs are now seen to be squandering ratepayers' money in a last desperate attempt to save themselves. It is because these authorities have always been thoroughly disliked by the boroughs and districts which are the real power base in local government in the conurbations.

In Committee I referred to the disdain—that is not too strong a word—expressed by some hon. Members towards the activities of borough councillors. It has been suggested that a district councillor cannot lift his eyes above the boundaries of his own borough. I quote the words of the Conservative leader in Trafford, Councillor King. In an article in the *Local Government Chronicle* he said:

"The suggestion that I as a borough councillor can represent my constituents when talking about education or housing but that if I talk about the police or the fire service this is somehow undemocratic, is preposterous . . . The charge that we are incapable of rising above parochial interest and reaching agreement across geographical and party lines is both insulting to districts and has no basis in history or reality."

Councillor King is right. I fully endorse that sentiment. District and borough councillors have an interest which is wider than that covered by their area or conurbation.

In our 1983 election manifesto we said:

"The metropolitan Councils and the Greater London Council have been shown to be a wasteful and unnecessary tier of government. We shall abolish them and return most of their functions to the boroughs and districts. Services which need to be administered over a wider area—such as police and fire, and education in inner London—will be run by joint boards of borough or district representatives."

In almost exactly one year from today we shall fulfil that manifesto promise. The metropolitan counties and the GLC have just 368 days left. The boroughs and districts will have the powers which they have sought for so long. The people of London and the metropolitan counties will have a more effective and cheaper system of government. The House has clearly shown its support for the Government's policy. I commend the Bill to the House.

9.13 pm

Dr. Cunningham: The Minister of State talked about borough councillors lifting their sights. It is a pity that the Minister of State in his speech did not lift his sights above the petty, the tawdry and the insulting. Perhaps he was right, because this is a petty, tawdry Bill. It is also dangerous and damaging.

The Minister not only insulted the House and elected representatives in the GLC and metropolitan councils in

his opening remarks, but he insulted the 18 million people who live in the GLC and met areas. He has done his reputation no good.

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Patrick Jenkin): Rubbish.

Dr. Cunningham: It is interesting that the Secretary of State for the Environment has not even bothered to take part in much of our deliberation on the Bill to defend his own proposals.

We face the final vote, by one set of the people's representatives, on a measure which abolishes another set of elected representatives. The fundamental question right from the outset has been: why should we have the Bill and why has it been put together in this way? The honest answer, which is recognised by the overwhelming majority, including many Conservatives in spite of the votes and strenuous whipping, is simply because the representation in the great conurbations, including our capital city, does not suit the Government and does not find acceptance by the Administration. The councils are being abolished principally for that political reason.

Much has been said in the discussion on the Bill about the important services that will be adversely affected—trading standards, refuse disposal, fire services, administration and funding of the arts, and the strategic development of the cities and the capital. The Bill is really about the tyrannical attitude of the Government and the way that attitude is being enforced by what many people regard as an elective dictatorship.

The Secretary of State is perhaps an unlikely sounding tyrant. However, he and his Cabinet colleagues are systematically removing the rights of people in a succession of measures which have been forced through the House. The Government have been able to get away with it because the people are governed without constitutional protection.

To most of us on this side of the House the right hon. Gentleman seems probably more accident-prone than tyrannical. If we consider his record in his present office, in his determination to trap Sheffield by rate-capping he also trapped Portsmouth, thereby losing a safe Conservative seat in a by-election. If we go further back to his energy-saving days, he exhorted people to brush their teeth in the dark, no doubt while he was using an electric razor. Again in 1980 he had to be persuaded by his Cabinet colleagues not to damage seriously the budget of his own Department of Health and Social Security. As Daniel Defoe wrote:

"all men would be tyrants if they could."

An even closer examination of the right hon. Gentleman's more recent history demonstrates his tendencies. In 1979 he acted outside the law, abusing his powers to dismiss an area health authority, a decision overturned by the courts. There was his refusal to accept his responsibilities under the law with respect to the Greater London development plan; he changed the law to get out of his legal obligations there. In the consideration of this Bill in Committee and again yesterday and today he brought amendments and new provisions to the House to change matters retrospectively to suit his own political purposes. That is the record of the right hon. Gentleman in removing people's rights on the one hand and acting beyond his powers on the other.

In some cases at least the people who were affected could take him to court, but in this Bill the Government are taking away the right of people to vote for direct, democratic control of a host of local services, many of them of considerable importance to our daily lives. I can understand why the right hon. Gentleman does not want to listen to his record, because it is so abysmal. Some of the services will be run indirectly by people elected for other purposes or by ministerial placemen or by ministerial diktat. Others will be run we know not how, as was made clear again today in the debate on refuse disposal.

After all the hours of discussion, consideration and debate, to which the Minister for Local Government referred, fundamental questions remain unanswered. That is the reality of the paucity of the Government's case. Yet more provisions that exist and are important in the everyday life of people will simply disappear because the resources—the money—will not be available to sustain them.

It has become clear from our consideration of the Bill that the impact of abolition, contrary to Government claims, will have far-reaching and damaging effects on people's lives, on the delivery of services and on the quality of services on which so many people depend. Other local authorities and agencies, the private sector and voluntary organisations will be adversely affected.

The Bill has been shown to have what are often called major constitutional implications. Yet we have no constitution in this country against which to test it. Two thousand years ago Plato in his Republic discussed the passing of democracy into despotism. Recent history provides examples and reminds us of how a formal constitution can protect the people from that kind of transition.

It was in Germany before the last war that a lack of such constitutional structure and built-in safeguards allowed despotism to develop and to tyrannise the world. It was no accident that after that conflagration the western powers imposed upon Germany a carefully tiered structure of local, regional and federal government with elections at every level to provide checks and balances. No element in that structure could be struck out by a simple vote of the national Parliament. Yet that is exactly what this House is being asked to do tonight—to strike out a tier of democratically elected local government.

In the United States as recently as the 1970s, constitutional provisions have been used to protect the American people from the disordered will of their then President. Yet tonight the House is being asked to eliminate a tier of local government for which 13 million citizens of our country are entitled to vote. That part of the democratic rights of people living in all our major urban areas is being removed. Ironically, all that may stop it — may — are the votes of people in another place, themselves not elected, but there by an accident of birth or by appointment.

Let the House remember that, in considering the passage of democracy being undermined by this Government, the Bill follows by only a few months the Secretary of State's and the Government's previous assumption of central authoritarian powers under the Rates Act, formerly widely dispersed to other elected politicians. The Rates Act also involved centralisation, under the right hon. Gentleman's control, of decisions formerly at the discretion of local councillors. Like the whale in John Donne's "Progress of the Soul", the Secretary of State is insatiable — his gulf-like throat sucks in everything that passeth near. The passage of the

[Dr. Cunningham]

Bill has taught us much—*[Interruption.]* The Minister for Local Government might complain, but I am more concerned about the democratic and constitutional issues than he was in his pathetic and tawdry speech to the House a few moments ago.

Mr. Marlow: As the hon. Gentleman knows, the democratic and constitutional process will allow his party to fight a general election. If it wins, that process will allow his party to reinstate what is being changed by the Bill. Will he give us a commitment from the Dispatch Box that he will reinstate these authorities?

Dr. Cunningham: I shall come to that in a moment. I do not think that the hon. Gentleman can be too keen on the prospect of a general election just at the moment. The Opposition would strongly welcome the people of London and of other major conurbations being allowed to have a vote in the elections that should have been taking place. We are confident of what the outcome would have been. It is the hon. Gentleman's party which is running away from and circumventing the ballot box, not the Labour party. We are willing to put our faith in the people and to let them vote on these issues. They have not had the opportunity properly to consider these matters at any time during the Government's term of office.

The passage of the Bill has taught us much. We have learned that the GLC and the six metropolitan authorities have a real and necessary role. They have important functions, which are best performed under elected supervision. We have learned that, in their relatively short lives, they have offered services which are appreciated by the people in the areas that they control. We have learnt that they have been run by diligent politicians of all political parties, working in their spare time to improve the quality of life for their fellow citizens.

We have learned also that the local administrative structures of the country require a thorough review, whether they fall under the Department of the Environment or other Ministries. The disaster of these proposals is that they are not based on any proper systematic, independent, authoritative, review but are cobbled together in haste without any evidence to support or substantiate them. We still adhere to the view that such an examination or review should take place before any fundamental constitutional changes such as this are proposed.

When in government, we shall ensure that there is a proper review of local government structure, functions and role.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Cunningham: No, I am coming to the end of my speech and do not want to speak any longer.

We have all learned that the Secretary of State is not interested in democratically expressed criticisms from whatever direction, source or political party. Perhaps it is worth reminding Conservative Members of what a famous Conservative—Edmund Burke—had to say about such matters:

"Bad laws are the worst sort of tyranny."

We are today seeing yet another example of such tyranny. It is only the latest in a long line which the Government have brought to the House.

Many people before the Secretary of State and the Minister for Local Government, including William Pitt, have said:

"Necessity is the plea for every infringement of human freedom."

That is the kind of argument that we have had from the Government to justify what they are doing, and it is simply not good enough.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. It might be for the convenience of the House if I announce that the Front Benches will seek to rise at 9.50 pm. Many hon. Members wish to speak. Will they please bear that in mind?

9.29 pm

Sir John Osborn (Sheffield, Hallam): I have followed the proceedings of the Committee and Report stages with immense interest, and I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government on the way in which he has conducted them. I have supported the Bill throughout. Within 15 years, however, I have listened to Second Reading and Third Reading Front Bench speeches, and both Conservative and Labour Ministers have reversed their arguments in that time.

I shall touch on the future, with the benefit of hindsight into what happened in the early 1970s. My former right hon. Friend the Member for Crosby, Graham Page, was largely responsible at that time for the administration of the transition to the two-tier system. The transition was so great that it was inevitably not smooth. In the early 1970s I supported my right hon. Friends and thought that the two-tier system would work, but since then the political supporters of the Conservative party in south Yorkshire — those in the professions and industry — have increasingly pressurised me to do away with that extravagance. That is why I welcome what was written into the Conservative manifesto at the last election.

In Committee and on Report, issues such as refuse disposal standards were debated. While the Committee was sitting, officials from the various departments in south Yorkshire affected by the transition invited me to see what they were doing. Although I have had good contacts with Conservative county councillors in south Yorkshire, Sheffield and other districts, I felt that the officials had not been at ease in approaching me or my right hon. and hon. Friends.

The chief executive for south Yorkshire, Mr. John Harris, approached me as the only Conservative Member for that area. Representatives of the unions in south Yorkshire have come to me and were especially worried about severance pay. I suggested to them that the Socialist-controlled county council with its "no redundancy" policy, when industry in the area was having to declare redundancies, may have brought this on itself and its employees. I said that in the long term the county council may well not have been a good employer.

Officials have appealed to me because they want a smooth transition, and I have sent my right hon. and hon. Friends letters. I hope that county councillors will get together with district councillors, and that officials will get together, especially in south Yorkshire.

Many people have told me that they will be declared redundant. However, the services which have been carried out by the county council will not necessarily be

dismantled, but will be carried on by the district councils. Therefore, there are opportunities for those affected by the change.

It is imperative that the employers — in south Yorkshire they are the South Yorkshire county councillors, their officials, the district councillors and their officials — act as good employers, work together and ensure that as many people as possible retain employment using the skills that they have acquired under the county council. I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends will take that matter up, especially when they visit south Yorkshire.

9.33 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): In 1964 the Greater London council was born—created by a Tory Government. Eleven years ago the metropolitan county councils were born — created by a Tory Government. In 1979, when the Tory Goverment came to power, the jewel of their crown was the GLC, but that changed when the GLC was taken over by the Labour party. Therefore, in May 1983 the Government changed tack and decided to abolish the GLC and the MCCs. "Abolish the GLC and the Mets," they cried. "Two-tier government in the Met areas is now inappropriate," they claimed, although in the predominantly Tory shires it was to continue.

Abolition went into the manifesto. The Government fought the election on that manifesto and lost support, but our perverse system gave them more Members of Parliament, despite the decrease in public support for them. Then the new Conservative concept was born. They were wedded to their manifesto. Their actions were unprecedented. There was no royal commission, no public inquiry, and what comments they sought, they refused to publish.

For years the Liberal party has argued that we are too centralist a state. We have argued for devolution and regional government. We saw the GLC as a prototype for regional government, and supported its creation. The proposed six metropolitan authorities were in all cases much too small to be regional authorities and, therefore, we opposed their creation. The Bill will abolish all seven.

We want London to have a proper regional authority; to do that, one should develop and improve, not abolish what exists. Strategic functions will always exist, and they should always be controlled by a democratically elected authority, not by a combination of the powers of the Secretary of State, quangos and joint boards. We wish the metropolitan counties to be replaced too, but by democratic regional government, not by the muddle that the Government propose.

Even my hon. Friend the Member for Rochdale (Mr. Smith), who on Second Reading supported the Government, will not support them tonight. He and my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton), like the rest of my colleagues, find the proposals unacceptable. The House should now take the opportunity to have the sort of inquiry that we proposed. If there is not to be a royal commission, there should at least be local public inquiries. While galloping through the Bill, the Government have made hardly any concessions. Almost every expert in the land is ranged against them. The Government, in their conception, birth and development of the Bill, have always intended to take liberties, not for local government but with local government. Liberals and our alliance partners believe, of course, that as much power as possible should be held by local boroughs and districts, but we believe that in each region of Britain there should be democratic structures at all levels. More powers to the Secretary of State, more quangos and more joint boards are unacceptable.

The Government's distorted, apparent majority in the House reflects the distorted attitude of the present centralist Tory Government. We reject their centralist, arrogant and muddled attitude to local democracy.

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): Their Stalinist attitude.

Mr. Hughes: The hon. Gentleman might be right.

We shall oppose this politically misguided, muddled, party political Bill. If we cannot stop the Bill on Third Reading, we look to the House of Lords, as it did last year, fundamentally to turn round the Government's course in the months ahead.

9.37 pm

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): It is always difficult at this late hour in such a debate to make further significant points, but I must say that the Bill has been an extremely unhappy experience for many Conservative Members. It has been a dialogue of the deaf, and a case of the bland leading the blind. We have seen a parliamentary steamroller driven with great suavity but a remarkable lack of conviction.

For many months, many of us have tried to persuade our right hon. Friends on the Front Bench that the course upon which they were embarked with regard to London was not entirely wise. Of course, it was difficult to do so, because we were faced with immense preconceptions on the part of our right hon. Friends.

The Government's attitude can be exemplified in two quotations. The first is from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State who, when answering the amendment of my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Feltham and Heston (Mr. Ground), said yesterday:

"Is it not clear that all the major planning and transport decisions fall inevitably . . . to the Government and to the House? . . . Where does London begin and end?"—[*Official Report*, 27 March 1985; Vol. 76, c. 560.]

From somewhere on the Back Benches came the cry, "In Marsham street." Of course that is right. As the Shadow Minister for Local Government said in reply to the debate, we live in an era of grant-related expenditure assessments, of targets, of ratecapping and of a decline in autonomy and local accountability. The Bill will accelerate that process, to the detriment of London's government, as was so forcefully put across in the cogent speech of my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham (Sir I. Gilmour).

The other quotation from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State came in the Second Reading debate when he said that London is just

"a series of separate local areas with diverse characteristics. Camden has little in common with Croydon; Hackney has little in common with Harrow; Redbridge has little in common with Richmond."—[*Official Report*, 3 December 1984; Vol. 69, c. 27.]

The alliterations may have made good rhetoric, but those of us who live and work in London know that there are common interests which transcend borough boundaries, and certain functions that need to be fulfilled properly on a central basis because it is more rational and cost-effective so to do.

[Mr. John Wilkinson]

The Government, had they chosen, had the mechanism in the Bill to provide a sensible division between services provided at a local level and services provided at the centre. The mechanism was straightforward. All services and functions that could be, should be transferred to the boroughs. We do not quibble, we make no cavil about those services that, in this legislation, are so to be transferred. However, those that, in the Bill, are to go to joint boards, to the Secretary of State and to the strategic planning commission should more democratically and properly go to a directly elected Londonwide body. In Heaven's name, why should this party be afraid of democracy and of the ballot box?

This last point is the aspect of the measure which is so shocking to us, because implicit, if not openly acknowledged, in the Government's approach has been the understanding that if we could prevent any successor democratic body being established, we would somehow prevent a new "subversive element" — those were the words of my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) — emerging south of the river. However, as my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Feltham and Heston pointed out, it is up to the House to set the precise role and responsibilities of the new body, and to define them.

My right hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government yawns. I understand. It has been a long and tedious process for him and it must be particularly exhausting if he does not entirely believe in the legislation which he has had to carry through. Nevertheless, there is no reason why the successor body, if it is divested of discretionary spending power, should arrogate to itself new and inappropriate responsibilities.

In the last analysis, the Bill will be judged by its effect on the pockets of the ratepayers of London. The Government have skated over the financial implications of the Bill. There was a disparaging speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Highgate and Hampstead (Sir G. Finsberg) about the excellent work done by Cyril Taylor, the deputy leader who has financial responsibility on the Tory group in the GLC, called "London Preserv'd". That document is the most comprehensive analysis of the financial implications of the Bill and it was backed up by the officials in county hall. It does not prove that there will be dramatic savings.

My borough of Hillingdon, in a letter from its leader on 28 February, asked for assurances that the extra functions imposed on it will be met in full by extra resources from the centre. However, we know that the Treasury is steadily seeking to reduce the amount of local government expenditure financed by the rate support grant. Against this background, and particularly as resources have been flowing away from London in the past five years, how can boroughs which are having to take on new functions be assured that there will not be an adverse effect on their ratepayers?

I believe that many of my hon. Friends have felt like saying, "Let us leave it to the other place. Let us set our consciences aside on this occasion. Their Lordships will do our work for us." This is a dangerous principle. We may have a big majority, but numbers do not necessarily equate with the force of the argument. That has been the lesson of this measure. If benefits do not accrue to Londoners from this legislation, the Conservative party will be judged severely in elections in London in the future.

9.45 pm

Mr. Tony Banks: With the Third Reading of this Bill we are approaching the end of what I believe to be one of the most shameful and sordid episodes in the history of this House.

The abolition of the GLC and metropolitan county councils was conceived in spite and vindictiveness by the Prime Minister. It has been nurtured in prejudice and ignorance, and the Bill will leave the House surrounded in controversy and injustice. The Government's unthinking and largely uncaring majority will be used to steamroller through a Bill which has no widespread popular support in the country and which continues to give rise to great concern among a large number of Conservative party supporters inside and outside Parliament. An example of that was the speech of the hon. Member for Ruislip, Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson).

At no time throughout the passage of the Bill have the Government been able to quote a single impartial, independent or authoritative voice in favour of their proposal to abolish the GLC. Voluntary organisations, amenity groups, professional institutions, the churches, trade associations and learned bodies have spoken almost with one voice against the Bill.

It is a sad day for democracy when a measure so universally unloved and unnecessary can tie up the affairs of Parliament and be pushed towards the statute book simply because one person, the Prime Minister, so dislikes the politics of the Labour administration at county hall. Throughout the many months of public debate the only truly honest statement about the abolition of the GLC coming from a Minister was that made by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on 14 March of last year, when he said:

> "The Labour Party is the Party of division. In its present form it represents a threat to the democratic values and institutions on which our Parliamentary system is based. The GLC is typical of this new, modern, divisive version of socialism. It must be defeated. So we shall abolish the GLC."

There we have it. The Bill is designed to give statutory reality to a party political vendetta originating from a Prime Minister whose obsessive loathing for all opposition calls into question her very commitment to democratic freedom.

All other major changes in our structure of local government have followed careful and close examination. But such former standards and traditions count for nothing in today's Tory party — *[Interruption.]* — noted for its extremism and intolerance.

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Hon. Members: Sit down.

Mr. Banks: I will not give way.

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Banks: The Government say that abolition will save money, but they have consistently failed to identify positively where the so-called savings will occur.

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Mr. Banks: No.

Mr. Marlow: What about the results——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have said that the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) persisting in that way only takes time out of the debate, in which many hon. Members wish to take part.

Mr. Banks: The Government also say that abolition will cut out 7,100 jobs, but, again, they have failed to identify the service areas from where workers will be taken to push up the already scandalously high levels of those unemployed in Britain. Everybody must surely now know that not GLC nor metropolitan county services will be abolished but, rather, the democratic accountability by the electorate over those who administer those services. Elected councils are to be replaced by joint boards, quangos——

Mr. Marlow: What about the results——

Mr. Banks: I am not giving way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Hon. Members: Sit down.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The behaviour of the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) is intolerable.

Mr. Banks: Elected councillors are to be replaced by joint boards and quangos, and ever-increasing powers will be concentrated in the hands of Ministers and civil servants in Whitehall. With the abolition of the GLC elections in May, the Government have revealed clearly their dictatorial tendencies and their fear of the ballot box. In London, the electorate will surely exact revenge on the Tory party in the 1986 borough council elections. For their part in the shameful and unconstitutional exercise, Ministers of the Department of the Environment have earned the contempt of the House. They have sold themselves for the dross of office at any price. They have betrayed what few political principles they might have had by being prepared to humiliate themselves and their former views in the service of the Prime Minister.

Mr. Favell *rose*——

Mr. Banks: Nearly 100 years of continuous citywide local government in London is drawing to a close. We must now look to another place to achieve what rational argument and good sense could not achieve in this place.

I was first elected to the GLC in 1970, and I speak with some feeling when I say that I find it difficult to believe what I am witnessing tonight.

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Mr. Banks: However, I anticipate being a Member of this place for some time to come. I shall never forgive nor forget what has been done to my council.

Mr. Favell *rose*——

Mr. Banks: Whatever happens to this most shameful Bill, I remain utterly confident that in the years ahead a directly elected Londonwide council will still be sitting in county hall long after this discredited and divisive Government of second-raters and self-seekers have been deservedly swept from office.

9.52 pm

Mr. Straw: I commend to the House the eloquent and brave speech of the hon. Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson). The hon. Gentleman was right to say that the Opposition might lose the vote tonight, but opponents of the Bill on both sides of the House have won the arguments.

All reorganisations of local government are controversial, but two things distinguish this one from all those which have gone before. In every reorganisation and organisation, including those of 1835, 1888, 1963 and 1972, there have been disagreements about the nature of change but full agreement throughout the country about the need for change. All the previous reorganisations of local government affected local authorities of all political persuasions or none. In this reorganisation there is no agreement or consensus about the need for change. It is the only reorganisation that has ever taken place in which the party in government has sought to reorganise seven local authorities whose only difference from it is that they are controlled by Opposition parties.

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Mr. Straw: No, I shall not give way to that stormtrooper, the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow).

That difference exposes the disgrace of the Conservative party. That is what exposes the Government's true motives.

The hon. Member for Ruislip-Northwood said that the Minister for Local Government does not believe in the Bill. Of course he does not. Year after year the right hon. Gentleman supported the case for a strategic planning authority for London and for the GLC. He moved Bill after Bill in that light. Of course he does not believe in this measure, but he believes in his own ambition. It is his desire—to his eternal shame—to take the Secretary of State's job. That lies behind his prosecution and advocacy of this extraordinary measure.

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Mr. Straw: In his desperation to rise under the Thatcherite regime, he is willing to jettison old friends and old principles with all the consistency of an Iago. No case has been made for this measure. Not once have we been told the basis of the outrageous claims of savings of £100 million. This measure will cause disorganisation. It will undermine the level of services and reduce the quality of life of the 14 million people who live in the GLC and metropolitan areas.

Mr. Favell *rose*——

Mr. Straw: I say to those new Thatcherite Tories with the scent of the blood of the kill in their nostrils that their victory will be short-lived, because this measure is unpopular, undemocratic and authoritarian. It will hasten the day of the defeat of a rotten and corrupt Government.

9.56 pm

Sir George Young: Five magic words were missing from the speeches of the hon. Members for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) and for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham)—"We will repeal this Bill".

Mr. Straw: We will.

Sir George Young: Anyone who was expecting during the passage of the Bill a clear statement of Labour party policy on local government has been sorely disappointed. The hon. Member for Copeland treated the House to a series of abuses of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of

[Sir George Young]

State and the Government. My right hon. Friend was called a tyrant and the Government were called dictators. The hon. Gentleman called us dictators because we were striking out a tier of government. Has he forgotten what his right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufmann) said:

"We shall legislate to create unitary district authorities which will be responsible for all the functions in their area. We shall set up no more inquiries. We shall legislate."

What about the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker), an Opposition spokesman on the Environment, who has made it quite clear that he will not lift a finger to save the metropolitan county councils?

Those who have followed the Bill have noticed a change in the mood of the House. After the vote on 12 December, the hon. Member for Copeland rose on a point of order and referred to what he called

"a moral and humiliating defeat." — [*Official Report*, 12 December 1984; Vol. 69, c. 1182.]

We have not heard much of that sort of language recently after the vote in the House last night. After that vote, I hope that all the posters that say, "74 per cent. say no" will come down and be replaced by posters that say, "61 per cent. say yes".

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East) *rose*——

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Only one hon. Member can be on his feet at a time.

Sir George Young: Mr. Speaker——

Mr. Corbyn *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Under-Secretary of State is not giving way.

Sir George Young: At the last election in London the prospect of abolition was a policy that secured widespread support and gained a record number of seats for my hon. Friends. I am confident that, at the next election, the reality of abolition will be equally popular. I predict that at some convenient moment, the Labour party, which has already jettisoned the commitment to bring back the metropolitan counties, will also abandon the commitment to exhume the GLC.

Mr. Nellist *rose*——

Hon. Members: Give way.

Sir George Young: I shall not give way.

After 1 April, next year, life in London will not grind to a halt as we were told in Committee. The major difference for most Londoners is that rates will be lower than they would otherwise have been. Many Londoners look forward to better government in London.

Mr. Corbyn: Prove it.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Sir George Young: Many Londoners in London are looking forward to better, more accountable and more responsible local government and to services being delivered more economically. I am confident that when these policies are delivered and on the statute book, the country will realise that they are right and that the commitment to repeal, if it ever comes, will be abandoned. I ask the House to give the Bill a decisive Third Reading.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 325, Noes 170.

Division No. 173] **[10 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Best, Keith
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Hon Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(N Luton)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, E. *(B'y St Edm'ds)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(SW N'folk)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayhoe, Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert

Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(W Herts)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Gregory *(Derby N)*
Knight, Mrs Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
McCusker, Harold
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marlow, Antony
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Moate, Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parris, Matthew
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Powell, Rt Hon J. E. *(S Down)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prior, Rt Hon James
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Ross, Wm. *(Londonderry)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev W. M. *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spence, John
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(N Hertf'dshire)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, J.
Sumberg, David
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Carol Mather and
Mr. Robert Boscawen.

NOES

Abse, Leo
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Tony
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'rmline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Rt Hon J.
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Cartwright, John
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Concannon, Rt Hon J. D.
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cormack, Patrick
Cowans, Harry
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Dubs, Alfred
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Ellis, Raymond
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
Garrett, W. E.
Godman, Dr Norman
Gould, Bryan
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Central Fife)*
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr. Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McKelvey, William
Mackenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, M.

Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ryman, John
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'kl'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Straw, Jack
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wainwright, R.
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Wilkinson, John
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Allen McKay.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read the Third time, and passed.

Coal Industry

10.13 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. David Hunt): I beg to move,

That the draft Redundant Minerworkers and Concessionary Coal (Payments Schemes) (Amendment) Order 1985, which was laid before this House on 11th March, be approved.

On 26 November 1984, I commended to this House a draft order amending the redundant mineworkers payments scheme to loosen the link between entitlement to RMPS weekly basic benefit and pension supplement and eligibility for unemployment benefit. The order was necessary because one consequence of the long and damaging strike in the industry was that some redundant miners found themselves disqualified for receiving unemployment benefit for the duration of the dispute by virtue of section 19(1) of the Social Security Act 1975.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): I am sorry to intervene so early in the Minister's speech, but will he bear in mind that in my constituency I have miners who became redundant last year? Although the dispute appears to be over, the Department takes the view that it is not yet resolved, and still denies them the benefit to which the Minister referred.

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Member uses one word wrongly. It is the view not of the Department but of the independent adjudication officer. I very much hope that during the course of this debate hon. Members on both sides of the House will have an opportunity to raise points of that nature, to which I shall reply in detail at the conclusion of the debate.

The strike is now over, and I was encouraged to hear this afternoon that the NUM executive will be recommending to delegate conference next Tuesday that the overtime ban should be lifted. I am sure that I speak for the whole industry when I say that we all look forward now to a return to normal working next Wednesday. The message for the future must be, "Let us get going and put this strike well behind us," but the consequences of the strike are going to be with us for some time to come. The main purpose of the order is to deal with one such consequence.

Hon. Members who take an interest in the operation of the scheme will be aware that the level of basic weekly benefit paid to men aged 55 or over on redundancy depends upon the level of their pre-redundancy earnings in the tax year which preceded that in which their redundancy date falls. Either because they were on strike, or as the result of the disruption in the industry, many miners had exceptionally low earnings in the tax year 1984-85, and if they took redundancy from 6 April they would therefore, under existing rules, be entitled to significantly reduced benefits. The Government intend to do something about that situation.

The National Coal Board and the Government have said that there is no question of compulsory redundancy. Miners who wish to stay in the industry will be able to do so, but those who do not will of course be entitled to payments under this scheme. The Government have always made it clear that they are determined to ensure that those who take redundancy should be properly treated.

The draft order therefore amends the definition of "pre-redundancy earnings" so that, for the vast majority of men who take redundancy in 1985-86, their basic benefit will be based on whichever is the greater—their earnings in the tax year 1983-84 or in 1984-85. Those working miners whose earnings in 1984-85 were better than their earnings in 1983-84 will be able to take advantage of that fact, subject only to the normal maximum limit on earnings of £160 a week for benefit purposes. For those who did not work normally through 1984-85, however, the new definition, together with the new table updating benefits as in previous years, will mean that the level of their weekly benefits, including unemployment benefit, should be broadly the same as if they had left the industry in 1984-85.

There is another main change in the draft order which applies to very few people, but it is nevertheless important. This offers further protection to men with breaks in service due to sickness or incapacity. I know that this subject is close to the hearts of many Members on both sides of the House who have constituency mining interests. The further change proposed, though modest, will, I hope, be widely welcomed.

Under the existing rules, a period of more than 26 weeks during which an employee was in receipt of an incapacity pension under a suitable scheme established or continued by the board does not break continuity of employment for scheme purposes. This rule has served to protect numbers of men who would otherwise have had breaks in service due to incapacity. But it has not helped men who, though taking redundancy now, suffered such breaks before 1979 when they lacked sufficient service to qualify for a pension.

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hunt: I should like to finish this point.

The change therefore ensures—and this may answer the question that the hon. Gentleman is going to raise—that if, but for a lack of suitable prior qualifying service, a man would have been entitled to such a pension, he will be treated under the scheme as if he had received one.

If the order is approved the change will come into operation on 1 April 1985. However, to ensure consistency of treatment, ex gratia payments will be made to all those men who took redundancy between the effective date of introduction of the original safeguards — 11 March 1981—and the introduction of the amendment.

The amendment order is designed to ensure that the redundant mineworkers' payment scheme continues to serve the purpose for which it was introduced. It is no radical new departure; it builds upon what has gone before.

Mr. O'Brien: The Minister referred to workers who take redundancy now and said that they would benefit under the scheme. Is he aware that anyone who accepts redundancy today operates under the shadow of section 19 of the Coal Industry Act and that no benefit is due to him?

Mr. Hunt: I am aware of that. The hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) is referring to my earlier comments, not the change to which I am currently referring. Of course, what he says is extremely important and I shall respond with comments which I hope will be of help.

Provided that the industry returns to normal working next Wednesday, the problem will disappear for the

[Mr. Hunt]

future. As I said on Monday, we look forward to a major decision on 16 April which will enable those who suffer up to the moment when the industry returns to normal working to be dealt with properly. I am sure that that matter will be raised by a number of hon. Members.

The order emphasises the Government's continuing support for the National Coal Board as it attempts to attack and tackle the problems which must be overcome if the coal industry is to have a successful future. I hope that the order will be welcomed by Members on both sides.

10.22 pm

Mr. Alexander Eadie (Midlothian): The scope of the order is so wide that we can debate the coal industry generally tonight. We are talking about jobs in the coal industry. I do not want to repeat what the Minister said. We welcome the pre-redundancy earnings provision. We also welcome the amendment to the original article 17(2). I shall not restate what the Minister said about that.

I hope that the Minister will consider the position of men aged 55 and over who are made redundant on or after 1 January 1986. Under the scheme, I understand that they will be disqualified for receiving weekly basic scheme benefit unless the scheme is amended. That anomaly arises from the fact that for a person to qualify for weekly benefit, he must register as unemployed and receive unemployment benefit. In certain circumstances a person might still qualify when he does not receive unemployment benefit. However, the scheme does not provide for a person who is disqualified for receiving unemployment benefit. That applies to many workers who, in the tax year 1984-85, have paid insufficient national insurance contributions to meet the requirements for unemployment and sickness benefit in the benefit year commencing 1 January 1986.

The Secretary of State is absent, and I am not complaining about that, but the Minister will remember how he talked in a polite and dignified way about the bargain that had been made. There was a problem about 400 men who were serving their redundancy notice when the strike began. That was taken care of by an amendment. A union circular said:

"As RMPS weekly benefit is paid four weeks in arrears, the next payment will be made on the 11th January, 1985, and subsequent payments at 4 weekly intervals, thereafter."

In regard to a problem about pensions, the circular said:

"This anomaly likewise has been rectified and the men in question will receive a lump sum to compensate them for the loss to the 8th December, 1984, with restoration of the regular payments."

Although we welcome the two aspects of the scheme that the Minister has dealt with, there is a further anomaly. I hope that he will consider it, because it will affect people over 55 who become redundant on or after 1 January 1986. There was a dignified and positive solution to the other problem. There was nothing yah-boo about it. The Secretary of State was constructive and gave a moderate and considered opinion on it.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): I did as well.

Mr. Eadie: My hon. Friend is very moderate and conciliatory in all things that he says.

The order that we are debating unavoidably spills over into the miners' strike and what will happen in future. It presents the House with an opportunity to make its views known. The ending of the miners' dispute produced in its wake an increase in redundancies, and, as a consequence, the necessity to update the redundancy scheme, as was known to all hon. Members who take an interest in these things. What a difference it would have made to the climate of the debate if the dispute had ended in an honourable, principled settlement. We must accuse the Government of acting in bad faith because it did not end in that way. It was not a settlement but victory that they wanted. In her address to both Houses in the United States, the Prime Minister quoted Bismarck:

"Do I want war? No! I want victory."

That sums it up.

I substantiate my assertion of bad faith by drawing the attention of the House to column 695 of *Hansard* of 4 February. The Under-Secretary will recollect that in that debate on 4 February——

Mr. Michael Morris (Northampton, South): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. To the best of my knowledge, we are supposed to be talking about the Redundant Mineworkers and Concessionary Coal (Payments Schemes) (Amendment) Order. It is proper for the hon. Gentleman to introduce this, but, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am having great difficulty in relating previous debates on the coal strike to an amendment to a particular scheme which is before the House now.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): I have got the substance of the hon. Gentleman's point of order. It is in order to pursue it, as the hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) has been doing, so long as it is related to the order before the House.

Mr. Eadie: I shall relate it to what has been happening in the industry. I got the concurrence of the Minister that this is a wide-ranging debate because we are talking about redundancies and jobs in the mining industry. The hon. Gentleman tried to pull the same trick during a recent debate on pensions. If he cannot understand the issues, I am sorry for him.

Mr. Michael Morris: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I want to be clear about this matter as I wish to take part in the debate. Are you saying that this is a debate on the whole of the miners' strike since it began and the future prospects for the coal industry? If it is, I know where I stand.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I was not saying that. The hon. Gentleman knows the nature of the order before the House. Provided that speeches are related to that, they are in order. The Chair will decide whether hon. Members are in order, not those taking part in the debate.

Mr. Skinner: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I wish to be helpful to the smooth running of this place. I appreciate that you have a difficult job. In your judgment, you must take account of the fact that it was a 12-month strike that resulted in redundancies or otherwise, with the £2·5 billion that the Chancellor told us was a worthwhile investment but which has cost the country dear. Therefore, is it not fair to say that my hon. Friend the Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) has trodden narrowly on the order? If we are to talk about the loss of money involved in trying to smash the NUM, there is a large gap in the fence, and I hope that my hon. Friend can get through it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. This is a three-hour debate. The longer we take discussing what is in or out of order, the larger the number of hon. Members who will not be called. The Chair will decide what is in or out of order.

Mr. Eadie: I regret the interruptions, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because they prevent hon. Members from contributing to the debate. I have many points to make, and I assure you that they are entirely in order.

In a debate on 4 February 1985, the Under-Secretary of State said:

"The Leader of the Opposition shouted to me about the NACODS agreement, and I should make it clear that, if the NACODS agreement is accepted, there will of course be no need for any written undertakings. It is a written agreement and can be accepted by the NUM. It has always been on the table."

My hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) said:

"What the Under-Secretary of State is saying is very important. Are we to take it that the suggestion put forward from the Dispatch Box is deliverable by him through the NCB, and that there will be no request to the NUM to give a written undertaking to the NCB in that regard?"

The Under-Secretary replied:

"I have made it quite clear and will repeat again that if the NUM wishes to accept the NACODS agreement, there is no need for any written undertakings of any sort. I have made that absolutely clear".—[*Official Report*, 4 February 1985; Vol. 72, c. 695.]

That is why I said that the Government have acted in bad faith. They should know that before the decision of the special conference to end the dispute by an organised return to work, the full national executive of the NUM decided to accept the NACODS agreement in full. I was authorised by the national executive to telephone the Secretary of State for Energy to inform him of that decision. That would have been an honourable ending to the dispute. I deeply regret that he decided not to speak to me.

The atmosphere in which we are debating the order is polluted by the way that the strike has ended. My fear is that it will haunt the coal industry for some time to come. It gives me no pleasure to say that.

I understand that NACODS believes that the agreement has been breached by the National Coal Board, with the acquiescence of the Government. All that is capable of reaching serious proportions. I have been informed that NACODS was today in the High Court challenging the NCB for riding roughshod over a modified review procedure which was agreed in October 1984. It is a strange irony that, as we debate the order, we are not sure of the scope of those procedures. We cannot verify with the unions involved what new waves of redundancies will confront the mining industry. We can only read reports in the press, because there is no conciliation or consultation in the industry today.

The NCB refuses to consult or conciliate with the NUM. I have personal experience of that. I went with a deputation of Scottish colleagues to meet Mr. Wheeler, Mr. Cowan and Mr. MacGregor. We discussed the future of the industry in Scotland, but they were unable to tell us about redundancies and closures. We also discussed the 200 sacked miners—43 per cent. of whom are branch officials and 18 per cent. of whom were doing official union picket duty. We said that the decision of the Scottish area director to sack without consultation or conciliation was in contravention of all natural justice. We asked Mr. MacGregor to undertake a review of the cases—a moderate demand. Some of those men have never been before a court, and those who have have had no serious charges levelled against them. We were supported by the churches and three chief constables.

Mr. MacGregor agreed to consider those cases. We left at 3.40 pm, and at 5 pm the chairman of the NCB announced, through a press release, that all of the men remained sacked. He could not possibly have considered 200 cases in that time. His action showed indecent haste and was a breach of faith. The word of the chairman of the NCB is not his bond.

The Minister should be required to spell out the implications of the order for the industry. He should have told us how the conciliation and consultation machinery will be followed. He cannot, because the NCB is in breach of those procedures. If the Minister takes time to read the Coal Industry Nationalisation Act 1946, he will find that section 46(1) provides:

"It shall be the duty of the Board to enter into consultation with organisations appearing to them to represent substantial proportions of the persons in the employment of the Board, or of any class of such persons, as to the Board's concluding with those organisations agreements providing for the establishment and maintenance of joint machinery for—

(a) the settlement by negotiation of terms and conditions of employment, with provision for reference to arbitration in default of such settlement in such cases as may be determined by or under the agreements".

I also have a copy of the guide to the consultation machinery. I shall not ponder over it because of the lack of time, but it lays down the procedure which should be followed. Mr. Wheeler, Mr. MacGregor and the NCB are clearly law-breakers. The NCB is a creature of statute. Every one of the sacked miners has a right for his case to be heard individually with trade union representation. Mr. Wheeler and Mr. MacGregor have no right to sack men without invoking the procedures laid down by Act of Parliament in 1946. If the Minister supports them, he is guilty of breaking the law. The conduct of the NCB as a law-breaker may be the subject of a court decision. At present, opinion is being canvassed. I hope that the Secretary of State for Energy and his hon. Friends will be held to have been in breach of the law. I hope that they will go before the courts and be charged with breaking the law, because they have connived with the NCB in flouting the 1946 legislation.

I wish to raise with the Minister the question of redundant miners not receiving unemployment benefit because of a decision of adjudicating officers. He referred to that matter in his opening remarks. In the debate on Monday evening I told him that the Government were suspected of being party to that decision. I have been informed that some of the cases, in which I was involved last week, have been resolved. I can speak only for Midlothian. I have not yet been home to confirm that information. The Minister has a responsibility to inform us who originated that decision. We want to know. In the debate on Monday I suggested that it originated in Manchester. Some investigative journalists are hot on the trail to find out who originated it. The Minister owes it to the House to give all the information that he can. It is nothing but spite and vindictiveness to deprive redundant and victimised miners of unemployment benefit because somebody somewhere saw that the industrial dispute was not coming to an end.

Overtime is not mentioned anywhere in the Coal Industry Nationalisation Act 1946. Somewhere it

[Mr. Eadie]

mentions overtime in relation to safety, but there have been no violations of safety regulations. The law-breakers should be accountable to Parliament.

Mr. Michael Morris *rose*——

Mr. Eadie: I am about to finish. I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman, because he has nothing to contribute.

The Minister must tell the House where the Government stand on this question of spite and vindictiveness. He must clear them of it and assure us this evening that they were not behind it.

I do not intend to recommend to my right hon. and hon. Friends that we oppose the order. However, the Minister must respond to my point about the amendment being sought in the redundant mineworkers' payments schemes. He must give us information about the law-breakers in the NCB—Wheeler, MacGregor, and the rest.

Mr. Skinner: Eaton.

Mr. Eadie: I understand that Eaton may even be in the building. If he is one of the law-breakers, he must be made accountable. We in the mining industry are entitled to consultation and conciliation. That is why the mining industry has been a model for consultation, and why we have not had a general industrial strike for 46 years. Our conciliation and consultation procedure has been the envy of industry generally.

The Minister must also tell us about miners being deprived of unemployment benefit. We look forward to his reply.

10.44 pm

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood): Following the death rattle of Scargillism from the hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie)—*[Interruption.]* If hon. Members are patient, they will discover that I have something to say. I shall not follow him down the road of turning the debate about the order into a re-run of the failure of the Labour party and the Socialists to bring Arthur Scargill to the negotiating table, because that would be pointless. The Opposition had plenty of time in which to mount such a debate. They had plenty of Supply days, but they used only one to have such a debate. I shall bring the House back to the order, because I know that Opposition Members, like me, have constituents who had accepted voluntary redundancy but who were affected by the strike.

I should tell my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State that many of my constituents, and, I suspect, the constituents of many Labour Members, welcome the Government's action last December in moving the amending order, which enabled the redundant mineworkers payment scheme to be made available to men who had accepted voluntary redundancy before and during the strike. Hon. Members on both sides of the House must welcome what the Government did; certainly my constituents tell me that they welcome it.

The reason why I wish to speak in the debate is that one of my constituents took his case to a tribunal. He is a miner of 38 years' standing, and before the strike he accepted, informally, voluntary redundancy. The period of notice ran from the end of March to 2 June 1984, and on that date he took his voluntary redundancy. The hon. Member for Midlothian paid tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Elmet (Mr. Batiste), who made a concise and clear speech on Monday with which hon. Members on both sides of the House agreed. As my hon. Friend said, those men accepted voluntary redundancy on the basis that it was a deal: in exchange for accepting voluntary redundancy, they would be covered by the redundant mineworkers redundancy scheme and they would receive unemployment benefit. The reason why many of us are here tonight is that many men are still not receiving unemployment benefit.

My constituent's case was upheld by the tribunal, but the Department of Employment appealed. Then the case went to the social security commissioner for a decision. In February, Commissioner Munroe, sitting alone, came to a conclusion, and it might help the House if I recited some of his arguments. I understand that several other cases have gone to individual commissioners. I suspect that I am not alone in the House in finding the whole business of tribunals completely labyrinthine and confusing.

On 8 February, Commissioner Munroe came to a favourable conclusion. My constituent had accepted voluntary redundancy at the beginning of the strike. He was unable to get to work for two weeks before the buses were laid on, but once they were he remained at work until 2 June, when he left the pit altogether. The commissioner said:

"Here the claimant after losing his employment as the result of the stoppage regained it. And the regained employment did not terminate as the result of the stoppage; it terminated as the result of redundancy and would have continued but for redundancy. From the moment that the claimant regained his employment in April 1984 he could no longer be classified as 'a person who has lost his employment' but rather as a person who has at one time lost his employment but has subsequently regained it. In my judgment thereafter section 19 no longer applied to him unless and until he lost his employment again, and then only if he lost it on account of some relevant clause. As he lost his employment in June on account of redundancy he is not affected from then by section 19 . . . I do not consider that I am thereby bound to conclude that a person cannot escape from the consequences of section 19 during the currency of a stoppage if he regains his lost employment thereby ceasing to be a person who has lost his employment during the stoppage, and thereafter becomes unemployed for some extraneous reason. If that were so, a person who becomes bona fide employed elsewhere would be better placed than a person who becomes bona fide employed at his place of employment."

In other words, if that man had left the pit and gone off and got employment elsewhere, he would have been entitled to pick up unemployment benefit. The commissioner is saying that the fact that the man left the pit because he could not get into it because of the strike, and then went back to the same pit, means that it would be monstrous if he were denied access to unemployment benefit. That is why the commissioner upheld the case.

Mr. Skinner: It is a good job that that rule does not apply to Members of Parliament.

Mr. Howarth: The hon. Gentleman may experience the need for redundancy pay after the next election.

We should tread carefully, because, unlike many of our constituents, our security of tenure is not very good. As reselection goes on in the Labour party, one or two Labour Members may not be smiling in a few months time.

My constituent has been through all the procedures and has had his case examined by the commissioner. It has been upheld, and he told me tonight that he has been paid his arrears. That should be a precedent for all hon.

Members who have constituents in similar circumstances. I accept that there may be some variations, but many of us may have constituents with that problem.

I heard the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) saying that he has constituents who are still not being paid unemployment benefit, and some have not appealed. I have the case of another constituent, who has been told that it is not worth appealing until these cases have been decided. Another constituent left Littleton colliery on 29 September 1984 after 40 years service, although he was aware of the difficulties that were then prevailing. Mr. Wright accepted voluntary redundancy, but even now that the dispute is over he is not being paid unemployment benefit. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister can help us on that account because there are men who are suffering genuine hardship, and who feel that, because the dispute is over, they should be able to obtain unemployment benefit.

A third category of ex-miner has not been mentioned tonight, and was not mentioned on Monday. That is those men who left the pit and decided to go and do something else, but their other job fell through, and they found themselves unemployed.

Mr. Skinner: I have a case like that.

Mr. Howarth: I see that the hon. Gentleman is familiar with the problem.

Those people are in a worse position because they have picked up no lump sum payment under the redundant mineworkers payment scheme. They have nothing to survive on—no lump sum payment to keep them going. I shall be grateful if my hon. Friend the Minister can look into the cases of such men.

I am concerned about the time it has taken for the tribunal procedures to be carried out to resolve these matters and about the large number of men who are still awaiting a decision. I am also concerned that the decision in the case of my constituent—whose clear-cut and well argued case I have cited and whose name I have been asked not to reveal—has not acted as a precedent.

I hope that the Minister will do what he can to ensure that when the commissioners meet on 16 April, they will be clear as to the consequences of failing to endorse the decision of Commissioner Monroe, otherwise we shall be back to square one and find that these men will have exhausted all the procedures and will still be denied the deal which they struck and to which my hon. Friend the Member for Elmet referred on Monday.

The commissioners are not open to influence, in the sense that one cannot bring pressure to bear on them, but I hope they will realise the seriousness of the task that lies before them. I hope that if they fail to reach the right decision, the Minister will give an assurance immediately thereafter that action will be taken to make sure that these chaps get the deal which they struck.

Mr. Alec Woodall (Hemsworth): The hon. Gentleman said that he was disappointed about the length of time it had taken for these cases to come before a tribunal. Will he take it from me that he will be delighted how quickly they come before a tribunal after next Wednesday?

Mr. Howarth: I shall be delighted if the decision on the 16th is correct and the matter is able finally to be resolved.

Mr. Woodall: The hon. Gentleman will not have long to wait after Wednesday.

Mr. Howarth: I am not interested in rehearsing arguments about the strike. That would be pointless at this stage. As I said on Monday night, the president of the NUM should say that the dispute is now finally over. Then we could get back to the business of making the pits profitable. I conclude on that hopefully optimistic note.

10.57 pm

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): I welcome the order. It is a necessary detail to make a fairly generous scheme work. I call it a "fairly generous" scheme in terms of the benefit that it provides, but there is a fundamental problem about it which is at the root of the complaint that hon. Members have made tonight.

The scheme is founded on the falsehood that those made redundant under the scheme are intended by the Government to go out and seek work. That is why they are asked to sign on at unemployment exchanges, why their contributions records are relevant and why they finish up as tribunal cases of the kind described by the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth).

The policy of successive Governments has been that these men, having served a large part of their lives in the coal industry, should now be given the opportunity to make way for younger men and be provided with the financial basis on which to retire. However, they are treated under our legal system as unemployed men nominally seeking work, and they therefore come within all the apparatus of commissioners, tribunals and the rest. That is an inherent falsehold in the scheme.

It used to be more difficult for such people until some of the rules were relaxed. There was a time when all who benefited from the scheme had to sign on weekly, even from rural and isolated pit villages, on the basis that they were looking for jobs, which everybody would have been dismayed had they taken because the people who should have got those jobs where those who did not have the benefit of the redundancy scheme.

In those days, if a man went away on holiday or, say, went with his wife to visit his son serving in the forces in Germany, he lost his benefit under the scheme, supposedly being treated as a redundant miner. Thankfully, the scheme has been the subject of some improvement, though we are bound to come across the sort of difficulties with which we are dealing tonight because of the way in which the scheme was originally devised. It was devised in good faith and to meet a need, but it was devised on the basis of an officially approved falsehood. We are talking about a group which we treat as comprising unemployed men who are seeking work. In fact, we are trying to enable men to retire to make way for younger men to do the work which they have previously undertaken in the industry.

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): Does the hon. Gentleman realise that the order will change the 1984 redundancy terms, which provide that those aged 21 are able to be made redundant? We are talking also of those who have retired under the voluntary early retirement scheme at the age of 60 years or more. They are made to sign on and look for work for the first 12 months of their early retirement.

Mr. Beith: Yes, the hon. Gentleman is right. In describing the genesis of the scheme, I did not say that in the course of its history it has been extended widely to facilitate the removal from the industry of many younger

[Mr. Beith]

men to whom it was not originally intended to apply. I accept that that has been a necessary part of restructuring the industry. I am glad that those who go out of the industry at a much earlier stage than was envisaged originally still get some benefit from their service in it. In that respect thay are in a better position than those in a number of other industries.

Whenever these matters are discussed in my constituency there is a sharp division between those who benefit from the scheme in the industry as miners and those who are excluded from it as opencast mineworkers. This issue arouses a great deal of anger, division and dissension in areas where the two groups of men live and work virtually side by side in the same community or in neighbouring ones. There is quite heavy redundancy in the opencast mining industry in parts of north-east England, and this has brought the issue to the fore. That is certainly the position in my constituency in places such as Amble, which has recently been excluded from development area status.

The redundancies have caused considerable anguish and there is some bitterness that the opencast mineworkers cannot benefit from the same generous terms as their colleagues, notwithstanding that the European money that goes into the scheme is determined on rules which would allow opencast mineworkers to benefit in Britain.

I understand that the Transport and General Workers Union is taking the Government to the European Court and challenging the exclusion of opencast workers. It appears that, if the scheme were extended to include opencast workers, the Government would receive European assistance. There is a great sense of injustice among opencast workers, certainly in the north-east, about their exclusion from the scheme.

It is possible to range quite widely in the debate, as it involves redundancy and what happens to those who are made redundant under the scheme, but that should not draw us to pick at the sores of the strike, which would be extremely damaging. That would stop the healing process, which must continue.

However, some issues have to be raised, and one of them is the sackings which have taken place and the doubts which surround them. There is genuine doubt, which goes far wider than the narrowest confines of the dwindling group of the NUM's most determined supporters, and a feeling that there is something wrong, at least in some areas, in the number who have been sacked. It is right to consider the background to the sackings and the inevitability that those who want to make a success of the industry will not be happy to see the violence that was at the pit gates brought back into the collieries. That is why there was widespread support, certainly in my constituency, for not re-employing those who were guilty of crimes of violence or serious damage—*[Interruption.]* Perhaps hon. Members will allow me to complete my assertion. I was about to say that there is an obvious distinction between those to whom I have referred and those who have not been convicted of serious crimes.

Mr. Skinner: What happened to Jeremy Thorpe?

Mr. Eadie: The hon. Gentleman must not be allowed to get away with this. I referred to a group of about 200 mineworkers in Scotland who have been sacked. None of them has been found guilty of outrageous violence. Well, there might be one among them, but I doubt it. They have appeared before the courts for minor offences. Indeed, some of them have not appeared before the courts. I thought that the hon. Gentleman would support my argument. I say that the NCB had no right arbitrarily to decide that these men should be sacked when there was good conciliation and consultation machinery within the industry.

My plea is for the Government to carry out the provisions of the Coal Industry Nationalisation Act 1946. These cases should be considered individually. They should not at this stage even be the subject of consideration by an industrial tribunal. The matters should have been settled at the pit, in accordance with conciliation and consultation procedures. The men should even have had the right to go to an umpire.

Mr. Beith: The hon. Gentleman could not have been listening carefully, because I was seeking to draw a distinction between cases about which there is widespread public acceptance outside and inside the industry, that right is on the side of the coal board in not re-employing those who have been found guilty of serious offences to persons and property, and cases about which there is genuine and reasonable public doubt. The coal board exposes itself to the industrial tribunal machinery created long after the 1946 Act—it has already done so—if it dismisses people who are not guilty.

If hon. Members do not understand why there are strong feelings about this matter, they must understand that in the part of the coalfield that I represent it was violence that turned the return to work into a massive return. That is the history of what happened during the strike. The Government must remember that a small group of miners seeking to return to work were stoned in a stationary bus by a crowd of violent men after allowing regional NUM officals to put their case to them and listening fully to the case that they should not return to work. After that incident, the return to work was not just a trickle but a surge, with women and children lining the streets cheering the men as they returned to work. That is what happened in my constituency. Government Members may not have seen what we saw in our areas at that time. The extent of the violence turned the strike.

Not all the people involved in the violence were miners. It was fascinating to see paraded before the magistrates courts as having been involved on the picket line unemployed Australian printers, unemployed fishermen and various other people——

Mr. Skinner: And young Liberals.

Mr. Beith: There was no such case before a court in my constituency. There were people who had no previous connection with the coal industry but who were guilty of violence, and that contributed to the atmosphere. Those people are not causing the problem now. They will probably not be anywhere near the Northumberland coalfield for a long time, if at all.

There is genuine public anxiety about those men who were not found guilty by the courts, against whom there is no clear evidence that they committed violence or caused serious and significant damage to property. The Government must recognise that that anxiety exists.

I share the views expressed by a number of hon. Members, although not yet by a spokesman for the Labour party—I hope that one will do so at some stage—that

the fact that the strike is over is to be welcomed. The industry has to return to a proper working footing and its prospects for the future must be enhanced. I say that with particular feeling because I represent an area in which we are fighting against the Government's determination to site a nuclear power station in the area. The hardest period to sustain that argument has been the past 12 months, because the NUM's leaders placed in the hands of the nuclear power lobby the argument that they wanted—that coal supplies and the coal industry were unreliable. I want to scotch and dispense with that argument, because I believe that the future of coal is central to our country's future and energy supplies. Thank goodness the industry is back at work. Let us keep it that way.

11.8 pm

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): I should like to endorse the comments of the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith). He said that no Labour Member had welcomed the strike's end. That was rather unfair, because the hon. Gentleman is well aware that every Labour Member has been desperately anxious for the strike to be resolved. He could bear in mind the fact that a number of us tried to ensure that the dispute did not take place. If the Treasury Bench had hearkened to what was said by the Opposition in November and December 1983 and January and February 1984, the strike which we smelt coming would not have taken place and the country would have been saved at least £6·5 billion, money which could have been spent upon generating jobs.

These figures approach a degree of generosity, but they are necessary for the men who are leaving the industry, especially for young and fit men in their early twenties, because in my area and in many other coalfield areas there are no other jobs. In my constituency there are communities where not a single teenager is in normal employment. In other communities the number of teenagers in normal employment can be counted on the fingers of one hand. If miners are to leave the industry and enter the economic desolation to be found in so many parts of this island they must be treated with reasonable generosity. I do not know whether the word "generosity" is the correct word to use when one thinks of how much the chairman of British Petroleum has been awarded in the last few days. There are Conservative party members who think that we are being generous to the miners. If men who have served the industry well are never to work again, it is right that they should be treated decently.

I hope that the Opposition will not vote against the order. Therefore, I was pleased to have the assurance of my hon. Friend the Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie). I suspect that there are one or two Conservative Members who would have liked to rebel against the Minister's cause, but in this Parliament we do not see much real rebellion on the Government Benches. Nevertheless, I thank the Minister for the way he opened the debate. He has made it clear that he is prepared to listen to a good case. I hope he will pay considerable attention to the arguments advanced by the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth) so that this longstanding problem which affects several of my constituents can be resolved.

It is very sad that a little more wisdom and compassion was not shown earlier. The hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood made a very relevant point. If it had been recognised before February and March 1984 that there was a problem, a different approach might have been adopted either by the Government or by the National Coal Board, or preferably by both, and the dispute would never have taken place. But at least the Minister has demonstrated that he recognises that the coal industry has a very necessary and important part to play. It is from that point on that we begin to have anxieties. Those anxieties are relevant to the order. The Minister and his hon. Friends recognise that the coal industry has a very important part to play and that help will be needed to establish decent relationships and a forward looking approach. However, I wonder whether the future role of the coal industry as envisaged by the Opposition is quite the same as that envisaged by Conservative Members.

Although the Opposition welcome the order, at the same time we have to consider the implications of another document from another Government Department for the future of the nationalised industries. The National Coal Board may be involved in considerable expenditure so that advantage can be taken of whatever changes in ownership are brought about by the Government.

It will soon be necessary for the House not merely to debate these much needed, sensible and acceptable orders but also the Treasury document on the future of the nationalised industries as that is particularly relevant to the energy industries which include the NCB.

Let me add my word to the point which has been made by my hon. Friend the Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) and, to some extent, by the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith). Men were sacked. In Scotland that was the result of a rather aggressive approach, perhaps with an eye to the changes which have taken place at senior levels of the NCB. Promotion stakes beckon even at that level. But it is not only in Scotland that that has happened. It has happened at pits in south Yorkshire. At one pit in my constituency men were sacked before their cases had been decided by the court and without their even being given a hearing. I understand that they simply received a letter immediately dismissing them. That is no way to carry on.

Mr. Eadie: It is illegal.

Mr. Hardy: It is, but I am not so concerned about legalities. I do not like law in industrial relations. I never have. Britain would have been a great deal better off over the past 14 years if that obsession had not been pursued by Conservative Members.

At its best the coal industry is a family industry. In a family industry we should not be looking through the rule book to find patterns and codes of decent behaviour. We should have seen a recognition from the top of the board right down to the youngest apprentice that, after this sad and damaging chapter, we should move forward to success. I hope that we shall soon have apprentices in the industry as well. At the very time when that concept should have been encouraged, we saw men being sacked even though they had not been convicted in the courts. That is sad and the sadness that I feel eats away the benefit of the order before us this evening. If the Minister cannot take action on that, I hope that the NCB will. If it does, I trust that the Minister will give it his encouragement.

I also hope that the Minister will give considerable encouragement to the NCB and maintain the consistency in his approach by ensuring that the NCB is yet again reminded—I shall not labour the point now, but it is

[Mr. Hardy]

appropriate that it should be made — that the Government are backing the National Association of Colliery Overmen, Deputies and Shotfirers' agreement. I hope that my association will not have to start running to the courts again to try to ensure that that agreement is met. The sooner that that agreement, with all that it implies, is extended towards the whole industry, the better I shall be pleased and the better the industry will be served.

I trust that this brick will help to build a wall which will be less easily broken down than the construction of the industry and the relationships within it were demolished last year.

11.1 pm

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): I am pleased that we are having this debate tonight, if it is only to educate the hon. Member for Northampton, South (Mr. Morris) on what the mining industry is all about. The difference between him and I is that I have spent 35 years in the industry. I know it from A to Z: I know it inside out. I know exactly what is going on. I know all about what has happened in the past couple of years. It is a good thing for Conservative Members to be sitting in, even if they cannot participate. But some of them make me a little sick when they get up and make interventions without realising what they are saying. The Chair rules in this place. The hon. Gentleman did not get very far with his point of order, because he was wasting time in the three hours that we have to debate a serious problem for the mining industry. The hon. Gentleman may shake his head, but I still maintain that he is getting an education. If he sits quietly and listens, he will learn some more. I accept that there is a definite improvement over redundancies in the mining industry. A step has been taken in the right direction. However, some of my hon. Friends are correct to say that the agreement could mean finishing at the pit and taking redundancy pay at the age of 21. That is a ridiculous state of affairs.

Hon. Members must understand what the average age is in the mining industry. All the elderly chappies went years ago. They went before I became a Member of Parliament in 1979. I saw them go. As a local branch official I helped to negotiate at a local level, so I know something about that. But the average age is about 34. That illustrates the problem for redundancies. I should like the Government and the NCB to come into the open and to tell us where those pit closures are to be. I want them to be honest with the whole mining industry and with the nation.

I am worried stiff. I am convinced that the Government are planning, behind closed doors, to sell off the nation's profitable pits. If that is so—and I am sure that it is—there will be many pit closures. The Prime Minister stands at the Dispatch Box and at conferences and says time and again that uneconomic pits must close. The hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) can take that smirk off his face. This is a serious matter, but he is grinning all over his face. He thinks it is funny. He has never seen a shovel in his life. Not many Conservative Members know what work is. We know what it is. We come from industries where the people work hard. It is time that Conservative Members understood that. When they start grinning, it does not help.

If Conservative Members had done what we have done, and had looked at the report of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission on the mining industry, they would know that each pit is mentioned, together with whether or not it is economic. The report shows that we could be left with about 100 economic pits. That is how serious the Prime Minister is when she talks about uneconomic pits — *[Interruption.]* It is all right for some of these solicitors who have two jobs, and who earn money outside. They cannot even listen to an argument put by an Opposition Member. They always act like that. Why do they not shut up and listen? Some of those solicitors used to have pits in their constituencies before they became the Members of Parliament. However, slowly but surely the mining industry is being destroyed.

My hon. Friend the Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) has mentioned the conciliation procedure and industrial relations.

For many years in this Chamber the mining industry, with its conciliation procedure and its industrial relations procedure, has been held up as second to none and an example to any other industry and any other trade union. I am afraid that the Government have allowed it to be destroyed.

Hon. Members shake their heads. They do not know anything about it. I say that the industrial relations and the conciliation procedure are being destroyed, and I can tell the Minister why. Before we had the strike we begged the Government not to appoint MacGregor chairman of the National Coal Board — three months before. We said that if they appointed MacGregor it would mean constant confrontation with the National Union of Mineworkers and the other trade unions within the mining industry. And we have been proved correct. The only way we are going to get back to some normality in the future in the mining industry is by shipping MacGregor back to the United States. We have plenty of people working in the mining industry who have had experience on both sides and are eligible and able to run the industry as its chairman. The sooner we ship MacGregor back the better—and I am prepared to pay his fare.

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West) *rose——*

Mr. Haynes: No, I am not going to give way. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman really must relate his remarks to the order before us.

Mr. Haynes: I am trying to do that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I kicked off by talking about redundancies and about the youngsters who will not be able to get work. In my constituency we have five pits; we used to have nine. Thanks to this Government, four have gone. There are young lads in the villages who will not be able to get work when they leave school. We are told that the shutters are down at the pits for youngsters. My hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) is right about apprenticeships. There is a first-class apprenticeship scheme in the mining industry and there always has been, but we are not using it to the extent that we should. We want lads to come into the industry to be trained to be the future miners, mechanics and electricians. We have gone along with modernisation of the pits right from day one.

I did my stint with a shovel in my earlier life, but we accepted mechanisation of the industry in the interests of the people who work in it and of the nation.

I believe that under the redundancy scheme some people are not going to be treated fairly. We are going to have some real problems.

One of the things that really bothers me is safety. We have talked about safety over the years in the mining industry and the lads themselves have made suggestions for improvements. Yet this Government have not allowed the number of Her Majesty's pit inspectors to be as high as it should be. Indeed, it is well below, and this Government are responsible because of the cutbacks in public expenditure. There are not enough inspectors to carry out the provisions of the Mines and Quarries Acts in the pits. We have put down many questions over the past two or three years, but they have never been answered by the Government. The requisite number of inspectors have never been appointed, so I hope that the Minister will look at this problem and do something about it. It is essential that we have those inspectors on the job to make sure that everything is in order.

I have made my points. I am sincerely interested in what is going to happen to the mining industry in the future. I agree with the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) when he ended his speech by saying that he hoped we would get back to normality soon. I want the industry to return to what it was in the days when I was at the pit; when we worked together as one. Then we were all interested in what happened.

The Government must back off. They have much to answer for. Their one big mistake was to appoint that American chairman of the NCB. The Government must now encourage the NCB and workers in the industry to work together — to be sensible, not daft — so that the mining industry works for the people who work in it and for the nation.

11.31 pm

Mr. John Hannam (Exeter): The hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) referred to the generosity of the scheme. I commend the Minister's actions during the dispute and now that it is at an end. He obviously has the interests of the coal industry at heart.

I have always believed that one day we should achieve the logical objective of a successful low-cost coal production system with a skilled, highly paid work force. Unfortunately, every action by the NUM leader and his associates has resulted in serious setbacks to the coal industry.

We have heard impassioned pleas about loss of jobs in the industry. The NUM president likes to say that he is fighting for jobs, but his actions have without doubt destroyed more jobs and closed more coal faces than the industry's management planned. It is sad that, despite the financial support given year after year by this Government and previous Conservative Governments for redundancy payments, concessionary coal and pensions, all that we get in return is militant and rigid trade unionism which is never backed by democratic vote. It is against the wishes of the majority of coal miners and uses the twisted mechanics of the NUM procedure book.

It would be a natural reaction for anyone to say that taxpayers should not continue to support an industry which is so self-destructive. If I did not believe in the future of coal as our main industrial feedstock for the years to come, I should sympathise with that reaction.

The responsibility for managing this great industry is now back where it belongs — with the NCB. The Government once again are fulfilling a promise made during the dispute, and in the years before it, that pensions and redundancy payments will continue to be made and improved. Under the Labour Administration, no capital payment of note was made to redundant miners under 50 years of age. The Government's generosity has to be put on the record. This Government have introduced substantial improvements in payments to redundant miners.

Despite all the noise from the Opposition, the Conservative Government are providing handsome pensions in capital payments for miners who choose to leave the industry.

Mr. Barron: If a miner in my constituency took redundancy at age 25 he would be able to get a lump sum of £9,000 under the new scheme. That seems handsome, but if he were then to join the 20 per cent. unemployed in the constituency for the rest of his life it would be a paltry sum. What does the hon. Member think of that?

Mr. Hannam: It is a load of rubbish to talk about miners being unemployed for the rest of their lives. Mining is an extractive industry, which means that there is a constant movement of labour from one part of the country to another. When I have visited coal mining areas in the midlands and in Kent, I have met miners who have come from Scotland, from the north and from every other part of the country. That is the nature of such an extractive industry. It is a load of codswallop for Opposition Members to talk about long-term unemployment for young men who are given that sort of redundancy payment.

It was reported in the newspapers only a week ago that a miner who had been on strike for a long period was offered a substantial redundancy payment a few days after returning to work. He grabbed it with both hands to go off to start up his own business. So there is a clear indication of what will happen to many younger ex-miners.

I am not under-estimating the short-term problems of those who leave the industry and remain in their own communities where there will not be jobs. What I am saying is that, if we create the right sort of mobility, which has to exist in an extractive industry, as the economy grows and develops we shall see new jobs.

I believe that the industry can be taken to the point where it becomes a high-volume and low-cost industry, which will not only supply all our coal needs but will be able to get back into the business of competing for the export of coal as well. Mr. MacGregor was appointed with declared objectives and targets. One was to secure new markets for the sale of coal which previous managers, concerned much more with the internal administration and the problems which existed between management and the NUM, had failed to do. There are major opportunities, if coal is produced at the right price, for export to other parts of Europe and the rest of the world. I believe that Mr. MacGregor is the man to achieve those objectives. This is what he will achieve in years to come.

Mr. Eadie: Surely the hon. Member does not believe that.

Mr. Hannam: I do believe that, beecause that is precisely what he achieved in the steel industry. He raionalised that industry. It is now profitable and has achieved a bigger share of world markets. I am convinced that he will do the same for the coal industry.

We should be concerned all the time about the future for coal. In that regard, may I ask my hon. Friend to confirm that the coal conversion scheme for industry will be reactivated now that the coal dispute is over? I am getting inquiries about that from major industries. For example, the paper and board manufacturing industry declared just a year ago that it intended to switch over to coal burn for its continuous processes. It stopped its plans when the dispute broke out. Now it is inquiring whether it can be reassured that the coal conversion grants will be continued so that it can switch over to coal burn.

That does not just mean that that industry will benefit by the cost saving that will result; it also means jobs. The manufacture of the millions of pounds worth of plant and equipment that will be needed in the mills and factories will create jobs elsewhere in the economy. If it had not been for the disastrous coal dispute, that industry would have been well on the way to switching over to coal burn and extra jobs would have been created elsewhere.

I congratulate my hon. Friend on his efforts and the efforts of the Government to re-establish a viable, effective coal industry. Once the dust of the coal dispute has settled I am sure that the majority of miners will also support what he and his right hon. Friends are trying to do.

11.40 pm

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): On 1 March 1984, the chairman of the NCB gave figures for tonnages in the industry. He also suggested that 20,000 people would be made redundant. The miners have returned to work during the past three weeks, so it would be interesting to know how many people will be affected by this order which was introduced on 1 April 1984 and will end on 30 March 1986. As these so-called generous offers have been made to miners, it would be interesting to know how many people will benefit. That is something that the House should know so that we can estimate how much it will cost.

I congratulate the Minister on proposing to pay people who have left work through incapacity. Their broken service has been taken into account in the past, but now they can benefit from the scheme. My hon. Friend the Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) raised this matter in 1983. He will be pleased to know that that anomaly has been rectified.

This appears to be a debate for congratulating decisions. I congratulate the NCB on its decision last night to extend the executive from the chairman and deputy chairman to a wider board. That move will be welcomed throughout the industry, especially by the NUM, NACODS and the British Association of Colliery Managers. Those trade unions have, during the past 12 months, been highly dissatisfied with what has happened in the NCB. Mr. MacGregor packed the NCB with part-time professional people from other industries and ignored the highly qualified and skilled mining engineers who have worked in the industry for many years and who recognise the industry's needs. It is a pity that some of those people have now finished with the industry; and that can be directly related to dissatisfaction with the chairman.

I am tempted to ask the Minister to extend the order to include someone at the top. Whether that person wants to return to America or to his native Scotland does not matter. I am not offering to pay his fare, but I am sure that a collection could be made if necessary. He was paid a reasonable transfer fee when he joined the NCB. No one would object if the order was extended to the man at the top. I am sure that there are others more capable than him of running the industry.

The order is wide-ranging. I wish to direct my remarks to the aftermath of the strike and the question of dismissed miners. Many miners have been dismissed by decision taken outside the usual conciliation procedures. That point was mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie). According to statements in the media, it is clear that men have been dismissed without proper conciliation. That has much to do with the strike. People who were dismissed many months ago could not have their cases discussed formally at local level because of the strike. However, my information is that there has been little discussion since the strike ended, certainly in Yorkshire. I regret that. It appears from the media that the NCB's answer has been to tell those who have been dismissed to go to an industrial tribunal.

I do not know whether right hon. and hon. Members know about industrial tribunals, but they are second best to conciliation procedure in industrial relations. That is clear from the involvement of ACAS as it settles many cases before they get anywhere near industrial tribunals. The NCB has let the industry down by saying that men should go to industrial tribunals.

Mr. Eadie: My hon. Friend is making a serious point. I mentioned law, because we always get law from the other side of the House. Is my hon. Friend aware that, when I saw Mr. MacGregor and Mr. Wheeler, I asked them whether, if an industrial tribunal decided that a victimised miner should not have been victimised, they would give an undertaking that he would get his job back and that Mr. MacGregor refused to give such an undertaking? Indeed, Mr. Wheeler is on record in the press as saying that he would not give them their jobs back. The consultative and conciliation machinery in the industry, not industrial tribunals, is the answer.

Mr. Barron: My hon. Friend is right. The director or, perhaps, ex-director of the Scottish coalfield has said that, if someone was found to have been dismissed unfairly by an industrial tribunal, he would not be set off.

The tribunal can find in favour of a man and say that he has been dismissed unfairly, but it must meet again to say whether compensation should be paid. Compensation averages £700—nowhere near the figures that have been mentioned in connection with the redundant mineworkers' payments scheme. The tribunal can say that someone should be reinstated, but the employer does not have to reinstate him. In terms of justice, there is a fundamental flaw in that system.

The NCB has also claimed that those who have been found guilty of misconduct in the past 12 months have been treated no differently. On the basis of my experience of working for the NCB for some 20 years, I do not believe that that is the case. I have seen violence offered underground. People have admitted to being in breach of the Mines and Quarries Act 1954 because they have fallen out and fought. I have even seen that happen with officials. They have been taken to the office, where they have realised what they have done, in the heat of the moment

and they have been fined. I remember one person being suspended for a few days. They have then worked in the industry for many years after, and there has been no recurrence of trouble. The NCB is now saying that such people could never be trusted again, and so must be got rid of. Again the NCB is wrong in making public statements to the media that it is treating and has treated people during the past 12 months as in the 12 years prior to that. Anyone who has worked in the industry and considers the position of dismissed miners today, knows that that is not true.

I shall highlight the matter with two constituency cases. The first relates to a miner who works at Kiverton Park colliery. He was arrested and charged with besetting a working miner's home and with using threatening behaviour through abusive language. He and two others were taken into custody and he was in Armley gaol for three weeks. His solicitor told him that he could come out of custody only by pleading guilty to besetting, and also that a deal had been struck, as they are in court between prosecuting and defence solicitors, that if he pleaded guilty to besetting, the other charge would be dropped. He pleaded guilty last year, thinking that that way he could get back to his family and away from being for the first time in prison on remand. Although I have never taken part in besetting, I have personal knowledge of the incident, and know that the besetting was nothing more nor less than shouting abuse across a road in the presence of dozens of policemen.

The important point is that the man took a decision in January to return to work. He had been on strike since March 1984 and decided that he had had enough. He worked for six weeks at the colliery, where the man whose home he had been charged with besetting was also working. When at the beginning of this month the miners in the Yorkshire coalfield decided to return to work, that man was taken into the manager's office and sacked for that alleged offence. The man, as he claimed in the local media, was used by the NCB for those six weeks. There was no recurrence of any violence that may have occurred when he was charged. That man has a case to argue that what happened to him was wholly wrong. Although he worked for six weeks beside the man he was supposed to have wronged, it was decided that he was not to be trusted and he was sacked. He remains sacked today.

The second case is about a man at Maltby colliery who was also charged with threatening language and besetting a man's home. He returned to work on 4 March and received a letter from the colliery manager which extended a warm welcome to him for returning to work. The vast majority of miners at that colliery returned then. On 18 March he was taken into the office and sacked. He received a letter on the same date, which says

"I am satisfied that you were involved in besetting the home of a working miner. Your action amounts to gross misconduct justifying my dismissing you from your employment with the Board. Your conduct was an interference with the Board's business in that it was an attempt to intimidate a Board employee so as to try and prevent him from fulfilling his Contract of Employment."

That man has yet to appear in court. He has never been in court in his life, yet he is being sacked on the say-so, presumably, of either the police or an employee to the employer. That smacks of injustice. Although I cannot speak in great detail about the man's case, because it has not yet been to court, it appears that the NCB management has found him guilty of shouting at a working miner. I should add that the vast majority of workers at that colliery have been found guilty, at some time during the past 12 months, of shouting abuse at working miners. The circumstances may be different when that man goes to court, but my information from his solicitor is that he has a good chance of getting off.

That man, together with two others who were arrested on the same day, has been sacked, although they have not been near a court of law. Although they met the management once, they have not had the opportunity to use the conciliation procedure. Under that procedure, if the management were not satisfied with the man's explanation at the beginning of the month, he could have gone to see area NUM officials and area NCB management to argue whether he should have been dismissed. But now he has been told that he must go to an industrial tribunal. What is happening at present is wrong, and there are double standards in the industry where there should not be.

The thread of this debate—this brings in section 19, to which the Minister referred earlier — is how they should be treated when they are dismissed. One of my constituents came to see me earlier this month. He was dismissed in February. He went to the local unemployment office and asked to sign on because he had been found guilty in a court of law of two offences, and had been sacked. The officials there told him that he was still deemed to be on strike and that he had to claim supplementary benefit. When he went to do that, he was told that he could claim it only for his wife and children, less the £16 a week that he was alleged to have been paid by the National Union of Mineworkers.

I wrote on my constituent's behalf to the local office, because, in my view, the strike had finished on 6 March at that colliery. I believed that he was entitled to receive supplementary benefit for himself, and that the £16 a week should not be removed from him. I received a letter from the local office dated 13 March, which stated:

"I am writing in reply to your letter dated 11 March regarding Mr. Christopher Hill of 35 West Street, Thurcroft, Rotherham . . . The decision whether a person is involved in a trade dispute is made by an Adjudication Officer at the Unemployment Benefit Office. Although the majority of mineworkers have returned to work, the Adjudication Officer has now to decide whether or not the dispute can be deemed to have ended and the date thereon on a pit by pit basis. In these circumstances, Section 8 of the Supplementary Benefit Act 1976 requires the Supplementary Benefit Adjudicating Officer to continue regarding Mr. Hill as not being entitled to benefit for his own requirements and that he can only receive benefit for his family."

I assume that the officials still deem him to be in receipt of £16 a week.

I then wrote to the district adjudication office in Rotherham, which forwarded my letter to the regional employment office in Leeds. This week I received a letter dated 25 March from a Mr. D. Holmes, who signed for the regional benefit manager. The letterhead is the Department of Employment at City house in Leeds. It states:

"Your letter . . . addressed to the Adjudication Officer, Rotherham has been passed to this office for reply as a trade dispute adjudication is dealt with on a regional basis by this office."

The second paragraph is a broad history of Mr. Hill's position, and it mentions section 19.

The letter continues:

"In this connection I should perhaps explain that, in deciding this type of case, the Adjudication Officer is bound to take account of relevant case law. In decision R(U)12/72, the Social Security Commissioners laid down that where a person is due to

[Mr. Barron]

end his employment (for whatever reason) but a stoppage of work intervenes and causes him to lose employment earlier, then he has lost employment by reason of that stoppage of work and a disqualification for receipt of unemployment benefit will normally follow and will remain in force until the stoppage of work ceases."

If I have not confused everyone yet, perhaps I can continue with the penultimate paragraph, which states:

"I should perhaps point out that the fact that a strike is over does not necessarily mean that the stoppage of work due to that strike has come to an end."

Most people would have thought it logical that it did.

"We know that the strike in which Mr. Hill was involved has ended, and we have written to his Colliery Manager to establish the position on 5.3.85—with a view to deciding whether the stoppage of work has ended at that particular pit. Under the terms of the Social Security Commissioners decision R(U)25/57, the stoppage of work cannot be regarded as having ended until work is proceeding normally and the effect of the overtime ban on normal working is a factor to be considered."

I phoned up Mr. Holmes yesterday to find out what the letter meant, because there seemed to be a contradiction in one or two of the sentences of the letter. I asked Mr. Holmes what he meant by "normal working". The Minister will recall that I told him on Monday that one coal face in one of my collieries has been withheld by the board from normal working, whether it is for incentive or deeper reasons.

Mr. Holmes told me that the adjudication officer who takes this decision is the chief adjudication officer in the Department of Health and Social Security. I asked where his office was, and Mr. Holmes said, "I am not sure. Sometimes it is in London and sometimes it is in Southampton. He moves between those two places. His name is Mr. Parsons, he is a legal man and a very nice man." I did not know whether to phone London or Southampton to talk to Mr. Parsons.

I then asked Mr. Holmes what was meant by "normal working", and I was told 90 per cent. of the normal production of the colliiery in 1983-84. Since the strike has ended, we have heard much about the loss of coalfaces, and some colleries may never get back to 90 per cent. of the 1983-84 production level. Presumably, in that case, the adjudication officers will never think that those collieries have returned to "normal working". What does the Minister deem "normal working" to be?

My office is in the village in which Mr. Hill both lived and worked before he was dismissed. I was talking to my secretary yesterday, and she told me about the wife of a miner who had gone back to work on 6 March, and was claiming single payment from the DHSS for that week. I said that that was impossible because single payment had always been denied to striking miners, throughout the strike, because they were caught in the trap of social security legislation. If one has fallen on hard times and is living on supplementary benefit, one can get the single payment, but if one is a trade unionist, or the family of a trade unionist, with principles that mean that one will stand up and fight for something, one cannot be paid single payment.

My secretary told me that there was no problem. The miners went back to work at Thurcroft colliery—the one from which Mr. Hill was dismissed — on the week starting Monday 5 March. If they had not got any wages to come on 8 March, they could claim supplementary benefit. Each one could claim the full amount, including the £16—which had been stopped for 12 months—and payments for single men on supplementary benefit, who had been without a penny for so long.

Despite that, Mr. Hill, who had been dismissed by the NCB in February last year, has been denied the same benefits, because he is deemed to still be on strike. There has either been some interdepartmental bungling, or some victimisation of Mr. Hill—or perhaps both.

It is not satisfactory for hon. Members to be talking about tribunals and adjudicators when that sort of thing is going on in my constituency. Mr. Hill is suffering beyond reason. He has been fined in court and sacked. He has suffered twice for the crime that he committed. He should not be made to suffer more as a result of the operation of the social security system or through the bungling of a DHSS adjudicator who obviously does not know what day it is.

I want the Minister to investigate that and any other cases of its type to ensure that people who have been dismissed are not victimised by the NCB or by supplementary benefit officials. The Minister said that he would like to put the strike firmly behind us. It will never be put to rest while Mr. Hill and people like him are bearing the scars of the dispute in the way that I have described.

The summary decision of the NCB to sack people—for crimes that they have, or perhaps have not, committed; the courts have not yet decided many of the cases—will not enable us to put the strike behind us. The injustices, some of which I have mentioned, must be put right as soon as possible.

12.6 am

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): I support the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) and wish to add to his comments about redundancies and the situation in the mining industry. He was right to say that the NCB had established itself as judge and jury and that people were being punished twice for having done something wrong. That is foreign to everything that the NCB has stood for over the years, going back to the time when I worked for it, until Ian MacGregor became its chairman.

I hear people say that they have faith in MacGregor. I have not and I never have. I will not challenge his management expertise, but such expertise as he has is wrong for the NCB, just as it was wrong for the steel industry. I met him on half a dozen occasions when he was chairman of the British Steel Corporation and at that time he was saying exactly the same for steel that he is now saying for coal. "My job is to find the means of selling the product," has been his claim.

What has been the result of MacGregor's attitude, for example, on my area? I received a letter today telling me that Tinsley slab mill, one of the most modern in Europe, is to close. It will close, causing enormous redundancy in the area, because Samuel Fox, which is now British Steel, Stocksbridge, part of Tinsley Park and part of Aldwark, used to be the United Steel Company. The whole lot could become part of United Steel, but that is a prosperous organisation and will, no doubt, be ripe for selling off after the slab mill has gone.

What did MacGregor, as chairman of British Steel, do to find new outlets? He used British Steel money to try to buy a clapped-out steel works in America, because he wanted to transfer slabs from here to sell them in America.

But that never came off. I cannot think of anything positive that Ian MacGregor did for the steel industry, except close steel works.

Then MacGregor became chairman of the NCB. Time and again I have said that there are far better people within the management structure of the NCB than MacGregor ever was and ever will be.

In considering the whole question of redundancies and the activities of Ian MacGregor, the first question to ask is why certain people have left the NCB. For example, why did Geoff Kirk leave? Why did Paul Glover leave? Why did Ned Smith leave? These men were advising the National Coal Board from its inception. Why did they leave? Why is the NCB hardening its attitude? It is something which is foreign to the industrial relations which have been built up over the past 25 years.

Mr. Ashby: The answer is "Mr. Scargill."

Mr. Mckay: The hon. Gentleman should ask himself how long Arthur Scargill has been the president of the NUM.

Mr. Ashby: Too long.

Mr. McKay: In that case, why was there not trouble much earlier? My constituents know why the strike started. The sad feature is that it should never have happened. The opportunity to start a strike should never have been available. It is significant that the closure of Cortonwood took place when Mr. MacGregor became chairman of the NCB. The industry has been working to create low costs and high wages for the past 20 years. That is the end to which many have given a life's work.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): We are here to listen and to try to be constructive. I am sure that my hon. Friends want to see the coal industry return to full operation. However, we find it difficult to understand why so many miners worked throughout the dispute without being persuaded by the arguments that we are hearing this evening. They were not persuaded that Mr. MacGregor and many other things were wrong for the board. These miners worked individually and collectively. Until an explanation is given for that, the hon. Gentleman will not persuade many of my hon. Friends to accept his argument.

Mr. McKay: I shall not go down that avenue this evening. However, I shall be glad to answer the hon. Gentleman's question when we have a full debate on the coal-mining industry. The answer lies in the history of the industry and of the board, and unless he has studied that history he will be unaware of the answer.

There has been talk about the responsibility of management. The right of the management to manage has never been in question. Indeed, that right is enshrined in law. Until recently, management in the coal industry has been by consensus, not by fear. We must return to the conditions that applied before Mr. MacGregor became the chairman of the board. That is why I applaud the extension of the management structure at Hobart house. I hope very much that it will soon be in operation.

It seems that there will not be as many redundancies as I feared, but there will be some, and that is why the order is designed to make the redundancy scheme attractive. Some of the measures, which have been introduced gracefully by the Minister, have been well received. I am sure that they will be similarly well received outside the House. However, I shall want to examine them and their implications in the cold light of day.

Conservative Members have talked about jobs for everyone, and the debate provides an opportunity to say what that means. I placed redundant miners in Scotland and Durham in the prosperous coalfields of south Yorkshire. I had the misfortune on one or more occasions to move them from colliery to colliery. However, there comes a time when there is nowhere to which they can move. Conservative Members should consider the location of jobs and the implications for those who they think should take them. Colliery closures mean the virtual closure of villages. Because there is no work, people do not want to buy the miners' homes. Miners have to remember that the future of their children, who may be taking A-levels or O-levels, must be considered before they move from an area.

Les Hill, who lived at Cawthorn, provides one example of the difficulties facing miners. He worked at Shafton workshops, which decided in a rationalisation that some of its work would be moved to Carcroft. Mr. Hill found it difficult to move from Cawthorn to Shafton; he found it impossible to move from Cawthorn to Carcroft. At 54, he had no alternative but to take redundancy. One could say, "There was a job for him". There are supposed to be jobs for everyone, but there was not a job for him at Carcroft, so there is not a job for everyone.

In February, Mr. Hill was counselled to take his redundancy payment. Because he was a foreman, management asked him to stay on to take down the machinery that was being transferred to Carcroft rather than take his redundancy payment. Like a good workman, he did. Because he did what management asked, he was caught up in the strike. He lost six months' service pay and unemployment pay, even though he was on notice. The management made him redundant in September, while the strike was on.

If it was right to make him redundant while the strike was on, it was right that he should have been paid unemployment pay at the same time. That is one of the examples that the Opposition can bring to the Minister's attention at any time.

The adjudication officers' decisions were entirely wrong, because they did not take into account what the law said. The law says that a person will not receive unemployment pay because of a stoppage. The measure was introduced simply to prevent people from drawing unemployment to offset wages due to loss suffered because of a stoppage. Since the men returned to work, there has not been a stoppage. The stoppage is over. The present overtime ban started before the stoppage. During the strike, people were made redundant or left the industry and received unemployment benefit.

Are the adjudication officers vindictive, or have they been terribly wrong in their reading of the law, and decided accordingly? Ministers say that they cannot do a thing about this. Ministers have influence, and they can bend arms and ears. If peace is to be brought back to the coal mining industry, arms and ears should be bent and adjudication officers should decide according to the law on stoppages.

For years, there has been conciliation and consultation machinery. The coal board has always dismissed people who have fought on colliery premises. It has never dismissed people who have fought off colliery premises or

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committed misdemeanours on colliery premises, provided that they were not committed against the NCB. Why has there been a change of attitude? What has the coal board decided, on top of the civil action which has correctly taken place, irrespective of whether the action occurred on colliery premises? That has never been done before. For how long will this continue? The NCB has created a precedent. If a man says in 10 years that he was insulted by a person who was on strike, will that former striker be dismissed, or will he carry on, as has always happened in the past?

Why should somebody be dismissed, because a finger has been pointed at him—we come back to the witch hunt—unless the National Coal Board has decided that those who work for it are its property? It is well known that American miners were the property of the coal company. They had to live in the company's houses and spend at the company's shop. Mr. Ian MacGregor's hostility towards American miners and the American system is well known. So we come back to the head of the National Coal Board.

We welcome the changes. They will make redundancy more attractive and will create the justice that has been missing for quite some time. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) will be cheered up no end—illness in the family has kept him away from the House for the past two weeks—when he reads in *Hansard* that something for which he has been fighting has been brought to fruition.

I welcome the redundancy payments scheme. The scars have to be healed, but this can and must be done. As the Minister knows, there are those in the National Coal Board who would be better able to heal those scars than the chairman of the board. It is time that they were given their head and that the coal board was brought back to what it was before the strike.

12.21 am

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): I do not think the coal board will get back to what it was before the strike, and I do not think the miners should allow themselves to be put in a position where that kind of collaboration goes on as it did before, because those years of collaboration and conciliation did not get the miners anywhere. They allowed the board to build up massive stocks of coal. The Government and the board—people like Mr. Eaton and the rest, besides Mr. MacGregor—then decided to take advantage of the fact that supply had outstripped demand and, with all the other facets of the Ridley plan, they got stuck into the miners and their families. So my plea to the miners, notwithstanding the fact that they have gone back to work, is to make sure that they carry out the policy of equating supply with demand.

The miners can do better than that. They can make sure that supply does not equate with demand. They should keep it just a little bit below demand. That is the way to keep pits open. Everybody who knows a little bit about this industry knows that at times when pit closures were at a low ebb the supply of coal equated with demand, or supply was even less than the amount that could be sold on the open market. That applied to Governments of whatever colour. I make no specific point about that.

Therefore, my advice to the miners I have addressed in the coalfields still is, and I use this debate to say it again, to adopt the maxim that the miners of old adopted: leave a little bit of coal for tomorrow; do not smash any productivity records; do not get their photograph in *Coal News* so that Eaton and MacGregor can fawn over them and say what a wonderful job they have done by breaking another European record, after which the NCB chiefs will sit drinking champagne and gloating over the miners for having smashed records.

I hope miners have had their political consciousness raised during the last 12 months and that they will adopt the market economy philosophy, just as the Tory party have adopted it. I hope they will make sure that they do not supply too much coal so that the report in the *Daily Telegraph* on 22 March 1985 can be kept intact for a long time. It gladdened my heart to read in that report:

"Coal supplies, so bountiful, are now dwindling so much that rationing has been introduced in parts of the south-east. The problem apparently surrounds anthracite and other coal which merchants bought from abroad while home supplies, hewn in South Wales, were unavailable. The merchants have decided to hold out against ordering more of the expensive anthracite from Germany, America and South Africa with the prospects of cheaper, home-produced fuel."

I thought that the strike was all about shutting pits and the fact that we do not have cheap coal in Britain. I thought that it was all about the fact that there was so much cheap coal on the open market that we have got to shut pits. According to last week's *Daily Telegraph*, ours is cheap. The article went on:

"The merchants were caught out by the latest cold spell and now foreign imports have dried up."

I want that to last because the miners' bargaining power will remain high while the markets are there. I fancy the miners' chance in that situation.

One of the credits in the strike, notwithstanding all the difficulties, is that during that year not more than 80 million tonnes of coal was mined. That means that, despite all the oil supplies and the additional use of nuclear power——

Mr. Ashby: The hon. Gentleman advocates an honest day's pay for a dishonest day's work.

Mr. Skinner: The moonlighting barrister should be careful. He has plenty of jobs on his plate. I have got some more references to him if he keeps on interjecting.

We are now in a strong market position. Massive amounts of coal have not been produced and stocks have been reduced from the 60-odd million of those dire days of 1983 to 12 million tonnes, if that, as the Secretary of State said the other day, behind the power station fences.

We must ensure that the miners that we represent are not placed in the predicament that they have been placed in before by building up those stocks of coal. My advice to the miners in the Chamber and outside is that they should never allow those stocks to be built up again so that people like Mr. Michael Eaton can take a rise out of them when it suits them.

In a capitalist economy where market forces operate, the miners need to carry on the war of attrition. The miners did not start it. The NCB decided to send in Mr. MacGregor. The NCB and the Government decided to take on the miners and smash the union if they could get away with it. It is our job to see that the miners' morale is kept up. I shall do my best to ensure that that happens.

I have no doubt at all that if we are to get an amnesty for all those miners who have been referred to today, the

way to do it is not to co-operate and collaborate with the NCB or the Government but to make sure that we have that bargaining power at the pithead.

Why should there be no amnesty? Why should there be victimisation? The House of Commons does not operate that sort of system. I well remember a few years ago when an ex-Tory Minister called Reginald Maudling got involved up to the neck in the Poulson scandal——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order.

Mr. Skinner: Yes. It is a bit warm, isn't it?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I realise that the hon. Gentleman is on his preamble, but he should make his remarks relevant to the scheme.

Mr. Skinner: I am talking about people who were removed from this place. There was a vote in the House which you will remember, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Reginald Maudling got an amnesty. The same was true of the ex-Liberal leader, Jeremy Thorpe, when he was director of London and County Securities which was trading falsely and breaking the law, touting for custom when it was on the verge of bankruptcy.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will relate his remarks to the redundancy scheme.

Mr. Skinner: Yes. I am doing that. I am saying that, if the miners are to be fined in a court of law, and some of them not even that, and are then told by tinpot managers under the Government's direction—that is what it is really all about—that they will lose their jobs, then it is right and proper for me to say that other people in society and in this House of Commons have got away with the same thing. The same was true of the ex-Liberal leader, who was the director of London and County Securities, which was trading falsely and breaking the law. Yet that man still kept his job.

The same was also true of another former Member of Parliament called Iain Sproat. He was another Tory. He had eight directorships and he failed to carry out the law and to file those accounts for several years under the Companies Act. But he kept his job. There was an amnesty for him. The list is as long as your arm. I challenge any Tory who is a director of a company to stand up and say that every one of his colleagues is carrying out the law of the land as set down in the Companies Act. I have a few more cases up my sleeve.

There is a lot of injustice in this world. We say that the miners have a right to be reinstated. Every one of them who fought for the right to work should be reinstated. They were not involved in a dispute about money, greed or materialism. The dispute was over saving their jobs, or saving the jobs of others. It was about preserving a future for the children in the community. Some of those who took part in the strike were on the verge of retiring, so they were not even fighting for their own jobs. They were fighting for someone else to have the job after they left. We want an amnesty for them all. We shall get it not by begging but by fighting. We should ensure that we operate on the basis of not supplying this Government with too much coal.

The order deals with concessionary coal. In recent times, the NCB has introduced a new system of taking coal away from pensioners. There used to be two sorts of householders. There were those who had retired from the pits and their widows, who lived as householders. It did not matter whether they lived in flats, in bungalows, or in three-bedroomed houses in the private or public sector because they all qualified for five loads of coal a year. That was not a lot, but it was almost enough to get by on. The other category consisted of those living in lodgings, who were quasi-householders. The NCB now has another category. Apparently, it has now started measuring the square feet in any given bungalow or flat. If the figure is below a certain level, some coal is taken away. That is a scandal.

The Minister has been paid some compliments tonight. I shall not pay him any, because he played a wicked role during the strike. But will he get on to the NCB, and try to investigate why it is stealing coal from retired miners or pensioners who have gone into small flats or bungalows? That should be put right.

Mr. Beith: Is it not extremely unfair that concessionary coal should be withdrawn from a widow because she has gone out and scrubbed a few floors? After that date she will lose her concessionary coal for ever. Is the hon. Gentleman satisfied that the NUM has done enough to end the withdrawal of that concessionary coal?

Mr. Skinner: Whether or not the NUM has done enough, I can say that I am not satisfied because the NCB has been so vindictive. The hon. Gentleman has just graphically illustrated again how deep the bitterness and hatred is within the NCB and the Government. In order to exact retribution from the miners, those who have served the industry, and who were not even involved in the strike, have been attacked.

There has been a lot of talk about the Minister dealing with the cases in which unemployment benefit has been lost. I believe that these people need retrospective payment, every single one of them, for every single week that they have lost. There must be no date at which it is said that the strike is now ended. We want full back pay for every single person who has been treated like the two or three I have mentioned in my constituency—people who have left the industry, as my hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) said. We have all had examples of that and we want to make sure that they get their back pay.

Those are just a few of the things that need to be dealt with. I can assure the Minister that we shall not be letting him or the Secretary of State off the hook. It is our job to see to it that we represent our mining constituents as well as the others.

Mr. Greg Knight (Derby, North): Most of yours continued working.

Mr. Skinner: Did yours?

Mr. Knight: I have not got any.

Mr. Skinner: We are going to make sure that we represent them, in order to keep pits open. We are going to see to it—at least, I am—that they do not make a rod for their own backs ever again. We are going to encourage them not to build up stocks so that the Government can have another Ridley plan ready to try and smash them into the ground. This debate has been important for that reason, if for no other.

We know that the redundancy payments will help people who have got the sack, but they will never be as good as those in the Common Market. Is it not a strange

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irony that, although there is no money in this country to keep pits open, so the Government say, during the strike we had the galling experience of prospective redundant commissioners in the Common Market — a totally uneconomic unit of production, with no financial reserves —being made into vice-presidents three weeks before their retirement so that they could get a big, fat redundancy payment to which they would otherwise not be entitled? And this Government connived at it.

It is in that spirit that I speak tonight on behalf of the miners and others who have been victimised by the Government, and it is in that spirit that I intend to carry on.

12.37 am

Mr. J. D. Concannon (Mansfield): I apologise to my hon. Friend the Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) for not being here when he made his opening remarks, but I was on the Transport Bill in Committee and we were busy voting on certain clauses. I want to give him as much backing as I possibly can.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) is completely right. There certainly is a problem, as I found out myself this week from one of my old-age pensioners, over this concessionary fuel. It came as a terrific surprise to me when I was told that in a certain area of my town, because some rooms have been unclassified now, all of a sudden these old-age pensioners are losing 2 tons of coal a year. When they have been used to having it, this comes as a terrible shock to them.

It came as an even worse shock to me when I found this in the agreement, that it was what we had agreed to. How that slipped through I just do not know, but it is causing some problems, an the last thing we want in the mining industry at this time is more problems.

I agree with my hon. Friends representing other areas that there are problems concerning the adjudicating officer, because he seems to have taken a carte blanche decision about the whole industry. In our area, members who have finished with the coal board for one reason or another—nothing whatsoever to do with the strike—are finding that their unemployment pay, their DHSS pay, has been stopped because somebody somewhere on high has said that the industry is in dispute.

Some workers in my area lost not a day's work during the year of dispute. I do not argue about the rights and wrongs of that, but it seems odd that people who worked throughout the strike and who have now retired are deemed to be on strike. It is hard for people to understand and it has caused bitterness.

The Minister should take the adjudicator to one side. Perhaps he might have to twist his arm. I back my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover on this. Those affected were told to put in their appeals. However, the appeals were not dealt with during the dispute. A backlog has built up over the year.

Surely the adjudicator does not have to hear every case. One case should be enough. A decision to pay could be made after hearing one case. If the decision goes their way, applicants should be given back pay from the day that they made their application.

Mr. Barron: A man from the regional employment office in Leeds told me that he did not make a decision in one case at one colliery because he did not want one man from a village working at one colliery to be paid when someone from the same village working at another colliery was not paid because no decision had been made for that pit. Perhaps we shall have to wait until the men at all the British coalfields are working normally.

Mr. Concannon: That is why I think that the Minister should settle the matter with the adjudicator. Letters from the DHSS and employment offices give us a breakdown of what is happening, but then we are told "This is your problem. You make the laws and you must sort out the difficulties." That is what I am told, in all friendliness, by the manager of my local DHSS office. The men in my area have not been on strike, but if they are no longer employed by the coal board for one reason or another, they are in difficulties.

I heard of the case last week of an 18-year-old lad who suddenly found that he was no longer employed in the coal industry. He does not have a penny a week to live on. Without his parents I do not know what he would so.

The Minister should pick up the phone tomorrow and say "For goodness sake, take one case, use it as a precedent, and pay the men." Payment should be from the date of application. That would take some of the bitterness away. I want to back up my hon. Friends from other areas. This has been a national decision——

Mr. Eadie: We want to know tonight who took the decision. It was not dreamed up in local areas. It was taken nationally. We want to know tonight if the Government connived in the decision. That is the question that must be answered tonight.

Mr. Concannon: When the problem arose, I was told first that the decision had been taken in Birmingham. When I tried to get hold of Birmingham, it turned out that the decision had been taken in London. It was a case of being caught up in Tebbit's law.

In my area people were working all the time, but those who became redundant or lost their jobs were caught up in the problem. They may have got sympathy but they were left without unemployment and other benefits. There is a lot of bitterness and misunderstanding. The Minister would do himself and many others a great favour if he got on the telephone tomorrow and said, "Get cracking on it; make a decision and then start paying the lads the money that is due to them."

12.46 am

Mr. Michael Morris (Northampton, South): I hope my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary will not go in for any arm-twisting. There are some of us who represent industrial areas who have seen the same thing happen before. It may come as a surprise to Opposition Members, but when there is a national overtime ban that is not normal working. Certainly it is not normal working in the shoe industry or in engineering in my constituency. It may seem like normal working to some people in the mining industry, but it is not normal working.

Cases have been mentioned that should be considered, but I hope my hon. Friend will not be tempted to go along the path of doing some arm-twisting just to meet a difficulty——

Mr. Barron *rose*——

Mr. Morris: No. Nobody on the Opposition side gave way to me, and I am not giving way to anyone.

There are genuine anomalies that should be investigated. The processes of the law should be followed. The hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) and other hon. Members have quoted cases that should be investigated.

Is it not remarkable, however, that the hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) should have gone on at some length about the victimisation of Scottish miners who have been dismissed? He tried to leave the House with the impression that not one of the 200 miners to whom he referred could possibly have been involved in violence. It is worth recording that of 10,372 alleged offences, there were 3 for murder, 5 for threatening to kill, 1,019 for criminal damage, 39 for assault causing grievious bodily harm and 429 for assault causing actual bodily harm. There are many more that in normal circumstances would have resulted in fines. If the hon. Member for Midlothian is suggesting——

Mr. Barron *rose*——

Mr. Morris: I shall not give way.

If the hon. Member for Midlothian is suggesting that no miner in Scotland was involved in any of those crimes, he must think that we are a lot of fools.

Mr. Eadie *rose*——

Mr. Morris: No. The hon. Gentleman did not give way to me and I shall not give way to him.

Mr. Eadie: The hon. Gentleman asked me a question.

Mr. Morris: No, I did not ask the hon. Gentleman a question. It was a rhetorical question. If he cannot understand the difference between a rhetorical and a genuine question, he ought not to be here.

The hard fact—and somebody has to say it—is that it was a political strike from the start. It was a contrived strike by the NUM. The pity of it is that the hon. Member for Midlothian did not seek tonight to mend some of the hurts. The industry has a future, as both he and I know. We have the best fossil fuel resources in Europe. The only way forward is to heal some of the wounds. I hope the next time that the hon. Member for Midlothian speaks in a debate on the coal industry, he will refer to the future of the industry and not look back on all the difficulties created during the past 12 months.

My hon. Friend the Minister has made a major contribution to the healing process. There is much work still to be done. I hope that all hon. Members will do their best to ensure that the industry succeeds.

12.51 am

Mr. David Hunt: With the leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I shall reply to the debate.

I shall attempt to answer the many important points which have been raised, and will write to those hon. Members whose questions I do not have time to answer. I recognise the difficulty that will arise after 1 January 1986 because many miners will have insufficient national insurance contributions to qualify for social security benefits. I shall carefully consider the implications of that for the scheme. As the hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) recognised, the problem will not arise until next year. It is too early for me to say what changes might be introduced.

The hon. Gentleman made accusations about law-breakers that were not true. It is a fact that NACODS this morning sought leave to apply for a judicial review on the ground that the NCB had failed to undertake statutory consultation under section 46 of the 1946 Act, concerning in particular the proposed closure of Bedwas colliery, but in the generality also. It also sought an injunction to prevent the board from making any closure until the introduction of the revised colliery review procedure. The court refused it leave to challenge the board in that way. Therefore, I cannot understand how the hon. Gentleman can maintain that the NCB should be regarded as having breached the terms of the 1946 Act.

The hon. Gentleman attempted to rewrite the history of the dispute. My hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, South (Mr. Morris) was right to say that it was a wide aspect of the debate. However, it is right to stress that the NUM rejected the NACODS agreement in October and on several occasions in subsequent months. When we debated the issue on 4 February, that was still the case, as it was in the following days.

However, later the NUM did accept the NACODS agreement, and that was made clear to the TUC. It was that step that prompted the TUC to approach the Prime Minister on the basis that there was but a narrow gap between the NCB and the NUM. If the hon. Gentleman refers to the TUC document, he will note that clause 4 states:

"The parties accept that it is of value to outline, at this stage, the procedures that flow from a commitment to modify the Colliery Review Procedure."

Accepting that the NACODS agreement was part of the final agreement between the NUM and the NCB, what were the consequences that would flow from that?

There was a crucial difference in the dispute between NACODS and the NCB and the dispute between the NUM and the NCB, and that was a major problem to overcome. The NUM, not NACODS, had been on strike on the main issue of uneconomic pits. Conservative Members and several Opposition Members have termed that as an irresponsible demand that no uneconomic pit should ever close. That issue had to be dealt with over and above acceptance of the NACODS agreement. That is why other clauses were in the document presented by the seven top trade union leaders to the NUM as the best deal that they thought was available.

Mr. Eadie: I am as tired as the Minister having spent six and a half hours at a national executive committee meeting in Sheffield and six hours on a train today. I hope that he will not rewrite history. I was present when the magnificent seven from the TUC went to the NUM. They did not have a TUC document but an a NCB one. I quoted what the Minister told the House on 4 February when we asked whether anything would have to be signed, and, if so, would the ACAS-NACODS agreement of October 1984 have been accepted. The Minister said no. He is now telling me that the NUM had to sign something in the document submitted by the TUC. We were told that it was negotiable ofand capable interpretation but had to be signed before negotiations started. It is the Minister, not me, who is rewriting history. He gave an undertaking to the House on 4 February. I am accusing the Government of bad faith in not carrying it out.

Mr. Hunt: I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman does not have it right. I have spent many hours, often late into the night, with those seven top trade union leaders. The hon. Gentleman has not denied that they went to the NUM

[Mr. Hunt]

executive and presented that document—presented to them by the NCB—which was the subject of discussion between the TUC and the NCB. It was the best deal available. Time and again I have criticised the Opposition, because if only they had supported Norman Willis and the TUC, the document would have formed part of the final agreement. It would have been a just and honourable settlement. I accept that the hon. Gentleman and I disagree.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth) made several telling points about disqualification and unemployment benefit. I assure the House that the social security commissioners, who ultimately determine entitlement to unemployment benefit under social security legislation, are entirely independent of government. There is no question of arm twisting. The commissioners are all barristers or advocates of at least 10 years' standing and, like judges, are appointed by the Queen on the recommendation of the Lord Chancellor. It would not be proper for Ministers to try to influence them, and I hope that Opposition Members accept that no attempt has been made to do so in cases arising out of the coal dispute.

Mr. Barron: The House has some dealings with the commissioners, because it draws up the legislation that they operate. Why can people who have gone back to work at Faircroft be paid under legislation presented by Ministers when Mr. Hill, who has been dismissed and is no longer an employee, is deemed to be on strike and cannot get the same payment? It seems to me that there is something radically wrong.

Mr. Hunt: It would be improper for me to seek to interfere with the commissioners exercising their judicial jurisdiction.

I understand that a tribunal of commissioners will hear an appeal from a redundant miner on 16 April. Unlike the four appeals to date, which have been considered by individual commissioners, the decision of this tribunal will be binding on all similar cases. The decisions of the four appeals followed a series of commissioners' decisions and a decision of the tribunal of commissioners, which arose from the coal strike of 1972, as the hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) mentioned. The commissioners stated that they were following the ratio decidendi of the stare decisis doctrine of the original decisions made in 1972.

I am told that the tribunal of 16 April will consist of the chief commissioner, Judge Bromley, and two other commissioners of longstanding, Mr. J. S. Watson and Mr. Morcom. When they make their decision, my colleagues and I shall examine it most carefully, as will many miners who have appeals to the commissioners outstanding. The payment of back benefit depends on the result of the tribunal hearing. The tribunal has power to backdate the benefit in full to the date of application. I hope that that clarifies the position and demonstrates that there can be no question of the Government interfering.

Mr. Eadie: I welcome the hon. Gentleman's remarks. However, he must answer the point raised in the debate. Who took the decision? It was not taken in the individual areas, but it came down the line. Who told adjudicating officers that they could not pay? Who took the decision and sent it to Yorkshire and Scotland and so on to say that the dispute had not ended and to instruct the adjudicating officers? We must know who took the decision that influences those people?

Mr. Hunt: As the hon. Member for Bolsover, (Mr. Skinner) stressed, the hon. Gentleman is looking for a scapegoat in the Government. He will not find one. The Government did not interfere or intervene. The adjudicating officers have stated that they were following a decision of commissioners of a tribunal in 1972, which is binding. Now we have a new tribunal at the highest level which will look at the position again. I suggest to the House that we await that decision and consider the position thereafter.

The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) asked about opencast workers. The terms of employment in the opencast coal industry are, as he knows, more like those in the civil engineering industry than in the deep mine coal industry. That is recognised. However, they are still a crucial part of the coal industry. Typically, opencast sites last only a few years, with men moving from one to another. By contrast, the redundant mineworkers' payment scheme is designed to alleviate hardship when a deep mine closes in a settled community, typically after 60 to 80 years of life. That is the difference. Obviously, I shall consider carefully his points.

The hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) said that the strike should never have happened and, of course, it should never have happened. As my right hon. Friend has stressed time and time again, the miners had before them the most generous offer since nationalisation. If only they had accepted it—they would have accepted it, if it had gone to a ballot—the damaging strike would never have occurred.

Mr. Hardy: I accept that the Minister assumed his office while the strike was underway. For months before the strike, some Opposition Members pleaded with the Secretary of State to take part in the tripartite arrangements so that he could tell the unions in the mining industry of the splendid deal. Is it not a pity—£6,500 million of pity—that he did not take our advice and avoid that appalling bitterness and expenditure?

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Gentleman must be aware that the miners knew of the offer. It was explained to them. I could show him many documents in which it was set out clearly. Sadly, the miners were not given the opportunity to vote in a ballot. But we shall not get anywhere by looking into the past, as the hon. Gentleman would be the first to agree.

The hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) raised many important points, which I shall consider. I disagreed with much of what he said, but he would not expect anything different, judging by his attitude and accusatorial finger, which pointed in my direction on several occasions.

I appreciated the kind remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter (Mr. Hannam), and I completely agree with him that successful low-cost production with a highly paid work force must be a major objective of any policies on the coal industry. I agree with his comments about Arthur Scargill. We do not wish continually to kick Arthur Scargill, but, my goodness, his members do it every day of the week. He is beaten in ballot after ballot after ballot. Of course, my hon. Friend is right to say that the Government's commitment to coal is as strong as ever. He

asked about the coal conversion scheme. The coal-firing scheme is a practical expression of our commitment to the future of the coal industry. It is impossible to say exactly how much of the £75 million has been used, since, on past experience, several applications that are in the pipeline may be withdrawn or may not merit a grant. Companies must continue to apply, as a useful amount remains in the fund.

As for the future, the Government will be reviewing the long-term future of the scheme later in the year, and we shall certainly take careful note of my hon. Friend's points.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I lose no opportunity to promote that excellent scheme, and later today I shall visit several firms in the west country that have converted successfully. I shall also open the National Coal Board's new office in Bristol. We shall continue to intensify the campaign.

The hon. Member for Rother Valley asked me to estimate the number of people who will be affected. This order merely amends the March 1984 order. The terms currently available will continue to apply until the end of March 1986. No decision is likely about a further order for the period beyond 1986 until much nearer that time, and any decision will depend entirely upon the circumstances then prevailing. But much will depend upon the numbers who come forward, so I do not have a figure to give to the House. The terms that are now available will still be available against the important background of no compulsory redundancy.

The strike has had a major impact on the coal industry. Now that it is over, the board must undertake a thorough review of the damage done and its actions for the future. But it is too early to say wht the outcome of the board's review might be and, hence, the numbers of men who may take voluntary redundancy in 1985-86 and thereafter.

I welcome the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter about Mr. MacGregor's decision to widen the executive, and I join the tribute paid by him to the work of Ian MacGregor as coal board chairman. I make that point clearly.

The hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay) also paid tribute to the new management structure, and I am delighted that it has such a blessing from this place. He raised the case of Les Hill. I say to Mr. Hill, through the medium of the Chamber, that not only did the hon. Gentleman raise the matter in tonight's debate but he has already made a detailed submission to the Secretary of State and to me. We shall consider carefully all the points that have been made.

I join the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone in paying tribute to the hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse). I am sad to hear that illness has prevented him from being in the Chamber tonight; indeed, many hon. Members said that it must have been something like that to have kept him away. He is responsible for the continual pressure to improve the redundant mineworkers pension scheme, and I pay tribute to him.

Several hon. Members have asked about dismissal. I hope that all hon. Members realise—we have said it many times—that the dismissal and re-employment of employees are matters for the board. My hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, South read out a relevant list of offences, but the board has made it clear that all cases are considered on their merits. The Government have said that that is a good policy. If hon. Members have evidence that the policy is not being followed, I shall consider carefully any points made.

Mr. Eadie: The Minister must not say that all cases will be considered on their merits. I told him in my opening speech about what has happened in Scotland. I told him what happened when I met Mr. MacGregor and Mr. Wheeler. There were more than 200 cases, and none was decided on its merits. It is a complete violation of the conciliation and consultative machinery. I was surprised by how neatly the Minister sidestepped my point that there is conciliation machinery in the industry, and that the board has violated it.

Mr. Hunt: I do not accept that, but I shall not drag out the debate. In Scotland, I know from the explanations given to me by the NCB, that each case was considered on its merits, and no one was dismissed for trivial offences.

Mr. Eadie: No.

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Member for Bolsover made some disgraceful comments about Michael Eaton. Mr. Eaton cares more deeply about the coal industry than the hon. Gentleman. I hope that the NUM does not listen to the hon. Gentleman's strictures, and I do not believe that it will. The message for hope for the future of the coal industry is that the moderates are defeating the militants. The ballot result, the decision yesterday—this has been a bad week for the hon. Member for Bolsover, and Mr. Scargill, but a good week for Britain.

The hon. Member for Bolsover, and the right hon. Member for Mansfield (Mr. Concannon) both spoke about concessionary coal. As they know, miners' and miners' widows' concessionary coal is determined by an agreement between the NCB an the NUM. The NUM negotiated a new agreement, containing the provisions to which the hon. Member for Bolsover has objected, in 1983. In the light of what has been said, I shall carefully consider all the points that have been raised on that agreement.

I sense that there has been unanimity in the debate that there should be a return to normal working next Wednesday. The hon. Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Woodall) said that it will be a total victory for the Government. No—it will be a victory for common sense. This has been a useful and important debate. Let us now all agree to put the past well behind us. Let us get going with the urgent task of rebuilding our great industry. I hope that the House will support the order.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That the draft Redundant Mineworkers and Concessionary Coal (Payments Scheme) (Amendment) Order 1985, which was laid before this House on 11th March, be approved.

Statutory Instruments, &c.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With the leave of the House, I shall put all four motions on merchant shipping together.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 79(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

MERCHANT SHIPPING

That the draft Merchant Shipping (Passenger Ship Construction) (Amendment) Regulations 1985, which were laid before this House on 28th February, be approved.

That the draft Merchant Shipping (Cargo Ship Construction and Survey) Regulations 1981 (Amendment) Regulations 1985, which were laid before this House on 28th February, be approved.

That the draft Merchant Shipping (Application of Construction and Survey Regulations to other ships) Regulations 1985, which were laid before this House on 28th February, be approved.

That the draft Merchant Shipping (Navigational Equipment) (Amendment) Regulations 1985, which were laid before this House on 28th February, be approved. *—[Mr. Major.]*

Question agreed to.

Heathrow Airport

Motion made and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.*—[Mr. Major.]*

1.12 am

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): This debate is about an issue that is central to the future of the British airline industry and particularly the future of domestic, independent, privately owned airlines. I am grateful that there are so many right hon. and hon. Friends attending the debate tonight, because they, like I, appreciate the importance of this issue.

From 1 April, the short-haul domestic and European flights into Heathrow in narrow-bodied aircraft will have their landing charges increased, while long-haul international flights into Heathrow in wide-bodied aircraft will have their landing charges reduced. The landing charges for the Short Brothers 361, which is flown by British Midland Airways, Air-UK and Air Ecosse among others, will rise from £64 to £156—an increase of 144 per cent. The landing charges of a Bryman de Havilland Dash 7 will rise from £93·60 to £156—an increase of 67 per cent. For a Boeing 747, however, charges will fall from £483·21 to £156—a reduction of more than a third.

The memorandum of understanding signed last year by the United States and British Governments has created this problem and led to an alteration in the method of calculating landing charges at Heathrow, but nowhere else. Heathrow is to switch to a flat charge, whatever the weight of the aircraft or its potential damage to the runway. This flies in the face of document 9082/2, paragraph 14, dated November 1981, produced by the International Civil Aviation Organisation. This specifically states that landing charges should be weight-related. This results in United States and other long-haul airlines having a cut in costs while every independent private British airline will have its overheads dramatically increased.

The British Airport Authority's totals for landing charges a year reflect the position well. For 1984-85, landing charges totalled £7,916,000, which is to be reduced to £4,012,000 for 1985-86—a decrease of 49 per cent. for the biggest and noisiest planes. On domestic flights, landing charges will rise from £3,559,000 this year to a proposed £5,250,000 next year, an increase of 47 per cent. for the quiet planes of the domestic airlines.

What an outcry there would be if the Department of Transport were to raise the £100 private car tax to £1,000 a year and reduce the tax on giant juggernauts from the present £3,100 to £1,000, so that both paid a flat rate regardless of size, wear and tear on the roads and damage to the environment.

I declare an interest in British Midland Airways, but I am also interested in Dan Air, Air UK, Brymon and other small private airlines. All find that their landing charges and other airport expenses cost more than the fuel needed to run their planes; British Midland Airways' landing charges are now 36 per cent. of costs, whereas its fuel charges are 29 per cent.

On the east midlands to Heathrow route, British Midland will find a 32·58 per cent. increase in landing charges and a 47·1 per cent. increase in all its charges. Birmingham to Heathrow landing charges will increase by 32·8 per cent., or overall by 48 per cent. Brymon's landing

charges per day go up from £687·30 to £1,012·50 at Heathrow alone. How are these increases to be financed? Only by passing them on to the consumer.

The British Airways Authority's statement of principle dated 21 February 1985 said on page 3 in paragraph 9.4 that the authority

"believes in the practice of gradualism with regard to landing charges."

If gradualism is an increase of 48 per cent., will the Minister ask the BAA for its definition of rapid change?

The BAA argues that the overall increase, taking all British Midland air routes together, is not that high—only 14·2 per cent., or three times the rate of inflation. To reach that figure, however, the BAA has had to engage in a cross-subsidy exercise, putting all British Midland Airways' charges together. By doing that, BAA is flying in the face of Government policy, as enshrined in the Civil Aviation Authority guidelines on pricing. In its statement of policy on air transport licensing for 1979-80, the Civil Aviation Authority said:

"As a matter of principle, however, it is unacceptable that one passenger should be charged on a continuing and structural basis the cost of providing to another passenger the facilities which he himself does not need. Nor should passengers on profitable routes bear the costs of operating other routes which cannot be operated economically, even after emerging from the development stage."

In 1981-82, the Civil Aviation Authority stated:

"the Authority will seek to ensure that users are charged only for those product features they require. The Authority aims progressively to diminish discrimination and cross-subsidisation between routes and between fare types."

For 1985-86, the CAA reiterates:

"the Authority will seek to ensure that users are charged only for those product features they require. The Authority aims progressively to diminish discrimination and cross-subsidisation between routes and between fare types."

The BAA has done the same with British Airways' charges, cross-subsidising landing charges for narrow-bodied short haul routes with those for wide-bodied long haul routes, and has come up with a global figure of 4 per cent. as the overall increase for British Airways—below the rate of inflation. The state airline has been able to offset the dramatic increase in landing charges for domestic and European flights against the dramatic decreases in charges for long haul flights.

It is not only cross-subsidy on landing charges, however, for rumour—from the mouth of the stable boy rather than the horse—has it that British Airways lost £7·5 million on domestic routes last year and sustained its predatory actions only through cross-subsidy on an enormous scale.

The BAA argues that it is forced to increase landing charges at peak hours through opportunity costing, by which it places a value on a slot. It has warned that if that does not work—whatever that means—it will be forced to introduce rationing charges. As that was a point heavily criticised in discussions of the delayed Civil Aviation Bill, as the 275,000 air transport movements limit has not come into force, and as terminal 4 will not come on stream until the spring of 1986, will the Minister find out the basis on which the BAA is now introducing opportunity costing?

If the rationale behind opportunity costing is based on demand and lack of space, why, since Heathrow is only half as congested as Gatwick, does the BAA propose to continue with weight-related charges at Gatwick and all other BAA airports but not at Heathrow?

I have criticised the dramatic increase in landing charges for domestic airlines at Heathrow. The BAA is placed in a difficult position. I hope, however, that it will do its utmost to support and encourage private enterprise in the smaller independents. The increases by the Labour-controlled Manchester airport are even worse, resulting in a £13 million profit this year, which has been channelled into the local authority.

A policy which could work against our independent airlines will rapidly disadvantage our regional airports, which act as engines of growth for regional economic revival. Our domestic operators must be able to run highly competitive services into Heathrow where interlining takes place with international routes. Any unnecessary increase in fares as a result of increased landing charges, jeopardises the domestic services, threatens the viability of our domestic airlines and could sever our regions' international connections.

I welcome the attendance of so many of my hon. Friends. My hon. Friend the Member for Warwick and Leamington (Sir D. Smith), but for his European duties, would have been in his place tonight to express his disquiet about landing charges on the Birmingham to Heathrow service and to add his voice to that of my hon. Friend the Member for Birminham, Hall Green (Sir R. Eyre), who feels equally strong about the matter.

In recent years, there has been a growing interest, especially among business men, in short haul domestic and international air services from local and regional airports. I quote selectively from Michael Donne in last Monday's *Financial Times*:

"One of the principal catalysts for this interest has been the emergence in recent years of a new generation of small economic airliners, . . . which have made it possible for many operators to launch new, profitable short-haul domestic and international operators.

The significance of this development should not be underestimated. For much of the post-war period, the history of UK civil aviation has been littered with the wreckage of plans for new air services, that foundered because the airlines involved did not have aircraft of the appropriate size. They started operators with aircraft far too large for the traffic densities available, with the result that they lost money, and went out of business.

The emergence of the new generation of small, cost-effective turbo-propellor airlines has substantially changed the situation . . . Moreover, their quieter noise levels make them acceptable neighbours for surrounding cost-conscious communities."

It is precisely these aircraft which will be worst affected by the new British Airports Authority landing charges. It appears that these are designed just to please the Americans.

British Midland Airways, Air UK and Brymon fly the new breed of super-quiet aircraft whose noise footprints do not reach beyond the perimeter of the airport at Heathrow, yet they have absolutely no incentive to continue this investment, as it is on the super-quiet aircraft where the largest increase in landing charges is taking place. I welcome the support of my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Feltham and Heston (Mr. Ground), and my hon. Friends the Members for Surrey, North-West (Mr. Grylls) and for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley).

Why does the highly profitable BAA need to rob the British domestic sector in order to make good the revenue lost from the American carriers? Why do British travellers have to subsidise American travellers? Why should regional airports be the losers? How are the smaller airlines supposed to absorb yet another increase in the costs of running vital feeder flights? Why does the environment have to suffer as a result of the disincentive towards investing in the quietest aircraft?

[Mr. Anthony Steen]

The chairman of Brymon Airways has put the matter so well:

"The British premier airport should consist of an interwoven mixture of short-haul and long-haul flights together making up the total air transport product, and tariffs should be aimed at encouraging this mixture with a scale that takes account of the sector distance preceding and following Heathrow movements, rather than aiming at a flat-rate transit charge per passenger irrespective of their journey distance and fare paid.

The proposed new landing charges give a new twist to the Robin Hood theme, where the poor of Nottingham and the regions are now being robbed to help the rich transatlantic passenger.

1.23 am

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): I must declare an interest, as I am the chairman of an airline. However, anything that I say this evening will not be directly related to the planned operations of that airline. I shall speak as someone who I judge to be a friend of the British Airports Authority.

The BAA is an essential and profitable part of the air transport industry of the United Kingdom. It is up to it to nurture and facilitate the growth and development of United Kingdom commuter airlines. The level of landing charges can therefore be seen either as an attempt to promote growth or an attempt to stultify it. It must examine carefully its policy on landing charges as they affect the development of the commuter airlines.

I hope that there is no truth in the allegations that I heard earlier today to the effect that in future the credit facilities which until now have been available to domestic commuter airlines are to be altered savagely to the detriment of the airlines. If this were to happen, I should see it as a deliberate attempt by the profitable part of the British air transport facility to take advantage of the less profitable, more difficult and higher risk area. The losers could be only those who try to commute from various parts of the United Kingdom. As a regular commuter from Scotland, I have something to say about the matter. I should look with some hostility on any move that was seen to be a deliberate attempt to reduce the facilities that are presently available to commuter airlines.

1.24 am

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): The east midlands airport is within my constituency. British Midland Airways, other domestic airlines and Orion airways, operate from that airport. This pricing policy is an attempt to deal differently with the Civil Aviation Bill. Capacity at Heathrow airport is being dealt with by pricing out the super quiet aircraft.

The private sector is suffering. Private sector airlines, such as British Midland Airways, will be squeezed out, with the advantage going to foreign airlines and our large airlines which operate on protected routes, and therefore are happy.

The Government have a part to play because of the memorandum of understanding. On consideration of the Civil Aviation Bill, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said:

"One option might be to raise landing fees, on the assumption that the airlines prepared to pay the most for slots would be those that would make the most productive use of them. However, we believe that landing charges would have to be more than doubled to produce a significant reduction in demand, since they form a relatively small proportion of an airline's operating costs. That would be very hard on small airlines and commuter airlines, which have a part to play."—[*Official Report*, 21 November 1984; Vol. 68, c. 306.]

I call on my right hon. Friend to follow those words through and to do something about these excessive landing charges.

1.26 am

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) for allowing me the opportunity to intervene. Norwich airport lies in my constituency and Air UK operates out of it. If the British Airways Authority continues to squeeze the small airlines as it is doing at present, in the long-term this will mean lost jobs for Norwich. Like my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams and other hon. Friends, I am concerned about the proposed increase in landing charges. Air UK has cited an increase of 85 per cent.

The position at Heathrow is unique. The landing charge for a 747 during peak hours is identical to the landing charge for the small aircraft, the Shorts 360 and the F27. That cannot be right, especially since Air UK uses Heathrow at those peak times.

Mr. Steen: Is my hon. Friend aware that there is now no shortage of space at Heathrow? As the limit has not been fixed at 275,000 movements, 50,000 or 60,000 slots are spare. It is odd that BAA has decided on financial measures that are not weight related for domestic airlines at Heathrow, but that traffic that is much more crowded still incurs the old weight-related charges.

Mr. Thomson: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. This confirms the case that has been put across tonight, that the proposed landing charges are unfair on the small airlines. Apparently, consideration has not been given to the fact that the small aircraft are quiet. The environmental point is worth putting across. I support my hon. Friend in that idea.

Norwich and east Anglia have good industrial and growth prospects. Surely those who live in the area have an equal right to travel to Heathrow. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State should take that aspect into account when planning. I hope that he will have the interests of the small airlines at heart and will insist on fair landing charges that ensure competition and improved services for people, especially those from Norwich and east Anglia.

1.28 am

Mr. David Maclean (Penrith and The Border): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) for allowing me to intervene briefly. I can usefully add little to his excellent exposition, although he delivered it at breakneck speed, causing great consternation to the *Hansard* writers.

The House will shortly be asked to vote on a coherent airport policy. We all want such a policy, although we may disagree about the size of Stansted, terminal five, and so on. If we allow the proposal for a 144 per cent. charge on the Air Ecosse flights from Carlisle to Heathrow to go through, even if it is ameliorated to a 72 per cent. charge, it will destroy regional airports like Dundee, Carlisle, Leeds, Bradford, Norwich and East Midlands. If that happens, we shall not have a coherent airports policy

which would work in this country. We must have a coherent airports policy. To have that, we cannot allow this charge to go through.

1.30 am

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) for allowing me to intervene in the debate, too. My constituents use Birmingham international airport and are directly affected by the proposal of the British Airports Authority which would increase fares from Birmingham international to Heathrow by about 12 per cent. I believe this to be against the interests of my constituents. I also believe it to be hostile to the interests of Heathrow, which in part depends upon the domestic feeder services, both in and out, to maintain its pre-eminent position in Europe, and to the interests of the regions.

I particularly deplore the 144 per cent. increase in landing charges for the Shorts SD360 which is a "good neighbour" — an American expression — aeroplane, in that its noise footprint scarcely extends beyond the airport perimeter.

Finally, I believe that this problem really arises because the British Airports Authority is required by the Government to finance its capital programme out of revenue. I believe that capital developments of this nature should be financed from long-term bonds raised on the capital markets. If there is one message that I can give to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Transport, it is that these developments should be financed on a long-term basis.

1.31 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Michael Spicer): It is a great tribute to the pulling power of my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) that at this late hour the debate has attracted so many contributions. My hon. Friends the Members for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth), for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker), for Penrith and The Border (Mr. Maclean), for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson), and for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby) have all made powerful points. They will perhaps forgive me if time does not allow me to answer their points directly in great detail.

I turn in detail to the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams. The debate that he has launched gives me the opportunity to reaffirm the Government's firm commitment to a multi-airline policy, to the further liberalisation of domestic air services and to ensuring that domestic services from regional airports have access to the London airport system. My hon. Friend, with his knowledge of the aviation industry, will know that all these policies place increasing pressure on airport capacity in the south-east. The questions that he has put before the House tonight certainly bear strongly on one major constraint—runway capacity at Heathrow.

To give a full answer my hon. Friends I would need to discuss the Government's strategy towards airports not only in the south-east but in the regions. This point was made by my hon. Friend the Member for Penrith and The Border. My hon. Friend the Member for South Hams will know that until my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport and my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Construction announce their decision on the inspector's report on Stansted and terminal 5, that is impossible for me to do. Nevertheless, I can give answers to some of the points my hon. Friend has raised.

My hon. Friend has asserted that the BAA's proposed charges at Heathrow for 1985 are intended to ration access and, what is more, to do so in a way which discriminates against the quieter aircraft operated by the smaller independent British airlines in favour of the large aircraft which generate more revenue per movement for the BAA.

I remind my hon. Friend that the matter of airport charges is for the British Airports Authority, and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State cannot intervene. The Airports Authority Act 1975 does, however, require the BAA to consult users, and I have encouraged the authority to provide a full exchange of information with the airlines so that they can comment on any proposal to increase charges. I am pleased to say that in the present instance, having consulted the airlines, the BAA substantially modified its charges from those which were originally proposed.

Mr. Steen: I understand that British Midland Airways was going to have its overall landing charges increased by 48 per cent. but that the charges have been brought down to 14 per cent. after the discussions.

Mr. Spicer: My hon. Friend is correct. I was going on to say that the BAA has modified its original proposals by introducing, in the way that my hon. Friend implied, a peak/off peak differential for aircraft up to 50 tonnes. The landing fees for those aircraft will not now increase at all in off peak periods and will be subject to the new flat fee only in peak periods which extend from 7 am to 10 am and from 5 pm to 7 pm from April to October.

We have to accept that the BAA is constrained by international agreements. Those were reinforced by undertakings given in the out-of-court settlement agreement to the recent legal action brought by 17 foreign carriers which was resolved only two years ago.

The BAA is required to relate the structure of its prices to the structure of its costs — those being the full economic costs to the community. That precludes discrimination either in favour of or against any class of user. As a nationalised industry, the BAA also has to have regard to an overall objective of securing the most efficient allocation of resources. That means that it must ensure that charges for peak usage bear some relationship to opportunity costs where there is scarcity of capacity.

My hon. Friend has mentioned that the BAA has abandoned the weight-related runway charges favoured by ICAO. That is increasingly true of Gatwick as well as Heathrow. However, as my hon. Friend will know, airport charges consist of three elements — a landing fee, a passenger charge and an aircraft parking charge. In recent years the emphasis has been moving away from the weight-related landing charges towards the passenger charge since that is where the bulk of BAA's costs lie, and that move clearly benefits the smaller airlines.

Present traffic revenues at Heathrow break down as follows — 20 per cent. from landing charges, 60 per cent. from passenger charges, and 20 per cent. from aircraft parking charges. As a result, large aircraft pay considerably higher airport charges than small aircraft even though, during peak runway periods, their landing fees are the same.

The effect of the new structure will be to increase the overall average airport charges at Heathrow by 1 per cent.

[Mr. Spicer]

That means that the airport charges paid averaged across the total number of passengers will increase from £3·53 to £3·57 per passenger. In its present pattern of activity, British Midland Airways average charge on a per passenger basis will increase from £2·22 to £2·54, an increase of 32p per passenger. Charges paid on individual services will, of course, vary according to the scheduled operating time. Those in off peak periods will not increase at all.

My hon. Friend has said that the increases would seem to be discriminating against the quieter aircraft. Airport charges are intended to reflect actual costs, though noise rebates have meant that the operators of non-noise certificated jet aircraft have been paid more than the operators of quieter aircraft. The BAA has decided to discontinue the noise rebates and instead to surcharge noisy aircraft, but the purpose is the same. Those higher charges would help to pay for the measures to alleviate the effect of noise, such as noise insulation grants. The BAA is giving thought to the noise-related charging schemes which might be used in future when all aircraft meet the noise certification requirements.

I am sure that there will be general support for noise surcharges. For their part, the Government have taken the necessary steps to ban the use of aircraft, other than Concorde, which are not noise-certificated.

The White Paper on aviation competition policy has made clear the Government's commitment to a strong independent sector of the aviation industry. I assure my hon. Friend that we support the independent domestic airlines and their continued presence at Heathrow. Perhaps I should say in passing that BMA currently carries charges per passenger at Heathrow which are only 63 per cent. of the Heathow average. I realise that he was speaking not just about BMA. After April, those will be only 71 per cent. of the average charges at Heathrow.

That having been said, I assure my hon. Friends who asked for such an assurance that when we come to announce our overall policy on airports—this is perhaps the most important part of what I have to say—we shall pay full regard to the importance of developing a domestic airline industry comprised of several independent operators.

We shall also have strong regard to the requirements of regional airports. That means that we must ensure proper access for smaller airlines and smaller aeroplanes to the London system. I believe that will meet the main thrust of the argument of my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams.

We cannot, however, ignore the fact that runway capacity in the south-east is now scarce. It is bound therefore to be expensive. The Government will be addressing themselves to this problem in the next few months.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-one minutes to Two o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 29 March 1985

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PETITIONS

Buses

9.35 am

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): I beg leave to present two important petitions about the Government's policies on buses. One is the first instalment of a petition by the National Joint Council of Transport Users Committees for the six metropolitan counties of England. The petition, sent to me by Councillor Joe Clarke of Atherton in Lancashire, Councillor Tony Burns of Manchester and Mr. J. C. G. Lewis, secretary of the National Joint Council of Transport Advisory Committees for the six metropolitan counties, among others, states:

That Transport Users Committees representing over 14 million local bus and rail users with advice from about 200 local groups ranging from the local CBI and Trades Councils to Age Concern and disabled people's organisations, as well as Townswomen's Guilds and the National Association of Women's Clubs in the six Metropolitan Counties have examined the White Paper on Buses.

That they fear that, if implemented, the White Paper will mean:—

(a) concessionary fares for elderly, disabled and other people in special need, including schoolchildren, could disappear.

(b) that the strict safety standards needed for public service vehicles will not be upheld.

(c) that continuity, reliability and stability of services will end.

(d) many bus and rail services will vanish.

(e) the few services that are left will no longer link and services will become less frequent.

(f) passengers will not know which services should run at what times, or what fares are to be charged.

(g) operators will compete with old, unsuitable buses and coaches.

(h) neither Users nor Ratepayers will have any say about their local public transport services.

That there are wider aspects to the proposals. The ratepayers' considerable investments in the Metropolitan Counties on bus and rail facilities and improvements will be thrown away. Fewer new buses will be bought. This will mean more unemployment in the bus building industry. Socially needed transport services will be put under pressure. Highway costs, road accidents and congestion will increase. Business and the community as a whole will suffer.

That the User Groups believe Public Transport is needed as a social service. The proposals of the White Paper would destroy both.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your honourable House reject any legislation to implement the proposals of the White Paper on buses.

And your Petitioners will ever pray &c.

To lie upon the Table.

Mr. Morris: The second petition, in the same terms, has been sent to me by the secretary, Jim Bradford, of the Wythenshawe Pensioners Association in my constituency, where the importance of buses can be judged from the fact that over 60 per cent. of the households are without a car.

The message of both petitions is one of compelling importance and urgency for tens of thousands of my constituents and millions of others. I most warmly commend them to the House.

To lie upon the Table.

The Economy and Industry (Scotland)

9.38 am

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I beg to move,

That this House views with the utmost concern the continuing decline of Scottish manufacturing industry, the increasing and disastrous levels of unemployment, particularly amongst young people and the shortage of investment for training and re-training; and condemns the complete failure of the Budget to offer any hope of economic recovery in Scotland.

I propose to outline some of the economic, industrial and employment problems which so bedevil Scotland today and the Government's failure to tackle those problems. I shall then sketch several optional economic and industrial policy objectives. I believe that, no matter how condemnatory and critical of the Government's policies and failures we are, we should at the very least offer alternative prescriptions to cure the fearsome economic and social ills with which we are faced.

If the policy objectives that I shall outline later were to be adopted by Her Majesty's Government, we should see an improvement in productivity and employment which, in turn, would lead to greater prosperity. Nothing is easier than to offer from the Back Benches plausible solutions to the problems which seem to be beyond the capabilities of Ministers, Government and state to solve. Despite that qualification, however, I believe that the Government's political perspective and commitment to market forces have done little or nothing to stem the seemingly inexorable increase in unemployment and the consequent growth of misery.

In any debate on the Scottish economy it must be acknowledged that Scotland is a regional economy within the United Kingdom and thus largely lacks autonomous powers in the adoption of economic and industrial policy. It is also fair to say that there is no possibility of a devolved national administration for Scotland with autonomous tax-raising powers in the near future. That being so, employment and unemployment levels will be largely determined by the United Kingdom Government.

Not all is lost for Scotland, however. In a recent very important survey, which I understand the Minister has read, Stephen Young and Neil Hood have stated:

"there is the potential in Scotland, through bodies such as the Industrial Department and the Scottish Development Agency to design Scottish initiatives within the framework of existing guidelines and policies."

Mrs. Anna McCurley (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): Will the hon. Gentleman explain precisely what the Scottish Development Agency has done by combining with private capital to set up a £60 million project for the hon. Gentleman's area and my own?

Dr. Godman: I shall be dealing with the Inverclyde initiative later. The hon. Lady will have to contain her impatience. I am sure that she will succeed in catching your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, especially with the outfit that she is wearing today.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): A scarlet woman.

Dr. Godman: I would not go so far as that. The hon. Lady's politics certainly seem to be deepest blue.

Hood and Young continue:

"Through innovative thinking and the scope for flexibility around national guidelines, it may be valid to think of a secondary tier of industrial policy which gives specific attention to the problems of industry in Scotland."

Industrially, Scotland has experience of growth and decline. Once a leading nation in shipbuilding, marine engineering, steel making, engineering, coal mining and manufacturing industries, it is now woefully adrift in the league of industrialised nations, as evidenced by the dreadful decline in employment in coal mining, metal manufacture, shipbuilding, engineering, motor vehicle manufacture, textiles, clothing and footwear, and paper printing and publishing. Taking 1980 as the base year, the index for employment in manufacturing was 111·4 in 1977 but had fallen to 79·3 by June 1984. Thus Scotland—along with Morton, which may yet be rescued—faces relegation from the premier league. Scotland now accounts for only 0·7 per cent. of the total production of the 24 OECD countries.

In the interests of objectivity, I should add that Scotland's decline did not begin in May 1979. In truth, since 1945 the economies of both Scotland and the United Kingdom have slipped and slithered down the league of industrialised nations, as all the most significant economic indicators show. In the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s the Scottish and United Kingdom economies fell below the average for industrialised nations. We have, I regret to say, a miserable record.

Scottish economist David Bell said recently:

"The rate of growth of real incomes in Scotland lags way behind that in the USA, France, West Germany and Japan. And this is true whether one considers the period prior to the first major rise in oil prices or the period of slower growth which followed the OPEC intervention."

He continues:

"These countries have also, by and large, provided a continuous growth in employment to absorb any increase in labour supply . . . In Scotland, employment opportunities have tended to decline even though labour supply has increased, leaving little option but emigration or unemployment".

With regard to emigration, the right hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Stewart), who is not present today, has claimed:

"If it were not for the fact that 18,000 skilled and qualified people leave Scotland each year, mass unemployment would be even worse".—[*Official Report*, 11 March 1985; Vol. 75, c. 50.]

Many people seem to believe that the United Kingdom and Scotland are experiencing a form of de-industrialisation. They argue that the United Kingdom seems incapable of maintaining a positive trade balance in manufactured goods, and it is unfortunately true that in 1983, for the first time since the beginning of the industrial revolution, the United Kingdom exported fewer manufactured goods than it imported. That is a sorry state of affairs.

A number of studies have shown that British firms have a very poor rating for non-price competitiveness in terms of marketing, product quality, delivery dates and the servicing of products. I should point out, however, that the criticism does not apply to many Scottish firms which enjoy a deservedly high reputation in foreign markets. No one can deny, however, that in the past 20 years there has been a dismaying fall in the United Kingdom share of international trade and that this decline has had a serious effect on employment. I support the need for home-led demand, but one can scarcely expect high quality products to sell well in a country with high unemployment.

Concurrent with the decline in manufacturing industry in the past 20 years has been growth in the service sector. In the early 1960s, that sector accounted for about 45 per cent. of employment in Scotland. By 1982, the proportion had increased to 54 per cent. In the 1960s and 1970s the decline in manufacturing industry employment was to a large extent matched by the increase in the service sector, so that the overall employment level remained fairly static. But even in the service sector—the Government's magic employment garden — employment in some areas has declined. For example, employment in the distributive industry has fallen dramatically although the volume of retail sales has increased quite sharply. In 1965, employment in that industry was about 283,000. By 1981, it had fallen to 193,000, although in the same period sales increased by about 33 per cent. One reason for that, of course, has been the shift towards larger and more efficient stores. Other service industries such as education and the law are labour intensive and will presumably remain so for much longer.

The major shift in employment and employment opportunities between the manufacturing and service sectors was illustrated in a recent answer from the Secretary of State for Scotland to my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), which stated that in 1978 609,000 people were employed in manufacturing industry but that by 1984 the figure had dropped to 437,000. In 1978, service industries employed 1,188,000 and in 1984 they employed 1,254,000.

I welcome the growth of employment in service industries, but I do not believe for a moment that a service-based economy can solve our economic and industrial problems. There must be a more positive mixture. To quote David Bell again:

"employment levels (in manufacturing industry) should not be taken to be the main symptom of economic decline. Rather, one should think of decline in terms of Scotland and the UK's increasing ability to maintain a favourable balance on trade in manufactured goods. Britain was the first nation whose wealth was derived from its ability successfully to exchange manufactured goods for raw materials."

Mr. Barry Henderson (Fife, North-East): I apologise to the hon. Gentleman for missing the first couple of minutes of his speech.

In regard to trade, is it not a curiosity that, on the export side of the balance, we seem to have the highest proportion of national product exported in the world? The proportion is much higher than in Japan, the United States or Germany. Nevertheless, we seem to be losing a substantial share of our own market. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the problem appears to be one of imports satisfying United Kingdom demand rather than of exports?

Dr. Godman: The hon. Gentleman was gracious enough to say that there is a problem with a lack of home-led demand.

Mr. Henderson: I did not say that.

Dr. Godman: I thought that that is what the hon. Gentleman said. Bell is saying that now, due to the eccentricities of the common agricultural policy and the chance discovery of North sea oil, the balance is swinging towards the export of raw materials and foods and the importation of manufactured goods.

Having mentioned North sea oil, I am prompted to describe the benefits of that natural resource to Scotland and the United Kingdom. Where on earth would we be without this enormously valuable resource? Much of the revenue obtained from the extraction of offshore oil and gas has gone to pay the huge bill of the millions of people on the dole—a sad waste of people and money. It must be said, however, that oil and gas resources have provided Scotland with a great deal of employment. The Minister of State, Department of Energy said in a Scottish Grand Committee debate:

"In 1983, gross capital investment in the United Kingdom oil and gas exploration and production industry accounted for 27 per cent. of total United Kingdom industrial investment. . . . In Scotland, more than 64,000 jobs are provided by companies in North Sea oil and gas activities, with a total of around 100,000 jobs when taking into account indirect oil-related employment. In view of that, clearly it is an industry of major importance and interest." — [*Official Report, Scottish Grand Committee*, 18 December 1984; c. 1.]

Even there, opportunities have been lost by the failure of government and industry to capitalise effectively on this valuable resource.

Ian Wood, chairman and managing director of one of Scotland's most successful companies in this type of economic activity, has said:

"There is a strong belief in the United Kingdom fostered by both this and the previous Government that UK industry has done well in the development of North Sea oil. I personally believe that this is a dangerous myth.

Far too many of the successful North Sea performers are the incoming international companies who simply operate a local UK base to cater for North Sea oil. They are not building up genuine UK technology and know-how to be supplied in further expansion overseas . . . Any present realistic assessment of the number of UK companies who have the know-how, technology and manufacturing skills to expand into the offshore industry world wide would provide a pitifully small number nowhere near the level of presence and influence that should have been achieved from our privileged frontier staring position."

The two main areas of policy and prudence in offshore oil and gas industries are the expansion of Scottish involvement in the North sea and assistance for Scottish companies to compete more successfully in international markets.

North sea oil and the new high-technology industries, along with service industries, have saved Scotland from utter humiliation. But for many people and their communities, the experience is of poverty amid affluence. My constituency provides a striking example of the decline of secure employment and the growth of the dole queue. In the past 10 or 15 years, the communities of Greenock and Port Glasgow have suffered the withering away of traditional industries while there has been a growth of high-technology industry. It is estimated that more than 5,200 jobs in traditional industries have been lost in Greenock and Port Glasgow during the past five years. Almost 4,000 were lost in shipbuilding and marine engineering. We also lost a sugar cane refining plant, although I am pleased that Tate and Lyle still operates one successfully. It is an important element in the Scottish food and drink industry. Set against that decline in traditional industries is the growth in the electronics industry.

Mrs. McCurley: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Godman: No.

For example, IBM has new factories at Dalrymple street, Larkfield and Spango Valley which employ about 2,700 people. Expansion is planned and I hope that it will lead to another 200 or 300 jobs. National Semiconductor (UK) Ltd. employs about 1,700 people. Total employment

[Dr. Godman]

in electronics is now about 5,500, making it the largest industrial sector. According to *The Sunday Times* of 17 February 1985:

"1984 was a fabulous year in every regard for IBM in the UK market and it did better against ICL than ever before . . . IBM's UK turnover was up 40 per cent. whereas ICL's was up 8 per cent; and IBM's UK profit was up 27 per cent. compared to ICL's 9 per cent."

That extremely successful company was introduced to the area by one of my predecessors — not Dr. Dickson Mabon.

There is another welcome development, which the hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mrs. McCurley) mentioned in her intervention. It is the Inverclyde initiative, which was inaugurated by the Under-Secretary of State on Tuesday at Gourock. I should have preferred the ceremony to take place in Greenock or Port Glasgow, but I cannot have things all my own way. The hotel at which the ceremony took place is delightful. The Minister, the hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde and I did not get any lunch or a drink—just a cup of coffee. There again, we were there to work.

The Inverclyde initiative is a partnership, involving the private sector, district and regional councils and the Scottish Development Agency. It is proposed to pave the way for a £60 million investment in the area and a £6 million priority programme has already been identified. Naturally, I welcome the development, as I know the hon. Lady does.

The initiative is, first, a private-sector-led five-year project; secondly, an SDA commitment to expenditure of £4·75 million over a five-year period; thirdly, the establishment of a development group to oversee the project and the projecting, to promote the economic development of the area; and fourthly, the identification of a priority programme to be implemented over 12 to 18 months. The main elements of the programme are in the service sector, where there will be tourism and leisure initiatives, including a museum of emigration and the maritime industry. I hope one day to donate a little water colour of the Firth of Clyde, which I picked up in a sale. Obviously, I must first get the permission of my wife. Another element is the establishment of an enterprise development unit, and many manpower and training initiatives.

While I speak about the initiative, I must remind the House what the Secretary of State said about the project when he gave evidence to the Scottish Select Committee inquiry into Scott Lithgow:

"Once we have identified and costed whatever proposals are agreed between ourselves, the SDA and local interests on the ground, we can then work out how best they can be financed, and once I am clear about that I will have to consider how far it may be necessary for the Government to provide funds additional to those already provided to the SDA."

I welcome that commitment.

At the ceremony on Tuesday, Mr. Robin Duthie, chairman of the SDA, said:

"Despite the growth of successful electronics firms, such as IBM and National Semiconductor, the decline in traditional industries such as shipbuilding and marine engineering has had a major impact on the social and economic heart of the district.

Problems were highlighted with the threatened closure of the Scott Lithgow shipyard, at one time the biggest employer in the district. The subsequent takeover by Trafalgar House saved many jobs but there were still about 2,000 redundanies involving men with little chance of finding work elsewhere."

I would be deeply delighted if, in addition to the development, Scott Lithgow won some of the orders for the new SKK 2400 conventional patrol submarine and, similarly, Ferguson Ailsa won more orders, including the replacement for the fishery protection fleet. Although that is not the responsibility of the Minister's Department, I should like him to comment on that. Some of the vessels in the fishery protection service are getting a little long in the tooth.

Despite that exciting new developmeent, Greenock and Port Glasgow continues to suffer from appallingly high unemployment. Male unemployment remains in excess of 22 per cent. In addition, many of my constituents live in damp and often overcrowded housing. Fully 25 per cent. of Inverclyde district council houses suffer from damp —that is, approximately 5,000 houses. That, combined with unemployment, is a disgraceful state of affairs.

Scotland's economy is in a mess, and certainly in a state of flux. In that respect it is no different from that of the rest of the United Kingdom. The one commodity that is not in short supply is labour.

There are measures that the Government take to deal with those problems. The Under-Secretary, in reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Pollock (Mr. White), said that there were many economic measures and special employment measures designed to help reduce the level of unemployment in my hon. Friend's constituency and elsewhere in Scotland. He mentioned economic measures, regional development grant at the maximum level available, selective financial assistance under the Industrial Development Act 1982 and SDA financial assistance—for example, for the Glasgow eastern area renewal project. He gave a long list of special employment measures.

I seek not to belittle the Minister's efforts, but to point out the facts of economic life in Scotland. The Budget offers little relief for the unemployed in Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom, and little hope for many of the major industries which have sustained the Scottish economy for many years. The Budget was not a Budget for jobs. We need a Budget which will increase expenditure on our decaying or at least sharply deteriorating infrastructure. We need expenditure on houses, schools, hospitals, roads, bridges and sewers.

A great deal needs to be done, as the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) pointed out in Monday's debate:

"I believe more strongly than ever that a Government programme of investment in the infrastructure is desperately needed and should be carried through." — [*Official Report*, Monday 25 March; Vol. 76, c. 55.]

Investment in the infrastructure would be one of my policy recommendations. Such investment is desperately needed in my constituency for the replacement or modernisation of a decaying housing stock. Secondly, economic trade and industrial policies should be centred on a precise objective—the development of a manufacturing industry which can compete in all the world markets.

All the evidence is that the key to the growth of the economy is the growth of manufacturing industry. A prosperous manufacturing industry spreads its prosperity through agriculture, fisheries, distribution and other service industries. In other words, manufacturing is the central element in the modernisation of our economy. That was acknowledged on Monday by the right hon. Member for Waveney (Mr. Prior), when he said:

"The manufacturing industry is still the main provider of employment in Britain. Without it, most service industries cannot prosper. The number employed in the service industries cannot be increased without a good and prosperous manufacturing industry."—[*Official Report*, 25 March 1985; Vol. 76, c. 60.]

In this scheme of things, the role of the whole market is crucial. We can see that in Japan. Even now, it is largely a home-market-based economy with manufactured exports accounting for less than 14 per cent. of total domestic production.

The basis of a successful economy and industrial policy involves the control of demand and finance, and some direct influence on investment and, hence, on the development of the structure of industry. The control of demand can be achieved by state spending, including spending on subsidies, by taxing powers and by the control of imports. I am saying not that imports should be reduced, but that the growth of imports should be carefully regulated. We already have a restriction of imports by way of unemployment.

I have been able only to sketch in the merest detail my alternative policy objectives. I conclude by quoting from a paper written by Sir Alec Cairncross:

"In the end we cannot escape from the present depression without a large increase in demand and there is no likelihood of such an increase without an initiative on the part of governments. It is pure fantasy to suppose that output will recover of itself."

The sad fact is that, without the possibility in the near future of a devolved Scottish Parliament with independent tax-raising powers, we shall continue to be at the mercy, tender or otherwise, of the London-based Government. We must engage in a continuing and critical examination of the Government's economic performance, and I hope that this debate is part of that essential democratic function.

10.10 am

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): I congratulate the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Mr. Godman) on winning the ballot and introducing a debate on Scotland, because we always welcome the opportunity to discuss Scotland. However, for this extremely important debate we see no one from the Liberal party, the Scottish National party or the Social Democratic party. That is a severe criticism of their attitude to Scotland.

The hon. Gentleman spoke in his usual scholarly way, which was rather different from the wording of his motion. I believe it to be unacceptable. It talks down Scotland, and some statements in the motion are simply not true. This sort of grandiose motion does nothing to help Scotland. Of course unemployment is serious in Scotland; I have done nothing other than say that. Indeed, during my maiden speech in 1964, I said that this was an important issue; and, numerically, unemployment has grown worse during those 20 years.

However, criticism of the youth training scheme and of the Budget is misplaced and inaccurate. I am sad that the hon. Gentleman has not listened to Ministers, observed their actions or taken the trouble to read important documents. I know he will not have had much time to read the White Paper, "Employment: The Challenge for the Nation," nor does he seem to have read the Manpower Services Commission's plan for Scotland, which was published last year and which shows the amount of constructive thinking that has gone into resolving an extremely difficult problem.

The hon. Gentleman poured scorn on the Government's efforts to provide employment. Does he accept that 87 per cent. of the nation is at work? That is important, bearing in mind the fact that many others who are working are not on the register. Does he also accept that 350,000 more people are in work now than a year ago? That shows that growth is having an effect on employment and increasing the number of jobs. I accept, of course, that the larger population, because of the bulge in the 1960s, means that more people numerically are out of work, which is a sad fact.

Mr. Robert Hughes: What is the number of people in work in Scotland now, and what was the number when the Government took office?

Sir Hector Monro: I do not have those figures at my fingertips.

Does the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow accept that a significant number of new small businesses are starting up month by month; indeed, week by week? Does he realise the enormous number of schemes and plans to encourage small businesses? They were given added impetus by the Budget. Of course, the Budget must be viewed against the background of the coal strike, which did enormous damage to our economy. However, I emphasise, because it has been a topical issue all week, my concern that many small businesses will suffer because they will have to pay increased rates as a result of revaluation and other matters.

Did the hon. Gentleman hear my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer talking about the extension of the business expansion scheme, the reduction in class 2 national insurance contributions for the self-employed, and making class 4 contributions allowable against tax? Does he realise that the overall impact of the Budget has already reduced interest rates by 1 per cent. because of the strengthening of the pound, which is reflected in the importance that the Government place on beating inflation? Does he realise that, following the strengthening of the pound, petrol companies have already been able to reduce prices by 4p a gallon—*[Laughter.]* That is all good for the economy and the pound. I am sorry that Opposition Members are not pleased that the price of petrol has decreased by 4p a gallon, especially since many of them come from rural areas. The Government's strategy of keeping down inflation and strengthening the pound must have an impact on prices.

I do not believe for a moment that Opposition Members will support my view on wages councils, but I believe that some of them, especially those which cover shops and distributive trades, have prevented many youngsters, especially girls, from being employed in shops. The substantial initial wage that they can ask frightens off many shopkeepers. I hope that Labour Members will also welcome—they normally welcome nothing to do with the European Community—the introduction of Spain and Portugal into the Common Market. That will have an impact on tariffs between Britain and Spain and should help the motor car industry substantially. I hope that they realise that unemployment has not increased in every area of Scotland. Two employment areas in my constituency have fewer people out of work than 12 months ago, and that is probably true of some other areas. However, I should stress that I do not say that with any complacency.

I must say something about the development of the youth training scheme. The two-year, instead of one-year,

[Sir Hector Monro]

vocational training that is now proposed for school leavers must be helpful, especially if it will lead to additional skills and a qualification. The community programme will be increased by 100,000 places, which will cost about £300 million. I hope that Opposition Members will pay some tribute to training measures in Scotland, and that they realise that the special employment and training measures, including the job release scheme, the YTS, community industry, the community programme, training places supported in industry, the young workers scheme, the enterprise allowance scheme and the job splitting scheme, add up to 101,770 places in Scotland this month. If they do not believe that that is good news, they must be adopting their usual anti-Government attitude to everything. It is good news, and the Department of Employment must take much credit for providing so many schemes.

The Budget helps jobs, the lower paid and the elderly because it raises tax thresholds. I do not understand the statement in the hon. Gentleman's motion that the Budget is unsatisfactory.

Mr. Gordon Brown (Dunfermline, East): Does the hon. Gentleman accept, first, that since 1979, 114,000 jobs have been lost in Scotland; secondly, that 172,000 jobs have been lost in manufacturing industry, which represents 100 every working day; and, thirdly, that there have been 1,200 closures, which is almost one for every working day of the Government's period of office? Does he also accept that, far from creating jobs during next year at the level he suggests, not one more penny will go to the youth training scheme as a result of the Budget, and that no money will go on infrastructure? The only money that is going to Scotland, in terms of direct job creation, will amount to about 75 jobs in each constituency by Christmas as a result of changes in the community programme. That will make no impact on the problem of unemployment.

Sir Hector Monro: The hon. Gentleman will have nothing to say in his own speech if he continues to make such interventions.

Let me remind Labour Members about their proposals, which were circulated just before my right hon. Friend's Budget statement. They were going to increase expenditure on various projects by £5 billion and on social security by £3 billion. That £8 billion of additional expenditure must be provided by higher taxation, which is unacceptable when we are trying to keep down inflation and interest rates and encouraging industry to expand.

I have advocated the rural programme for a long time now and I am pleased that the Select Committee which looked into the Highlands and Islands Development Board has recommended so emphatically that the Scottish Development Agency should set up a rural development fund with a substantial sum of money to implement its recommendation. That is important. The SDA has a duty to deal with rural areas. However, its estimate of a rural area as a community of some 15,000 people is much too large. I am thinking of smaller villages and even areas without villages to which we want to bring employment to keep people living in the countryside, to keep schools open, to help the village hall, shops, and so on.

To that end we must take a more positive attitude to planning in the countryside than the peculiarly negative circular 40/60 that should long since have been withdrawn and replaced with something constructive to meet the needs of the 1980s rather than the early 1960s. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will give another push to the efforts that I have been making with the Scottish Development Department to do something about planning in the countryside. I hope that we shall see a new circular this year. I want to highlight that aspect of the countryside that requires assistance and development more than anything else today, because it is essential that we base more development in the rural areas and not always in the urban areas.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will look again at the great difficulty that we have in obtaining support from the EEC through regional grants for an area that is not in an assisted area. A large part of Scotland does not qualify as being in such an area and is therefore ineligible for EEC aid. I appreciate that rules are laid down, but they are not producing the results that we require, and everyone living in a deprived area is unable to obtain support from the EEC, of which everyone is a member. Therefore, I ask my hon. Friend to look at that most carefully.

Regional policy is important. Development in my area, which I share with my hon. Friend the Member for Galloway and Upper Nithsdale (Mr. Lang), has had substantial investment in the past year, although it is not an assisted area. ICI has put in over £60 million and Glaxo over £20 million, and Pinneys and Littlewoods are two other important developments in the area which show that the lack of assisted area status is not crucial to obtaining development.

Much of that is co-ordinated by the extra specially good work done by the regional council industrial development committee and the Enterprise Trust that has recently been set up to help industry in the area to expand and to iron out some of the difficulties that face it.

All in all, there is a great deal of good ahead for Scotland. If we can maintain the present growth, jobs will at last come in greater numbers and we shall see the high unemployment figures begin to come down.

10.24 am

Mr. Gregor MacKenzie (Glasgow, Rutherglen): I congratulate and thank my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) for introducing this debate. It has been a bonus for all of us irrespective of party, apart from, as the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) has just pointed out, the Social Democratic, Liberal, and Scottish National parties. It is no bonus for them. They do not seem to be much bothered about the matter. Perhaps they do not know that we work in Parliament on a Friday. Nevertheless, the rest of us are here.

A few days ago I read an answer which the Prime Minister gave to the hon. Member for Cheltenham (Mr. Irving). He asked the Prime Minister to list in the *Official Report* all her achievements and those of her Government since 1983. Those achievements took up about two and a half columns. But to all of us there were two noticeable and obvious omissions. First, she said nothing about what was being done about unemployment, and, secondly she said nothing about what was going on in Scotland. It may come as a great surprise to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but she did not mention Rugherglen in the whole two and a half columns. That was a big surprise to me.

It is little wonder that the right hon. Lady did not say much about unemployment. When my right hon. Friend

the Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) and I left office in 1979—not voluntarily, I am bound to say—about 1 million people in Britain were unemployed. We now know that there are about 3·5 million claimants of unemployment benefit, which is not to say how many people are unemployed because the figures have now been adjusted—or, I would say, fiddled.

The worrying thing for all of us is the number of young people who are unemployed. Small pockets in my area have a rate of unemployment among young people somewhere in the region of 100 per cent. I am worried that those young people will become so bitter that they will turn against the parliamentary system if something is not done to help them. It worries me a great deal that they may turn to other avenues.

The hon. Member for Dumfries stressed what will be done with the YTS. I concede that the YTS is a palliative of some kind, but nothing is more soul-destroying than for a young man or woman to be given a two-year training course only to find that at the end of the day they do not have a real job. We should be concerned about the creation of real jobs at present.

The Chancellor introduced yet another of his Budgets for jobs. The best crack about that was made by my hon. Friend the Member for Newham North-East (Mr. Leighton) who said that since the Government have been elected we have had so many Budgets for jobs that the British people could not stand another because every time we get a Budget for jobs unemployment seems to go up.

I hope that some of the measures that were mentioned by the Chancellor and which have been published in the new White Paper will help. But I am bound to say that I cannot share the enthusiasm or optimism of the hon. Member for Dumfries. It does not get to the core of the problem of employment prospects in the United Kingdom or in Scotland.

I was disappointed the other day when the Secretary of State was in trouble about rates and revaluation and he said there was to be no new money there and that that money was coming from the SDA, and from roads and infrastructure. The Secretary of State and the Minister responsible for industry in Scotland should put a lot of thought into that. We are worried that the Government think that they can solve the rating problem at the expense of industrial growth and development, and infrastructure, and that is not good enough.

I do not pretend that there is an easy solution to the unemployment problem. There are no magic wands. The next Government—I hope that it will be led by my right hon. and hon. Friends—will have a difficult task. I wish that the present Government would recognise that we face an enormous problem and that all the measures tried over the last five years have failed. The Government should be big enough to admit that and to try something else. Instead, the Prime Minister blithely says that more people are now at work than ever before, as if that were some comfort to the people who do not have a job.

The hon. Member for Dumfries was asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) to say how many people were in work in Scotland today compared with 1979. I took the precaution of collecting those figures. In 1979, when my right hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) was responsible, 2,098,000 people in Scotland had a job. Today, 1,921,000 people in Scotland have a job. Will the Under-Secretary of State please tell the Prime Minister that we have lost 177,000 jobs in Scotland since she took office? That is a significant number, and worries all of us.

Most of the jobs have been lost in the traditional industries. A total of 10,100 jobs in coal mining have been lost since 1979. In shipbuilding, more than 4,600 jobs were lost between 1979 and 1982. In the same period, 8,900 jobs were lost in the iron and steel industry, 17,600 in the textiles industry and 4,600 in the whisky industry—no-one can blame me for that.

I am puzzled about why the Minister can provide the figures only up to 1982. His is one of the best Departments in the Scottish Office. The Scottish economic planning office is exceptional. Why the figures apply only up to 1982 is beyond me. I do not understand how the Minister can plan for the future on that basis.

There are only three growth industries in Scotland. In the civil service, the Department of Health and Social Services has employed 697 more people to pay out more dole money. The Department of Employment has employed nearly 1,000 more people to scratch around looking for more jobs. In the electronics industry there is a ray of hope. The development of that industry began under the Labour Government. My right hon. Friend the Member for Govan and I spent much time trying to attract investment for that industry because we knew that it was important and would continue to be important. However, not everyone can work in the electronics industry. The Government must not neglect our traditional industries.

I wish that right hon. and hon. Members would stop saying that our traditional industries are old and declining. We still need coal, ships, steel and textiles. The rundown of those industries results not only in fewer jobs but in the decline of whole communities. My constituency has lost many coal and steel jobs, so I have seen the social effects.

All this is happening when we are earning an unbelievable amount of money from the North sea. Last year, North sea oil and gas earned us between £8 billion and £9 billion. What do we do with that money? As I said the other day, we spend 17 per cent. of it on unemployment benefit. That is a scandal. That money should be spent on industrial development, training, education and research and development, and on a proper regional policy. I agree with the hon. Member for Dumfries about that. Above all, the money should be spent on infrastructure. If we want to attract inward investment and to make Scotland a more attractive place, we must spend much more money on roads, houses, railways and essential services. I wish that the Prime Minister would grasp that.

The need for such investment has been stressed, not only by Opposition Members, but by the CBI and the TUC. However, the Prime Minister does not even seem to know how much we are spending on such essentials in Scotland. In an inquisitive mood the other day, I asked the Prime Minister how much was spent on infrastructure in Scotland, in the United Kingdom and in the Falklands. She was able to tell me to a halfpenny how much we were spending on infrastructure in the Falklands, but she was unable to say how much we were spending on infrastructure in Scotland or the United Kingdom. I had to be content with being told that she would write to me later. That reveals the Prime Minister's priorities. They are upside down.

I am sorry about what happened in the Falklands, but we will not solve the problem by throwing money at it.

[Mr. Gregor MacKenzie]

However, we can sort out many of Scotland's problems by spending more of the money we earn from the North sea in Scotland. We should spend that money on infrastructure, on investing more in the newer industries and on our traditional industries. Until we do that, unemployment will continue to grow and we shall fritter away the benefits of North sea oil as we have in the last few years.

10.40 am

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): I congratulate the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) on his good fortune in the ballot and on initiating this debate. He must be pleased with the number of Scottish Members in attendance today.

Like me, the hon. Gentleman must acknowledge that the only hon. Members who can truly speak for Scotland are Labour and Conservative Members who represent Scottish constituencies. The hon. Members of other parties who purport to represent Scotland's interests are always conveniently absent for late night sittings and debates on Fridays. Indeed, if it is inconvenient to them to attend, they do not care about the interests of Scotland. The citizens of Scotland should be told that they play a charade and do not care at all about Scotland.

I also congratulate the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow on the way in which he approached the subject. While I could not agree with everything he said —he would not expect me to do so— and while the motion as drafted is not particularly helpful, he made a constructive and thoughtful speech. As ever, he had done his homework. While I did not agree with some of his conclusions, I would not argue with the way in which he arrived at them.

It is always fascinating to listen to the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. MacKenzie), though one would imagine, from what he said, that he had never held office. During his spell as Minister of State, Scottish Office, in Blairgowrie in my constituency a canning factory and three spining mills closed down, with the loss of over 500 jobs. Those jobs were lost, on his criteria, because of the policies of the Labour Government of the day, but I have never subscribed to that view. Never once during the 1979 election campaign did I suggest that the loss of those jobs in the small town in which I live was the result of Socialist policies.

I have never believed in such a philosophy. Jobs are lost because of events. For example, an enormous change in consumer demand took place then, and it has continued. We must learn to live with events of that kind. New technology made the equipment in those spinning mills and in that canning factory out of date. The jobs were lost simply because the factories could no longer compete. In other words, they could not satisfy customer demand, a subject to which I shall return.

The right hon. Member for Rutherglen must stop and think about this issue, because many jobs were lost during his period as a Minister. As I say, it would not be right to blame him or the then Secretary of State for those losses, and I shall return to that subject, too.

Many of those in Blairgowrie who were made redundant in the winter of 1978-79 are today still out of work. They are part of the horrifying statistics made up of those whom we call the long-term unemployed. While it would be nonsense for me to suggest that the right hon. Member for Rutherglen could be held responsible for what happened to those people, I hope that he will be as charitable about the changes that are taking place now and the problems that we are facing.

No one can deny that the oil price increases had a damaging effect on the capacity of the industrialised nations to create and provide jobs. Indeed, the decline of the old smokestack labour-intensive industries has been going on all this century, and I wish that people would acknowledge that fact. The only two periods when that decline was halted, and even reversed, was during the two world wars. Otherwise, the old labour-intensive industries, in which I include the coal mines and other primary industries, have suffered a massive decline in jobs resulting from changing patterns of trade and demand.

Opposition Members frequently talk about a lack of demand. In fact, there is no lack of demand in the United Kingdom. There is a big demand for cars, videos, hi-fi equipment, white goods and furniture. It is sad to look at the Scottish scene and reflect on the factories that have closed in the last 20 years. I can think of many furniture factories in the west of Scotland that used to be household names. They made beautiful furniture—the demand was there—but they could not compete. The same happened to carpet factories. In other words, even when the demand exists, factories must be able to manufacture the goods that the customer wants at the time he wants them and at a price that he is prepared to pay.

We cannot blame other countries if they can manufacture the goods that the people of this country wish to purchase. I urge hon. Members to wander round the House of Commons car park and count the number of foreign cars. I suggest that the number is representative of the situation in the United Kingdom as a whole. We have the demand, but we do not have the companies manufacturing the goods to meet it.

The reason for that lies in the fact that, certainly in the latter half of this century, we have been suffering from out-of-date management practices and intransigent union attitudes. They have made the primary manufacturing industries of Scotland more vulnerable to the savage drop in demand that has occurred worldwide. After all, if we are to survive as a nation we must not only meet the home demand but be capable of exporting our goods. The drop in demand throughout the world made us vulnerable to the more effective management practices and more realistic union attitudes of our European and Japanese competitors.

I do not blame the trade unions alone. I have always held the view that managements get the kind of unions they deserve. If managers are not prepared to manage effectively, they should not be surprised if they end up with the type of union attitudes and practices that make life difficult and sometimes impossible.

I compliment those concerned — it is wrong constantly to knock—on the dramatic changes that have taken place. Today, at long last, there exist much improved and realistic attitudes on the part of management and unions. They have helped to improve our industrial performance. Unfortunately, those changes have not been sufficient to reduce the ghastly increase in the level of unemployment, and the situation, particularly in Scotland, was made more difficult by the coal strike.

I congratulate the management and workers of Ravenscraig and the shipyard workers and management on the substantial improvement in output and unit labour costs

that they have achieved, despite the problems caused to them by the coal strike. We should place on record the improvements that have been made there and the fact that they are now as competitive as we wanted them to be in the last 20 or 30 years.

It is clear, as the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow pointed out, that there has been growth in the service sector. We cannot expect that to continue if we are to have ghastly rating problems. Conservative Members have always said that rates have a savage impact on job prospects, in manufacturing as elsewhere. One cannot say that in one sentence and, in the next, whichever party is in power, claim that the position has altered. Huge increases in rates, particularly brought about by revaluation, especially in the tourist industry, shops and hotels, will have a great impact.

Opposition Members will accept that, when they are warranted, I am always prepared to make critical comments. I do not willy-nilly support anyone, but nor do I abuse anyone. I am here to represent what I believe to be the best interests of Scotland and my constituents. I do that while supporting the Government's general policies. Nevertheless, there are some dreadful rating problems that must be recognised.

One must not simply criticise the Labour party when in office or Labour councils when the rates go up and stay quiet when they go up under a Tory Administration. The rates increases will have a damaging impact on job opportunities, particularly in a place like Blairgowrie, which has been suffering as a result of the closure of the canning factory and spinning mills. Unless we implement changes quickly to produce a realistic rating system, the prospects for the long-term unemployed in Blairgowrie will become even bleaker.

However, that alone will not help Scotland. We must not forget that we are linked to our markets in the United Kingdom and overseas. We must ensure that the road system is capable of coping with the outward flow of goods that we must export if we are to survive. Equally, we must have a rail network that is capable of handling the flow of goods. Money should be spent on improving railway services. That investment will improve efficiency and help to produce jobs. I understand that the Government's capacity directly to produce jobs is limited, but Government policies could and would help the railways. However, that investment must be linked to a realistic attitude on the part of those working on the railways. Realistic attitudes have produced improved performance in the shipyards on the Clyde and we must look to the railways also to adopt realistic attitudes.

It is known that I have a special and direct interest in the aviation industry. We must build up commuter air transport links with Europe, the English midlands and the London area. Therefore, it is essential that entry to Heathrow is not stopped or stultified. It is important that commuter links continue to have entry—indeed, I hope that they have increased entry—to Heathrow, the main hub and spoke airport of the United Kingdom. If that entry is not available, we shall face problems, as business travellers will have difficulty reaching the various parts of Scotland.

Dr. Godman: Would development at Stansted help or harm Scottish aviation interests?

Mr. Walker: If development at Stansted is based on the maintenance of artificial limits at Heathrow, that will damage Scotland's export interests. Heathrow has to be the main gateway for the United Kingdom. That must be so, as there is a demand for entry into Heathrow. We must ensure that there are facilities at Heathrow that will make it easy for those who want to travel to Scotland to do so. We must improve the direct links into Scotland. It is not enough merely to ensure that we have adequate access through Heathrow. For too long we have delayed the improvement in the rail services to Prestwick that should have been made some years ago. Without doubt, Prestwick is one of the finest airports in the United Kingdom. The sad feature is that we have not recognised that in Scotland to the extent of making it easy for travellers to get to and from Prestwick. We have a duty and responsibility to do that and I hope that the Government will take positive steps in that direction.

I have an interest also in training. The youth training scheme has been extended to two years and that is an improvement but, in my judgment, it is still not good enough. It should be a three-year scheme. That would be the most effective way of improving the prospects for the young. It would also be the most cost-effective way of assisting industry. If all vocational and apprentice training and skill training were paid for by the taxpayer out of the public purse, there would be a massive direct injection of resources into industry. It would enable us at long last to get rid of the out-of-date methods that we have used for the development and creation of job prospects for the young.

I am not worried by those who shout about the spending of public moneys on training. When youngsters leave school at 16 years of age in areas where jobs are difficult to find—I left school when I was 14—it is important to ensure that there is an escape route that creates opportunities. We have always recognised in Scotland that education and skill training provided escape routes for our young people. Scotland has a greater interest in developing those routes than almost any other part of the United Kingdom. We have a background of good technical training and education. We have led the world in this training and education and I do not understand why we underrate the institutions that have provided technical skills.

Our technical colleges were a credit to Scotland, but somehow we devalued them. It is rather sad that we thought that it was wrong to have a good technical education. It was thought at one stage that if someone did not go to university it was not quite right. What nonsense. We must ensure that the YTS provides a platform on which we can build. I hope that the Government will recognise that. The finest investment that the nation could make in its young people would be to extend the scheme to three years and to take over responsibility for the training of all apprentices and trainees. This would have an enormous impact on industry and other areas of the economy.

Mr. Jim Craigen (Glasgow, Maryhill): Without going into the merits or demerits of the youth training scheme, is the hon. Gentleman suggesting that the funding of training for young people should be a matter initially for the state? The Chancellor of the Exchequer appears to be suggesting that training should be self-funding, with employers paying for it.

Mr. Walker: I have never subscribed to that view. If in a civilised society it is right and proper that we fund the

[Mr. Walker]

education of those who are fortunate enough or bright enough to go to university, why should we not make similar facilities available to those who contribute to wealth creation? I have not deviated from my beliefs in this area. I have been involved in youth training for many years. I was one of those who were involved in the establishment of training boards. I sincerely believe that, if we are to help our young people, we must give them opportunities. We must maximise the skills and talents that the United Kingdom has in abundance. If we do not maximise them, we shall be doing a great disservice to our country.

The two elements of a business are money and people and it is the way in which people are used that makes the money move that creates the profits. We often become too involved in all the other technicalities. The most important factor is the motivation of people. They must be given the right sort of leadership, and that is why I have been critical of management. I am critical also of trade unions. Both management and unions have much to answer for. The problems that we suffer are the result of our being unable quickly to respond to changing demands.

I shall direct myself to the problems of rural Scotland. As I represent about 2,000 square miles of rural Scotland, I have to take a constituency interest in the issue. I have no background in agriculture; one of my hon. Friends once said that my lovely constituency is wasted on me as I do not fish. It is sad that unemployment in rural Scotland has become as great a curse as it is in urban areas, and perhaps a more difficult problem to cope with. The difficulty of creating jobs in remote areas becomes more and more of a problem as the years pass. I congratulate the Government, the Scottish Development Agency, the Tayside regional council and the Perth and Kinross district council on the new north Perthshire initiative. I hope that it wil create jobs. At least it is an attempt to do so.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has said that £600,000 will be injected into the initiative over the next two years, but that does not change my view that no jobs will be created, no matter how much money is put up, unless there is the will and the desire on the part of individuals to take risks. That is the way to create jobs: someone sees an opportunity and realises that there are customers for a product or service. Customers create jobs. It is no good throwing £3,000, £300,000 or £3 million at a problem and believing that that will solve it.

The so-called travel-to-work areas are nonsense. Blairgowrie has been linked with the whole of north-west Perthshire in the Blairgowrie and Pitlochry travel-to-work area. It may have been all right in the past to call these districts travel-to-work areas, when it was sensible to think of people travelling to work within such areas, but the description is no longer appropriate, because it is unrealistic to expect people to travel to work in those areas.

Even after Blairgowrie has been linked with the north-west Perthshire and the figures have been fudged, unemployment in that travel-to-work area is still 16·5 per cent., which means that the rate in Blairgowrie is probably 19 or 20 per cent. That rate is higher than unemployment in Dundee. I do not complain about Dundee—my home town—getting assistance, because I should like it to get as much help as possible, but it is wrong that that should happen when we have big problems in the small town of Blairgowrie.

I draw the attention of the House to the splendid recommendation of the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs in its report on the Highlands and Islands Development Board:

"We therefore recommend that consideration should be given to alterations to the Board's boundaries to cover the contiguous areas of Grampian, Central and Tayside regions."

Dr. Godman: The hon Gentleman wrote that.

Mr. Walker: I do not claim that, but I hope that I had some influence on the Committee's decision. I did not propose that recommendation, because it seemed right for my constituency. I have never supported actions that I thought were wrong.

I cannot understand why, after 10 years in the European Community, we still do not recognise that the Highlands as understood in Europe are not the Highlands as we know them in Scotland. It is nonsense to go to Europe and say, "We do not really mean that those are the Highlands. They are only part of the Highlands. The other part of the Highlands, which is a substantial part, is not included in your definition, but we would like that other part to be included." That is nonsense. Assistance from Europe is particularly important to our hill farmers and to the tourist industry, and we must present our case properly. The recommendation of the Select Committee should be adopted by the Government so that we can have some sanity in the way in which we deal with the Highlands.

11.3 am

Mr. Norman Hogg (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth): I hope that the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) will forgive me if I do not follow the case that he put to the House.

I add my congratulations to my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) on putting his fortune in winning the ballot to such good use.

My hon. Friend should not be too suprised that alliance and SNP Members are not here. Those are part-time political parties. I am a connoisseur of Friday sittings and you and I, Mr. Deputy Speaker, know who attends and makes speeches on Fridays.

The motion rightly calls attention to the decline of Scottish manufacturing industry and the increasing and disturbing levels of unemployment, particularly among young people. That is certainly true in my constituency. The new town of Cumbernauld was built for young people, and the average age of the citizens there is 31, which means that the problems that I have to deal with are often those associated with young people.

The new town was built on a green field site and the idea was to combine jobs with high housing standards. The Government and their policies have undermined that concept. However, some fine work has been done to build up the town, and I pay tribute to Brigadier Colin Cowan, the chief executive of the development corporation, who is to retire later this year. He has made a fine contribution to the development of Cumbernauld and won a special place in the affections of the people there.

It would be appropriate also to congratulate Mr. David Anderson on being appointed to succeed Brigadier Cowan. Mr. Anderson will be warmly welcomed by the people of the new town and we wish him well in the onerous

responsibility that he will undertake. He will have to specialise in the attraction of industry and jobs. Unemployment, particularly youth unemployment, is the most pressing problem in Cumbernauld.

This week, I tabled a number of questions to the Secretary of State for Scotland about the economy in Cumbernauld. Regrettably, a number of replies remain outstanding, but it would not do for me to suggest that they will remain outstanding until the debate is over and that I shall get the answers on Monday. I await with interest the detailed information from the Under-Secretary, the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart).

The information that has come to hand contradicts the much-repeated claims of the Prime Minister, who insists, as she did on Tuesday and Thursday, that the economy is expanding, that investment is at an all-time record, that standards of living are at an all-time high and that the youth training scheme is being greatly expanded. That was the message that she gave the young people from the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Kilroy-Silk) when they visited 10 Downing street on Tuesday. What a far cry reality is from the Prime Minister's Britain. Life in Finchley must be vastly different from life in the north of England and in Scotland. I can say with certainty that the Government's policies have ravaged my constituency.

As I said, the average age of the citizens of Cumbernauld is 31. That makes them of child-bearing age, but the birth rate in Cumbernauld is falling. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow will confirm that it is well known to economists that optimism and pessimism have much to do with rises and falls in the birth rate. The hon. Member for Tayside, North laughs. I did not refer to him, because it is well known that he is no economist.

There is much pessimism in Cumbernauld. The jobs lost in 1980-81 were 1,662. In 1981-82, the jobs lost were 1,816. In 1982-83, the loss was 559. In 1983-84, it was 600. Those are not my figures. They are the Government's, which means that they have been well massaged. We all know what they have been doing with the unemployment figures during their tenure of office.

The Government claim to have created jobs, especially last year. I am sure that the Minister will throw at me the statistic that he always does when he talks about unemployment in Cumbernauld, but I have never been able to track down the jobs to which the hon. Gentleman refers. There is nothing like the number of jobs being created that the Government claim, and I strongly suspect that they include in that figure all the jobs associated with youth training schemes, which are not real jobs. They are not even real jobs according to the definition laid down by the Prime Minister herself.

One real worry about the creation and loss of jobs in Cumbernauld is the future of British Rail Engineering at Springburn, which employs a large number of my constituents as well as many of those of my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin). I hope that the Government will put up a defence of those jobs at the British Rail Engineering works and that the Minister will tell us about it.

I am sure that throughout today's debate we shall hear about the decline in Scotland's traditional industries. My worry is that we have seen in my constituency the destruction of industries founded on the new technologies which the Government are so anxious to claim for the Scottish economy. For my constituents, Silicon Glen is as much a fantasy as Brigadoon. Today, in Kilsyth, 865 males and 296 females are unemployed. In Cumbernauld, 2,339 males and 1,228 females are without work. In the constituency as a whole, 4,539 persons are without jobs. In the travel-to-work area, there is about 17·5 per cent. unemployment. Over the constituency as a whole, 657 school leavers are wholly unemployed.

Those figures have to be seen in the context of the statement by the Prime Minister that living standards are at an all-time high. Since this Government came to office, the number of persons in receipt of supplementary benefit in my constituency has doubled. In 1979, 4,438 persons were on supplementary benefit. Today, that figure has risen to 9,649.

Against that background, the Government can hardly claim to have done anything for living standards. They believe that cutting young people's wages will lead to more jobs. They talk of young people pricing themselves into jobs. I am surprised that the hon. Member for Tayside, North, who is into economic jargon, did not tell us about young people pricing themselves into jobs, because that is a much favoured slogan among Tory Right-wingers.

As a proportion of adult pay, the pay of young workers is dropping steadily as youth unemployment rises. Between April 1982 and April 1983, young men's pay rose by less than 2 per cent., whereas adult wage increases for males averaged 8 per cent. That effectively answers the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro), who referred to wages councils and described how young people, especially young women, might get jobs in shops.

The Government's young workers' scheme aimed to undercut the pay of young workers with a £15 bribe to employers to keep their wages below £50. The scheme has failed because it offers no training, has been expensive and has not created jobs. It is little wonder that the Chancellor of the Exchequer has decided that it should go. For those on YTS, the Government have kept the training allowance down to a paltry £26·25 a week. It should have risen to £34 with inflation. For those lucky enough to get places in higher education, grants are derisory. Those on further education courses get no compulsory grant.

Those 16 and 17-year-olds who are without jobs receive merely £17·30 a week supplementary benefit. If they refuse to enrol on a YTS course or do not complete it, they can have their benefit cut to £9·90 a week. Worse is likely to come. The Cabinet Minister responsible for jobs, Lord Young, is proposing that young people should no longer receive supplementary benefit. All those facts are well known to the unemployed and their families in my constituency.

If Scotland is to climb out of the economic wreckage which has been brought upon it by this Government, there has to be a radical change in policy. We must invest in new technology and skills so that the country can pay its way when the oil runs out. We have to build new homes for the people and put the construction industry back to work instead of crippling it with cuts.

In the last year of the Labour Government, 453 new homes were built in my constituency. Last year, the figure was only 70. That means not only that there are no homes available for the new generation of people who were born and brought up in the new town, but that unemployment amongst construction workers remains unacceptably high.

[Mr. Norman Hogg]

The Government are currently receiving £12,000 million a year from North sea oil revenues. They spend it on unemployment, when that money should be invested in modern transport, communications and services so necessary for the basis of the Scottish economy in the latter years of this century.

Rebuilding the infrastructure throughout Scotland should be an urgent priority. My right hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. MacKenzie) devoted much of his speech to that requirement. It seems to be impossible to get decisions out of the Scottish Office to improve the infrastructure. Ministers have talked for years and years about a bypass at Stepps and the extension of the M80 motorway. I know that those improvements are not the direct responsibility of the hon. Member for Eastwood, but I hope that he will be in a position to make a statement about them, because the failure to make decisions is having an adverse effect on the economy of my constituency. At its simplest, it is depriving the new town of a hotel to serve the business community. It is a sad reflection that industrialists visiting Cumbernauld have to be accommodated in either Glasgow or Falkirk.

Jobs would be created through road improvements, the electrification of the rail system and the continued and extended refurbishment of the inner cities. My constituents wait and wait for the electrification of the Cumbernauld-Glasgow rail link. They have been waiting for it for just about as long as they have been waiting for the Stepps bypass.

For a time it went out of fashion to say that social problems were related to unemployment. Today, I believe that it can be demonstrated that our deteriorating social conditions in Scotland are directly related to the economic morass over which the Secretary of State presides. Young people especially see future prospects for Scotland as bleak, and it is interesting to note that the incidence of drug taking and crime has increased in tandem with the loss of jobs, deprivation and despair.

It is Labour's intention to bring back hope to the people, especially the young people, of Scotland. We intend to set out a basic recovery programme that will present clear-cut, sensible answers to the problems that the country faces. The overriding priority of our policies will be getting the people back to work.

In the next few days, we shall launch a campaign to explain our policies in detail, and I believe that will obtain a positive response from our people.

The people of Scotland have no confidence in the Secretary of State or in his Ministers over getting jobs to Scotland. Indeed, there is evidence that the Scottish people have no confidence in the Government's policies, if the opinion polls are to be believed. There is no reason why those opinion polls should not be believed. If the opinion polls are right, the Tory party cannot expect to return a sufficient number of Scottish Conservative Members of Parliament at the next election to form a shadow Scottish team. That is how bad it is. The hon. Member for Tayside, North laughs. He is the only Conservative Scottish Member of Parliament who can laugh because he is the only one who got more than 50 per cent. of the votes in his constituency at the general election. I do not want to say farewell to his colleagues right now. We expect them to be about for another couple of years, but at the end of that time we shall be saying goodbye to them.

That is the extent to which confidence has been lost in the Government. It is all over for the Tory Government in Scotland. There is not much that they can do about it at their forthcoming conference in Perth. I am looking forward to that conference as much as if I were a delegate myself. I cannot wait for it. It will be quite an occasion. The people of Scotland rightly remain loyal to the Labour party. Their judgment has always been sound. The Government have failed dismally in clearing up any of the problems that they have created. Clearing up the mess will fall to a new Labour Government. I look forward to that day.

11.21 am

Mr. Albert McQuarrie (Banff and Buchan): Before commencing my remarks, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I must apologise to you and to the hon. Members for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) and my hon. Friend the Minister for the fact that I may have to leave before the wind-up speeches are made. I have a constituency engagement which will prevent me from remaining here until the end of the debate.

Like other hon. Members who have mentioned it, I cannot let the occasion pass without commenting on the fact that there are three empty Benches opposite which are normally occupied by the alleged SDP alliance with the Liberal party and the two solitary Scottish National party Members. They say plenty in the media about what they would do for Scotland, but they do very little about coming into the Chamber to debate subjects which are of massive importance to the people of Scotland.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow on having been fortunate enough to have his name drawn first in the ballot for private Members' motions and for the fact that he has chosen this interesting subject for debate today. It has given those hon. Members who represent Scottish constituencies the opportunity to highlight the real position in Scotland and to comment upon the biased manner in which the hon. Member chose to present his case—an example followed by the hon. Member for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth (Mr. Hogg).

I do not agree with a great deal of the speech made by the hon. Member for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth, but I have too much respect for him to castigate him. I depend upon him now and again to get me out of the House late at night. I would not expect the hon. Member to give any credit to this Government for the measures they have taken to look after the best interests of the people of Scotland. It is the custom of the Opposition to try to drive a wedge between the people of Scotland and Her Majesty's Government. They choose to be blind to the achievements of the Government in Scotland.

Mr. Robert Hughes: Tell us some.

Mr. McQuarrie: I am coming to that. The hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) has got the biggest mouth in the House when it comes to shouting across the Chamber and not allowing other hon. Members to continue with their speeches, yet he refuses to give way when asked to do so while making his own speech. Therefore I ask the hon. Member to hold back a little until I have finished my speech. I assure him if it is of any comfort to him, that I shall ask no questions during his speech.

The speech of the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow was no exception, for it too showed that the hon.

Member is blind to the achievements of the Government in Scotland. I shall endeavour to highlight where the hon. Member has got it all wrong. I would draw two points to his attention. He said that unemployment in his constituency now stands at 21 per cent. The *Greenock Telegraph* of 26 March reported that unemployment in Inverclyde was 19 per cent. Although that is high, the hon. Member should get his facts right before presenting them to the House.

Dr. Godman: The reason why I emphasised the unemployment figures in Greenock and Port Glasgow, not Inverclyde, was for a reason that the hon. Member knows well. There is a good deal of difference between, for instance, Kilmacolm and Port Glasgow. I do not need to be reminded of local facts and circumstances by the hon. Member.

Mr. McQuarrie: I shall come to that in a moment, too. The hon. Member did not mention that the Scottish Office has placed an order for an IBM computer costing £1 million that should secure jobs at the IBM factory in the hon. Member's constituency.

Mr. Bruce Millan (Glasgow, Govan): One million pounds?

Mr. McQuarrie: Yes, £1 million. There is nothing wrong with £1 million. Many Conservative Members would enjoy life with a further £1 million. I remind the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow that I was born and brought up in Greenock. I am a native of that town, which is more than can be said of the hon. Member. If anybody knows anything about Greenock and Port Glasgow, I do. I have continued to maintain my interest in Greenock, not only since I have been a Member of Parliament but also when I served on the town council in an adjoining part of the hon. Member's constituency. I remained in Greenock until I left to serve in the second world war.

Mr. Robert Hughes: The hon. Member was in Gibraltar.

Mr. McQuarrie: Gibraltar was long after I left Greenock, and I still maintain my interest in Greenock. That is the reason why I have the *Greenock Telegraph* in my hand and the hon. Member probably does not. I accept that, since his election, he has taken a positive interest in his constituency and in the unemployment that faces the lower Clyde. I give him credit for that, particularly when Scott Lithgow was threatened with closure. On that occasion I was pleased to be associated with the hon. Member in persuading Her Majesty's Government to save that yard.

The motion widely condemns the Government. The hon. Member alleges that the Budget fails to offer any hope of economic recovery and complains about the disastrous level of unemployment, particularly among the young, the decline in Scottish manufacturing industry and the shortage of investment for training and retraining. I shall endeavour to set the record straight for the hon. Member. It is obvious that he has taken little account of the real picture in Scotland.

First let me deal with the Budget which my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer presented to Parliament on 19 March and begin with the economic background. During 1984 as a whole, inflation remained at about 5 per cent., output grew by a further 2·5 per cent., investment was up by 6·5 per cent. and non-oil exports were up by 9 per cent. They reached an all-time record level in each case. Is this what the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow thinks is a complete failure, or is he prepared to accept the facts?

Let me remind the hon. Member of a few other things that were contained in the 1985 Budget of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. He said that it was a Budget for jobs and he announced measures designed to encourage employment, expand assistance to the young and the long-term unemployed and reduce the tax burden on the lower paid. It was delivered against a background of sustained improvement in the performance of the economy. The Budget created a strategy for jobs. The main elements of my right hon. Friend's Budget were all directed towards improving the prospects for employment. The national insurance contributions of employers and employees alike have been sharply cut for those on low incomes. The employer's contribution rate will start at 5 per cent. instead of 9 per cent. This will be partly paid for by the abolition of the upper earnings limit on the employers' but not on the employees' contributions. The national insurance contributions of the self-employed are to be sharply reduced. That is how the Government are aiding small businesses and helping to decrease unemployment.

The personal taxation threshold has been raised by almost 10 per cent. nearly double the rate of inflation. Thresholds have risen since 1978-79 by more than 20 per cent. above the rate of inflation. That will be of benefit to the lower paid. The small business scheme is also to be extended to job-creating research and development.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland, welcoming my right hon. Friend's Budget, said that it was tailormade for Scotland and would benefit Scotland with its announcement of an expanded YTS, and of measures to increase the output of engineers and technologists from the universities which would complement the switch of resources to those courses in the central institutions, which was announced last November.

Unchanged specific research allowances with new concessions on short life assets will be of especial help to high technology industries. The small increase in duty on whisky, which was much less than the rate of inflation, shows that my right hon. Friend recognised the industry's difficulties. It was a welcome way to protect jobs.

The Budget helps people who need help, and it encourages all those who create employment. It will be of considerable help to Scotland when we are looking forward to a fifth year of expansion.

I represent a rural constituency which also has high unemployment, and I am satisfied that my right hon. Friend's Budget was a Budget for jobs. I look forward to a further year of expansion and a reduction of unemployment in the rural areas.

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): Is that the finish?

Mr. McQuarrie: No, we are talking about the arts and crafts. The hon. Member should know that.

Let me deal with what the hon. Member for Greenock and and Port Glasgow has described as "disastrous levels of unemployment". In his Budget speech, my right hon. Friend told the House that the YTS, which was launched in 1983, was such a success for people between school and

[Mr. McQuarrie]

work that the Government had decided to promote a substantial expansion of the scheme to provide additional funds over and above the existing £800 million which had been spent on YTS in 1983-84. My right hon. Friend also said that the expanded scheme would offer places lasting two years to 16-year-olds and one year for 17-year-old school leavers, which would lead to recognised qualifications. Does the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow seriously believe that that is not a success story for the young rather than the dismal picture that he had chosen to present to the House?

I should like to draw the hon. Member's attention to an article in the *Glasgow Herald*. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow might be interested in listening to comments on his motion instead of addressing his colleagues from a sedentary position. If comments are of so little interest to him, it does not say much for his motion.

In an article in the *Glasgow Herald* dated 23 March, Mr. Ian Imrie reported that last month there were 13,841 vacancies at the jobcentres in Scotland for which there had been no applicants. Those were real jobs. If the hon. Member suggests that there are no opportunities for youth employment, it is time he visited the youth centres in and around the west of Scotland, where he will find a wide variety of jobs available for the young unemployed. The main problem to which he should apply his mind is the attitutde taken by so many unemployed, which Mr. Imrie described as a reluctance to make what in most cases would be a difficult move to another part of the country and the opposition to retraining for what many people consider is a cissy job. Unemployed people should start to do something for themselves. They could start a window cleaning business, for example, and see how many additional employees they could take on.

Gone are the days when jobs were available in the Clyde shipyards, and the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow well knows it. There has been change. If people are genuinely interested in employment, they could soon find a vacancy if they tried. It is the belief that the Government should provide them with a council house and that anything other than a job in heavy industry is demeaning that leads to jobcentres having 13,841 vacancies in Scotland with no one willing to take them on.

I should like to tell the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow a few more facts that he failed to mention. The birth boom and the increase in the service sector make it necessary for the country to provide between 160,000 and 200,000 new jobs a year to keep the jobless total at its present level. Many more women are becoming wage earners. That is shown by the fact that 340,000 new jobs were created in the United Kingdom, while the number of women in part-time work increased by 207,000. The total in full-time employment rose by 54,000. The hon. Member is well aware that in his constituency the number of women who have returned to work has risen dramatically in the past few years in the textile and electronic industries.

Mr. Buchan: They have lost thousands of jobs.

Mr. McQuarrie: There have been plenty of women entering textiles. There was a worthwhile sit-in at a Greenock textile factory. While all that is happening, men are stagnating at home because they are not prepared to apply for the kind of jobs which they could do. Mr. Imrie also said that it was no mean achievement for the Government to have created nearly 500,000 new jobs in eighteen months. That includes new jobs in Scotland and in the hon. Member's constituency.

The problem of an increasing work force, which during the past 30 years has grown by no fewer than 3 million, is temporary, because from 1990-95 the population of working age will decline. From then, it will rise much more slowly. That will create further good opportunities for job prospects for young people.

I should like to bring the hon. Member further back to reality about job prospects. As he is aware, the Government have played a significant part in regenerating employment. Unemployment has unhappily been prevalent in his constituency due to the closure of many heavy industrial firms.

Mr. Robert Hughes: What about your constituency?

Mr. McQuarrie: I ask the hon. Member to be quiet. I know that he is anxious to say something, but there is no doubt that he will catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow must acknowledge that the Government saved Scott Lithgow from complete shutdown, and that they have only this week given a further major boost to reducing unemployment by the announcement by the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland. I am pleased that the hon. Member gave the Government credit for their initiative in that multi-million pound project, which could lead to a further 2,000 jobs in his constituency over five years. As he said, the total programme is worth £60 million. The first £6 million has been identified for a priority programme. In setting that money aside, the Government intend to ensure the long-term regeneration of the Inverclyde economy, the diversification of the industrial base on which Greenock and Port Glasgow have been dependent for too long, the development of indigenous enterprise and the mobilisation of community skills.

The hon. Member quoted Mr. Robin Duthie, a native of Greenock, the town where the work will be carried out. He is the chairman of the Scottish Development Agency and the chairman of the new Inverclyde development group. He said:

"the launch of the initiative means that we now have a unique opportunity to improve the district's economic welfare".

Like me, Mr. Robin Duthie was brought up in Greenock and he is delighted at the wonderful chance that the Government have given his home town to become once again a thriving, progressive and prosperous town—but with modern technology, now that the heavy industries have ceased to exist. It is no use the Opposition suggesting that we can still depend on heavy industry. Those industries have gone and we must look to the benefits of the technological age.

The motion moved by the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow takes no cognisance of the great efforts that the Government have made and are making for his area. His constituents will not thank him for condemning policies that will bring new life to their area. It would have been far better for him to congratulate the Government on all that is being done for his constituents. I hope that on reflection he will accept that his motion is utterly absurd and does not merit the support of the House.

11.40 am

Mr. Bruce Millan (Glasgow, Govan): The hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. McQuarrie) has made a ridiculous speech, even by his own standards. He seemed to be suggesting at one point that unemployment was all the fault of the unemployed. The hon. Gentleman has clearly taken a great interest in Greenock and Port Glasgow. If he is so interested in that area, I suggest that he should resign his present seat and stand against my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) in the next general election. He will then be turfed out, as he richly deserves for making such an absurd speech, which insults the intelligence of the people of Scotland.

Mr. McQuarrie: Get back to Govan.

Mr. Millan: The hon. Gentleman is now interrupting from a sedentary position, having criticised others for doing that during his speech. The hon. Gentleman is a buffoon and I am sorry that we have had to listen to him.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow on his good fortune in being able to initiate this debate so soon after the Budget and on the day following publication of the White Paper on employment. I also congratulate him on his constructive and interesting speech.

The White Paper is a shameful document. At some points, it seems to have pretensions to being the modern equivalent of the 1944 White Paper on employment. It is a long apologia for the Government's failure to deal with unemployment in the past five or six years. One newspaper reported this morning that the seven Ministers involved, including the Secretary of State for Scotland, had been working on it since last June. If it takes them nine months to produce such an absurd document, God help us—and God help the unemployed.

In the past few years the Government have made a succession of excuses for the level of unemployment. First, they said that it was all the fault of the Labour Government. Then it was the fault of all previous Governments, Labour or Tory. Then it was the fault of the trade unions. Then it was the world situation. Now we are told that it is because wages are too high, especially among the lower paid. That is what the threatened abolition of the wages councils is all about. The Government are now saying that the only way to solve our problems is on the basis of an even lower wage economy and that they intend to start at the bottom by attacking the people most in need of protection from the Government, as even some Conservative Members recognised in the Budget debate.

One of the many extraordinary features of the White Paper is the lack of any reference to the regional dimension. One paragraph on page 30 referred to the new system of regional assistance announced in November 1984, but there is no mention of the regional dimension of unemployment and the problems faced by Scotland, Wales and some parts of England. The changes announced in November 1984 must be at the forefront of our minds in a debate of this kind. At a time when unemployment in Scotland and in many parts of the United Kingdom is at peak levels, a Government who claim to be concerned about unemployment and the regeneration of industry have brought in a new system which will mean a significant reduction in regional assistance to Scotland, as the Secretary of State's recent public expenditure commentary shows.

There has been a reduction of assistance for the United Kingdom as a whole of about £300 million, of which Scotland's share is just under £100 million. Then, in January, the moratorium was announced on the payment of grants in 1985-86. In the longer term, as the public expenditure White Paper shows, when the policy is fully in operation in 1987-88 there will be a reduction in regional and general industrial support in Scotland of no less than 40 per cent. compared with 1986-87, although unemployment is at record levels and there is nothing in the Budget or in any of the Government's policies to reduce the scale of the tragedy that we now face.

It is to insult the intelligence of the people of Scotland for the Secretary of State to describe the Budget as tailor-made for Scotland and designed to improve Scotland's economic position. Here I express the view not just of the Opposition but of many members of the public. This year's Budget has had the most emphatic thumbs down from ordinary people that I can remember in the many years that I have followed Budget debates in the House.

The Government's overall economic policy has failed. The Under-Secretary of State may refer to specific measures and initiatives when he winds up, but while the Government continue their savagely deflationary policy, unemployment will continue to rise. Certainly there has been no reduction so far and the Government are understandably chary about making any forecasts in the White Paper because they know that unemployment will continue to rise. The Budget is severely deflationary, to the extent of about £5 billion per year on any reckoning. Yet there is a desperate need for public expenditure on infrastructure—housing, roads, hospitals and many other items—as we all know from bitter experience in our own constituencies.

The Government's failure is not just marginal. It is not a matter of specific policies. Their overall strategy, if such it may be called, in the past five years was intended to provide regeneration of the economy and especially of industry, but it has landed us in the worst industrial crisis since the 1930s, and the effects have been felt in manufacturing industry more than in any other sector of the economy.

We have been asked to examine the real figures of unemployment, so what are they? The most recently published figures show that 3·3 million are unemployed in the United Kingdom, 357,000 of whom are in Scotland. Since 1982, the Government have constantly adjusted how the figures are calculated. The Unemployment Unit—an independent body which is not financed by the Labour party—produces figures calculated on the old basis, which was used before the Government employed every possible device to make the figures look better. On that basis, unemployment in the United Kingdom is more than 3·7 million, rather more than 400,000 of whom are in Scotland. Those figures do not take account of schemes such as the youth training scheme, which reduce the figures.

Such schemes were once despised by the Prime Minister for not providing real jobs. At the moment, they are reducing United Kingdom unemployment figures by 465,000, according to the Government's figures, and by about 70,000 in Scotland. We therefore have approaching 500,000 unemployed in Scotland, not 357,000. That is the extent of the decline and the tragedy that has hit Scotland as a result of Government policy. It is no good the

[Mr. Millan]

Chancellor and, no doubt, the Minister telling us about the expansion of the community programme as if it were a solution.

None of us despise such measures as, in such desperate circumstances, every little helps. The fact remains, however, that money spent on such programmes could be spent much more effectively by local authorities on local projects. It is absurd that the Government, who stop local authorities doing essential things, boast about expanding the community programme, in which much that local authorities are willing to do is done. Local authorities would have been able to do that if their spending had not been attacked in the past six years.

I have never disparaged the youth training scheme. It has many faults, and unfortunately most employers regard it as a source of cheap labour. The safeguards are not effective, but I am not knocking the scheme; it is important. Nevertheless, it is no substitute for the Government getting their general economic policy right. Until then, we shall spend more on schemes but not reduce unemployment or provide the sound basis for expansion which the Government mendaciously claim in the White Paper they have already provided.

If previous industry debates are anything to go by, the Minister will give us a long list of companies that have invested in Scotland. Some of the names are extremely familiar, because they have already been mentioned about 14 times. No doubt they will be mentioned 14 times more. The Secretary of State gives the impression that, because there is some investment here and there, the economy is thriving and there is nothing to worry about. It is equivalent to Ministers scouring Scotland to find a ratepayer who is paying less next year and saying that, because he is paying less, the other 99 per cent. of us who will have to pay more need not worry about having to pay more in 1985-86, as happened in the rating revaluation debate recently.

Despite micro-electronics, manufacturing investment is not even at its 1979 level, although manufacturing investment was given an artificial boost by the corporation tax arrangements in the 1984 Budget. In terms of manufacturing employment, we face disaster, despite the new projects that have come to Scotland and which we welcome.

If I hear one more Conservative Member talk about the new order which has come to Govan Shipbuilders, I shall scream. If the matter had been left with Conservative Members, there would be no Govan Shipbuilders. It is an efficient yard, which now has an important order, because it is well managed and has an excellent work force. The enterprise would not exist were it not for nationalisation and support provided by a Labour Government. I hope that the yard will get further orders, and that some of them will come soon.

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. MacKenzie) said, we are not suggesting that we can do everything by reviving our older industries. One of the most damaging fallacies of the Government and Conservative Members is that it does not matter what happens to our older traditional industries because new ones will come in and provide all the necessary jobs. That is complete nonsense. We must hold on, as far as we can, to existing industries.Thanks to a Labour Government's help with shipbuilding, I have an enterprise in my constituency which, although it has lost jobs recently, is efficient and is getting more work. I hope that it will prosper.

Much of what the Government claim that they are doing for Scotland is connected in some way with the Scottish Development Agency. I find it a little nauseating to listen to Conservative Members talking about projects and the valuable help they get from the SDA when I remember the hostility, or at least indifference, with which the concept of the SDA was greeted when the Labour Government introduced it in 1975. Ministers know better than anybody that, without the SDA, Scotland would be in an even more parlous state, despite the tremendous number of new jobs that have come from the oil industry.

When discussing unemployment, we are talking not about economic arguments or facts but about the social misery that unemployment causes. Most Conservative Members do not represent the worst hit areas of unemployment, and many of them have no idea of the amount of misery and despair to be found among many people in Scotland. The same is true for Wales and some of the regions of England. There is a sense of hopelessness. People believe that the Government have abandoned them and do not care about their problems. It is no use the Prime Minister inviting 25 people down from Merseyside and lecturing them in No. 10. If the Government care about unemployment, they should show it through action and policy.

Neither in the Budget nor in the White Paper is there a genuine recognition of the miseries of unemployment. Nowhere do the Government admit guilt. They always say, "Don't blame us. It is everyone's fault but ours." Until the Government accept their responsibility for unemployment, we shall get nowhere and bring no hope to the unemployed. After six years, the Government are in no position to bring hope to the unemployed in Scotland, and the sooner they go, the better.

12 noon

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton (Edinburgh, West): It is a matter for comment that the Liberal party, the Social Democratic party and the Scottish Nationalist party have not been able to provide one hon. Member to listen to any of our proceedings this morning. That should not be allowed to pass unnoticed, considering the importance of the subject raised by the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman).

I shall not follow everything that the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) said, but I am sure that he will be glad that 300 new jobs will be provided by the order which has been won from North Sea Ferries for Govan shipbuilders.

I am aware that, since February, 1,300 more jobs have been created through contracts. At present there is an appeal before the Secretary of State for Scotland which relates to land owned by Millers on the edge of my constituency by South Cultins road in the South Gyle. Millers want to lease the land for warehousing and high technology projects, which could produce employment for 500 people. It would be helpful if my hon. Friend would say when that decision is likely to be forthcoming.

I shall touch on four subjects: first, Ravenscraig's coke-making facility; secondly, Ferranti and the European fighter aircraft; thirdly, the need for Scottish universities to share fully in the programme to produce more

graduates, for which £43 million was announced in the Budget; and fourthly, the case for flexibility in attracting further inward investment.

I gave notice to the hon. Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray) that I would raise the subject of Ravenscraig. It seems that the delayed plan of the British Steel Corporation is likely to come forward in the form of a new strategy before very long. The decision, which affects the whole plant, will be determined by the decision about the coke ovens. If the BSC decides to close the coke-making facilities on the basis that the units will wear out within the next three years, Ravenscraig's self-sufficient coke-making facilities will be lost. I would deplore that. It would lead to importation of coke, would make the plant more marginal, and would be extremely unsatisfactory.

There are other options. The first is to repair the worn-out ovens — three out of six — at a cost of about £20 million. However, for that sum the repairs would not improve the facilities, and great extra productivity would not be achieved. The second option is to replace the three ovens, at a cost of nearly £60 million, with modern technology, making a valuable addition to the efficiency of the complete operation. Finally, there is the prospect of building new ovens of the most modern sort at a cost of £90 million, which would bring great benefits to the overall viability of the operation. I hope that my hon. Friend will tell BSC management that the wider interests of the Scottish economy require a substantial investment, as Scotland undoubtedly needs a steel industry. I hope that the complete renewal of the coke-making facilities will be seriously considered.

Before I became a Member of Parliament, I stood for election in Hamilton, so I am well aware of the difficulties of high unemployment. That was a valuable educational experience for me. I learned that a great many local suppliers depended on Ravenscraig, and that it was central to the local economy. During the miners' strike, the workers at Ravenscraig put the interests of the steel industry and their jobs to the fore. In so doing they acted in the national interest, so we owe it to them to give them strong support.

Ferranti is one of Scotland's outstanding success stories. Since I became a Member of Parliament 10 years ago, its work force has expanded by several thousand. Every year Ferranti receives more than £100 million-worth of orders from the Ministry of Defence. I am confident that, in placing the United Kingdom's contribution for the European fighter aircraft programme, the Government will recognise the present international pre-eminence of Ferranti in areas of advanced technology, such as radar and the formation of an international navigation system.

In recognising the benefits of co-operation for such an aircraft, I strongly urge the Government to use their best endeavours to ensure a fair share of any resulting work for the United Kingdom for Ferranti. It is with regret that I must tell the House of the potential for substantial disagreement between Britain and France over this matter. At present, France seeks to undertake 31·7 per cent. of the work on the project, leaving only 24·7 per cent. for Britain, 19·8 per cent. for Germany, 14·9 per cent. for Italy and 8·9 per cent. for Spain. British Aerospace would prefer Britain, France and Germany to be put on an equal footing, and each to receive 25 per cent. of the work, with 15 per cent. and 10 per cent. going to Italy and Spain respectively. I cannot stress too strongly that hundreds of jobs in Scotland depend on the Government getting this matter right, as the EFA will replace the Phantoms and Jaguars of the Royal Air Force in the 1990s.

In the talks that take place, I hope that the Government will respect the many principles which have been put forward by British Aerospace to ensure that the work is distributed fairly and that the French do not grasp the overwhelming preponderance of the work. I hope that my hon. Friend will pass that message on to the Secretary of State for Defence.

If no agreement is reached with France about the essential principles put forward by British Aerospace, such as that the weapon systems should meet the minimum requirements of the RAF, and that there should be equality of work-sharing between Germany, France and Britain, and if it is absolutely necessary, we should ultimately be prepared to go ahead with the national option. I hope that my hon. Friend will support Scottish interests in that connection.

I shall now deal with skill shortages and the lack of the necessary education provision for the necessary number of graduates for the job opportunities which are now available. I understand that it was suggested that about 500,000 jobs in Britain could be filled if the right skills were available.

I have with me an important book which will come out on Friday called "Silicon Glen: Reality or Illusion? A Global View of High Technology in Scotland". It is written by Andrew Hargrave. On page 119 it states:

"there may well be shortages, especially if demand by high technology industries continues to expand at the fast rate of the past few years."

We should meet that challenge. On page 118 is a quotation from a report which said that low level of application in micro-electronics

"in any individual country may lead to its domestic economy becoming increasingly uncompetitive, and this may in turn lead to secondary effects on employment that could be far more serious than the direct employment effects."

In other words, although inward investment may not produce an enormous number of jobs by itself, if we do not have it, the effect might be to lose necessary contracts.

Following the Budget, about £40 million to £43 million will be spent on producing more graduates in engineering and technology. I put in a special plea on behalf of Scottish universities. Edinburgh and Heriot-Watt are especially active in those areas. Edinburgh university's micro-electronic and microbiology departments have received a substantial grant through the Alvey project, on which it is working with the Plessey company, for a speech-driven word processor. The research department of Heriot-Watt university has also received substantial assistance, and it is providing with the health-care industry a medical laser unit set up by the university and financed by the Scottish Development Agency. I suggest to my hon. Friend that there is scope for substantial expansion, and that universities are entitled to a fair share of the £43 million. I hope that that matter will be followed up vigorously.

The principal of Heriot-Watt university stated in a report:

"Many of our departments and those concerned with electronics and computer studies have had to fume, . . . finding themselves powerless to respond to the urgent appeals from industrialists for more graduates in those subjects."

The £43 million will provide an opportunity to put that matter right.

Finally, an important priority for regional policy must be the capacity to attract inward investment projects. To

[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton]

do that, Britain must compete with other Community countries, and we must take into account the fact that Germany and Southern Ireland are competing directly with us. The Scottish lowlands are especially attractive to inward investment from American and Japanese companies partly because of the skilled manpower available, partly because of excellent communications but, above all, because in the past attractive financial packages were offered.

The main difficulty with modern regional policy is the operation of the cost-per-job limit in highly capital-intensive electronic projects. Under the present system, Nippon Electric receives less than half the grants that it was offered in September 1980. I suggest that there is a strong case for flexibility in the operation of the cost-per-job limit. I certainly do not advocate a return to the system that operated at the time of projects such as Sullom Voe. However, the attraction of high-technology companies to Scotland will bring immense advantages to the local economies, not only in terms of high-technology spinoffs, sub-contracts, and the balance of payments, but also for the service industries in those areas. It will have a direct effect on local economies and on local unemployment.

IBM in Greenock is an example of the way in which a multinational company can provide opportunities. It has sub-contracted about 5,000 jobs all over the United Kingdom, and there is an enormous trade of £1 million a day.

Inward investment requires speed of response in negotiation, and this depends on flexibility. If applied too rigidly, the cost-per-job limit could undermine efforts to attract high technology companies to Scotland. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will monitor closely not only the activities of those companies in Scotland, but the activities of our main competitors, to ensure that we do not lose in the future.

Contrary to what the right hon. Member for Govan suggested, I believe that the cumulative effects of the Budget measures will lead to the creation of hundreds of thousands of jobs.

12.11 pm

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): I am glad to follow the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton), if only for one reason: to reinforce what he said about Ravenscraig, for which we thank him. We shall hold him to what he said. If Ravenscraig is ever in trouble, we shall remember the pledges of the Secretary of State for Scotland, and we are glad to know that, should that fight come, we shall have the hon. Gentleman's support. I cannot say the same about the other Conservative Members who have spoken today. They regretted the absence of the Scottish National party, the Liberal party and the Social Democratic party for today's debate, but I almost wish that I could have regretted the absence of the Conservative Members who spoke earlier.

The salient fact in any examination of the Scottish economy is that we have stated unemployment of more than 360,000 and a real figure approaching 500,000, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) said. That means that nearly one in four of the work force is unemployed, which is an appalling and terrifying figure.

We must also remember that the Government have been conducting an experiment with the people of Britain and the regions of Britain in an economic heresy for which there was no basis in ideas or in material evidence. Galbraith once said that he thanked God that the experiment of Friedmanism that was being conducted in Britain was not being conducted in his country. We have seen the result during the past six appalling years; every application of those theories has led to greater misery for our people.

Unemployment of more than 4 million is a terrifying thought. It is infinitely worse than it was in the 1930s, and is creeping towards the long term. Yesterday, we had the publication of an astonishing White Paper, "Employment: The Challenge for the Nation". *The Scotsman* today says correctly:

"There is no forecast in the White Paper of where unemployment will be in the late 1980s, but the working assumption is that at most it will fall by 100,000 in 1985-86"—

and that may be doubtful. It is a trivial reduction. The article continues:

"It will remain high throughout the rest of the century."

That is the picture that the Government have painted for Britain during the past six years. The great depression of the 1930s will be the picture for Britain and, above all, for Scotland and the English regions.

What is the Government's response to that? It is this astonishing White Paper, which states at paragraph 2.4:

"To put this right"—

the malaise largely created by themselves—

"and create jobs the people of Britain have to: show enterprise and a willingness to take risks."

The people of Britain have to

"respond and adapt continually to new ideas and changing circumstances."

The people of Britain have to

"carry out the necessary research and development."

Shall I say to the unemployed textile workers in Paisley, "You must carry out research and development."? The people of Britain have to

"combine labour, materials and capital to produce efficiently and on time."

The people of Britain have to "pay ourselves realistically."

There is not a word of what the Government must do. The blame is laid entirely on the people of Britain. The Government's failure of the past six years has somehow magically become the failure of the people of Britain, who, especially with 4 million unemployed, have no access to power, to the levers of production or to control over the finances of this country.

A character in a Bertolt Brecht play says,

"The people have lost confidence in the Government."

The president in the play says,

"We will have to elect another people."

That has been the sort of proposition we have had from the Government.

The Government's response has been cuts in regional development, cuts in local expenditure, cuts in infrastructure and cuts in rate support. Recently, we have talked about the problems of ratepayers in Scotland because of the recent rates crisis; they also must suffer a decline in services and in jobs. The one quick trigger for economic recovery is to give more resources to local authorities. Not only the rating revaluation is hitting our areas, but also the cuts in rate support grant over five years from 75 per cent. to 57 per cent. There have also been cuts

in the skillcentres. We are told that they must show that they are ready to carry out developments and to show enterprise, but nevertheless they have been cut.

The Government have done one positive thing. They have used oil to finance unemployment. Their errors and the magnitude of those errors are awash in the funds from North sea oil — and tourism — without which Britain would have been bankrupt. As it is, the oil has hardly helped to sustain the cost and level of unemployment in Britain. It is a disgrace to a civilised country.

The Government's answer is shown on the first page of the document. The one specific thing they say is:

"The key contribution of Government in a free society is to do all it can to create a climate in which enterprise can flourish, above all by removing obstacles to the working of markets, especially the labour market."

Cut from that the fine language and it means poor wages. It means cutting wages and cutting the security and protection that is given to poor wage earners through wages councils. We are back to the Speenhamland system. Wages and their cost to employers will be cut and replaced by Government support. That is what happened at the beginning of the 19th century and the Government are repeating it. The abolition of the wages councils and the removal of society's control over dictatorial employers will mean that workers on poor wages will have to turn to family income for support. That is the one thing that has come forward.

Let me examine the consequences of that for one industry in my area. That industry was almost the only industry that was left to us. In 1981 we had one industry that mattered. Once we had one major factory with about 9,000 workers in it. When it ended in 1981 there were 4,500. Overnight, 4,500 men at Linwood became unemployed. That was seen as a shock level.

My hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, North (Mr. Adams) is present and he will testify that the background to that was textiles. But what is happening in the textile industry is terrifying. Paisley was the great creator of the industrial revolution in cotton and textiles. In March 1985 there were 132 men and 370 women—502 altogether—in the textile industry. In 1948, 10,000 people worked in the textile industry.

The consequence of that for unemployment is interesting. Paisley has 16 per cent. plus unemployment, which is bad enough, but the real figure is concealed because the vast mass of those 10,000 workers, 7,700, were women and most of them have not gone on to the unemployment register. Yes, we recognise the shock of the closure of Linwood but the closure of the textile factories has been the slow bleeding of an area and is not shown in the figures because, on the whole, women have not registered.

That is why we have sought action from the Government. We met the Secretary of State when Linwood was closed in 1981 and he gave us some promises. In a letter of 29 May 1981 from the Secretary of State after a meeting that we had with him, he promised an SDA integrated urban project for Paisley. That has not happened. Secondly, he promised "Locate in Scotland" to collaborate with the region and district to market what the area has to offer to prospective investors. We have a lot to offer. Our area is one of the best placed in terms of communications. We have plant and factories which have been made empty. The Government demand that the people of Britain should show initiative. We have the plant, factory space, roofing and traffic because the area was built up, largely through regional development initiated by Labour Governments.

One of my first experiences as a Member of Parliament for my new constituency was to attend a medical charity occasion. A small boy was given the honour of performing a ceremony. That ceremony was to blow up the tallest chimney in the west of Scotland, before they proceeded to destroy the rest of the cotton mill. That was almost the first public appearance that I made there. Nothing has happened about "Locate in Scotland". That promise has not been fulfilled either.

Thirdly, there was to be a development of small Scottish development units in the Johnstone-Linwood area. That is the only thing that has happened and that has been due to a private entrepreneur.

Fourthly, factories at Hillington were to be refurbished. That has not happened. None of those promises has been fulfilled. We have exchanged letters, and the Minister with responsibility for industry in Scotland, above all, should know about that. We are demanding action. Linwood has failed. The textile industry has failed. Alongside Paisley is the carpet factory at Elderslie. That is the only factory in that village. Where we once had about 7,500 workers in the Scottish carpet industry, we now have only about 950 and far fewer than that remain in the one high-class quality carpet manufacturer, Stoddard Carpets at Elderslie.

We see the consequences of all this for our youth. What are the prospects for them in Paisley given that background? We are in favour of training schemes but we are not in favour of training schemes as a substitute for employment. We are not in favour of training schemes that end with the kids going back on to the dole. In Paisley, 600 are on youth training schemes and 596 are unemployed. The approximate number in work is 442. That makes a total of 1,638. Out of the 16 to 18-year-olds, only 28 per cent. are in work. Three out of four are either unemployed or in short term training.

In the area that my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) comes from in Renfrewshire we find exactly the same situation. Only 25 per cent. of the 16 to 18-year-olds are in employment. There is little hope for them there, with the shipbuilding industry in its present crisis, and there is little hope for them at our end if we depend only on the Government's initiatives.

Mr. Gerald Malone (Aberdeen, South): I am listening carefully to the hon. Gentleman's exposition this morning of the reasons for unemployment being at the level that it is. Do they not sit rather uncomfortably with the view that he expressed in an article in the *Glasgow Herald* in 1978 when he said clearly that for demographic reasons unemployment would inevitably rise to over 3 million in the early 1980s? Was he not right then and is he not perhaps wrong now?

Mr. Buchan: That article is continually quoted.

Mr. McQuarrie: It was a good article.

Mr. Buchan: It was a very good article; I accept that. If the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Malone) will read the following paragraph he will see exactly what I said. It is for those reasons that we must take special measures to deal with the demographic effect. I went on

[Mr. Buchan]

to explain how to deal with it. Of course I accepted the demographic changes. The hon. Gentleman should go back and read the article. One of the things that I said was that there is no trigger for an economic recovery outside public expenditure. The Government hate public expenditure. They cannot even stand our great national institutions. They slavered and bayed at the thought of getting their hands on the pickings of advertising for the BBC two days ago—a disgusting and obscene sight. More and more Government Members resemble "Spitting Images". On the whole, I prefer their appearance in "Spitting Images" than their reality. They certainly look better.

The figures are terrifying and the cuts will make them worse. Since 1 January, another 800 redundancies have been created at Levi Strauss, Babcock and Stoddard carpets. We demand the restoration of proper investment in Britain and an end to the outflow of £12 billion a year to subsidise other countries' unprofitable undertakings on the mainland of Europe. We demand the restoration of proper funds for local authorities to provide the services which we so desperately need, and above all to act as a drive, a fillip and a trigger to economic recovery. There is no chance of that so long as the Prime Minister boasts that there is no alternative. There is an alternative. We can get rid of this Government and we can restore proper public investment to regenerate and rejig our industries.

12.30 pm

Mr. Barry Henderson (Fife, North-East): It is always interesting to listen to the hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan), particularly when he is wound up a little. The hon. Gentleman said that the industrial revolution started with the textile industry, which is important in his constituency. That industrial revolution might never have got off the ground if a Labour party had existed then. I am sure that members of that party and Mr. Ludd would have worked hand in hand to prevent the changes necessary and desirable for the British economy.

The Linwood closure was a great tragedy for the west of Scotland, but the greatest tragedy about that was that an opportunity was not grasped. Management was at fault, but the trade union side was also at fault. I hope that the lesson has been learned. Instead of taking the opportunity to beat stiff world competition which had to be fought by every means imaginable, the trade union leadership saw the opportunity as a dripping roast of which they could take advantage and relax. They did not realise that in a highly competitive world they would have to prove themselves.

We are grateful to the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) for initiating a debate on the Scottish economy. We are all deeply concerned about unemployment levels. The Government are seeking to create an enterprise economy with the best and most secure prospects of improving employment prospects.

We are entering the fifth year of continuous growth in output. Last year, manufacturing output was up by 3·5 per cent.—the biggest rise since 1973 in another period of Conservative Government. Manufactured exports rose by 10 per cent. Investment was up by 6·5 per cent. in 1984 and manufacturing investment rose by 13 per cent. I am talking of solid achievements which will create a firm foundation and will ultimately enable us to beat the dreadful scourge of unemployment. Britain today has the largest number of people in work of any major European country.

In creating the enterprise economy we are rectifying, in appropriate cases, the balance between public and private enterprise. That is important. Only the public sector can provide certain services effectively, but in other spheres private enterprise can do more to help the economy. A good example is Scott Lithgow, which failed under nationalisation, was rejuvenated by private enterprise and now has a continuing growth prospect.

I was told the other day by someone qualified to hold the view that Trafalgar House has launched a new offshore platform and announced further new orders and that management felt certain that the yards could continue to be filled so long as delivery was provided. In other words, if there were sound guarantees of delivery to specification and on time, there was a great future for the yards.

The same can be seen in smaller ways. My district council in north-east Fife until recently had its vehicle maintenance carried out by another public sector organisation. The council decided, after close investigation, that the work could be done more effectively and economically by private enterprise, and that change was then made. It was not a doctrinaire decision but a sensible change to get value for money.

Transportation is an area where the public sector has dominated heavily. It is curious that until recently one could not attend a meeting at which the question of public transport arose without someone complaining about the lack of a bus service or the inadequacy of a service or the way in which services generally were unrelated to the needs of the public.

Because the Government produced a White Paper, and have now introduced the Transport Bill to deregulate the environment of the buses so as to create an effective competitive climate which will put the customer first, suddenly all the lobbies are out saying that everything is wonderful with the buses and that nothing needs changing. Change is necessary and the customers will be the principal beneficiaries.

While I welcome the fact that the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow has initiated this debate on the Scottish economy, I wish that someone of his intellectual honesty had drafted the motion. The subject of, and the way in which he introduced, the debate is more positive and useful than the wording of the motion, which I pass over.

The most important aspect of the White Paper on jobs, which was published yesterday, is the intellectual honesty of the analysis of the nature of the problem. It points out that living standards have been rising throughout the Western world for 30 years, but less so in Britain than elsewhere, and it seeks to establish some of the basic reasons for that and for the problem of unemployment.

In the last 20 years, average productivity in manufacturing industry grew by over 500 per cent. in Japan, by over 120 per cent. in Germany but by less than 80 per cent. in the United Kingdom. That is one reason for our rate of unemployment today. If Labour Members cannot grasp that fundamental fact, they will not be able to help us as much as I hope in identifying policies which will help to change the unemployment position. If we are to change it, we must address ourselves to the problem of our competitiveness in productivity.

Related to that, we have always failed to put the customer first. After all, customers and their orders provide jobs, whether in the manufacturing or service industries. Powerful unions have often held economic reality at bay, and that has done nothing to create an environment for surer job prospects.

We have gone through an era in which the entrepreneur —the man who sees a business prospect and grasps it and, in grasping it and seeking to profit by it, creates work for others — has been one of the most under-valued members of society instead of the most crucial of all in relation to unemployment. I accept that we must be worried about unemployment and I recognise the totality of it. It is clear that there is a need to reduce it. But over 23 million are in work, a higher proportion of the working population than in the the main continental countries.

When I intervened in the speech of the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow I do not think that he understood the point that I was trying to make. Perhaps that was because I tried to make a short intervention. I sought to draw his attention the fact that we have a good export record. I think that about one third of all that we produce goes abroad but I accept that only certain sections of the economy contribute directly to the export effort. Some of the firms on the Clyde are making a major contribution. Scotland as a whole provides a significant proportion of all United Kingdom exports. Perhaps comparatively few companies are involved, but the fact remains that we are a good exporting nation. We depend on trade more than any other country in the world and I hope that we shall never be seduced by the siren voices of Labour Members who want to restrict the freedom of world trade. No nation benefits more from trade than the United Kingdom.

I put it to the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow in my intervention that there is a problem because we are importing many goods which we could produce more satisfactorily for ourselves. If we had held our market share of home-produced goods, we would have very little unemployment now. It is the loss of the home market rather than a reduced share of the world market which has perhaps had the most direct impact on the creation of unemployment.

Labour Members often say that we must stimulate demand, but I submit that there is not a lack of demand. The demand which exists is not being met by British companies; that is where the problem lies. In the past two years demand has grown by about 8 per cent., but that increase has not been met by our home companies.

It is often said that greater public investment would help to create more demand, as though there was no public sector investment. Last year we invested £22 billion of public money in the creation of public sector investment. To pour more resources into projects that will not yield a good economic return will waste the national wealth on which our jobs rest. If we increase public investment beyond £22 billion to £25 billion, one of the results will be less investment in the private sector, which is creating jobs and new opportunities. Manufacturing investment increased by 13 per cent. in 1984.

We are seeing a period of considerable changes in our economy. We must grapple with unemployment in a way which ensures that people are equipped to face the new opportunities which arise, as well as the old problems. One of the greatest problems in reducing unemployment is the poor qualifications of many school leavers. Developing training schemes, improving the education system and seeking to improve the vocational range of opportunities for youngsters will have a significant and increasing effect in tackling unmployment. The majority of those who have been unemployed for some time—this applies especially to younger people—have few educational qualifications and have had little or no opportunity for training. I welcome the further initiatives on training foreshadowed in the Budget. One of the great successes in Scotland has been inward investment. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary, who has made a direct contribution to that success, which has been particularly marked in information technology.

I hope that more effort will be put into developing opportunities in biotechnology as a native industry rather than as inward investment. Biotechnology could lead to as fundamental a revolution in industry over the next 20 years as we have seen with information technology in the past 20 years.

I also welcome schemes that are particularly helpful to areas such as mine. They include the PRIDE scheme, the programme for rural initiatives and development, which is administered by the Scottish Development Agency and supports private enterprise in rural areas. I understand that it has been open for business since the beginning of the month and I hope that it will make a useful contribution to developing industrial as well as service activities in rural areas, perhaps supported by the better business services scheme which now has a much wider coverage than Scotland.

The basic industries—agriculture, fishing, coal and oil—will have a crucial role in our economy for years to come and our interest in new industries should never detract from the importance of those fundamental industries.

I hope that today's announcement in the press about the efforts of the Scottish Fishermen's Federation to demonstrate the dangers of allowing a high by-catch in industrial fishing for Norway pout will be noted by the Scottish Office and that we shall try to get better arrangements within the European Community.

Only a sound economy can provide the vital base for industrial regeneration, whether in manufacturing or in the service sector. We have curbed inflation, but we have further to go. We must not put our achievements at risk. Curbing costs helps industry. The understandable outcry from people in Scotland facing substantial rates increases reminds us that only a few years ago under the Labour Government all prices were rising at such a rate. We have almost forgotten what it was like to live with inflation at over 20 per cent. The reduction of inflation to 5 per cent. provides an important base for the future.

12.48 pm

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): I join my hon. Friends in congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) on his good fortune in the ballot and on the subject that he has chosen to debate.

The motion draws attention to the great problems of unemployment, especially among young people. A youngster summed up in a letter to *The Scotsman* on 18 March what many young people think. He wrote:

"Sir,—What's in a name? An anagram for 'Nigel Lawson' is 'We all sign on.' Fraser Paton (15)".

[Mr. Robert Hughes]

That sums up where young people will end up if the Government carry on as they are.

To listen to Conservative Members, one would think that the Government had come to power only a few weeks or months ago. The fact is that we are but a few weeks short of six years of Tory Government.

Yesterday saw the publication of the document "Employment: The Challenge for the Nation." That shows that in the last six years the Government have learnt not a single lesson. Their record on unemployment is open to all sorts of arguments about the precise figures, what figures are brought in and what figures are left out.

I always tend to underestimate the figures. I do not believe in making exaggerated claims or in taking the highest figures. I take fairly reasonable figures so that I cannot be accused of exaggeration.

When the Labour Government left office in 1979, there were 114,400 people unemployed in Scotland. According to figures published last month, there are now 357,200. We all know that a great deal of massaging of the figures has been going on. I think that it is reasonable to add to that figure about 40,000, because there are 40,000 youth training scheme places currently taken up. That gives us 397,200, and I believe that the figure is much higher.

That represents an increase in unemployment of 47,166 every miserable year that this Government have been in office. It represents an increase of 907 every week. It represents 129 every day of the six years that they have been in office—every working day, every Saturday and Sunday, every bank holiday and every Christmas and New Year's day.

The Government's response to that steady erosion of employment prospects is "Employment: The Challenge for the Nation." The document is totally devoid of ideas.

It is always said that Ernest Bevin once described a document as "nothing more than clitch after clitch after clitch." But no one should be surprised at the poverty of ideas in the document. It represents the combined wisdom of the Secretaries of State for Employment, for Education and Science, for Scotland, for Wales, for the Social Services and for Trade and Industry and the Minister without Portfolio. The combined wisdom of them all is this pathetic document, and I shall return to it later in my speech.

I want to outline one or two difficulties facing my own city of Aberdeen, only part of which is in my constituency. The city is regarded in many circles as the jewel in the crown of the Scottish economy, if not the jewel in the crown of the United Kingdom economy. It is the so-called oil El Dorado of the United Kingdom.

We have an unemployment rate of 6·6 per cent. It is a measure of the stark nature of unemployment and the stark difficulties facing our country that a 6·6 per cent. rate of unemployment is regarded as reasonable. Some of my hon. Friends say to me "What are you complaining about with a 6·6 per cent. rate of unemployment? We only wish that was the unemployment rate in our constituencies." They have unemployment rates of 13 per cent., 16 per cent., 17 per cent., and 25 per cent.

The trouble with statistics is that they do not always mean a great deal. A 6·6 per cent. unemployment rate represents 10,460 people out of work in the city of Aberdeen. Even in a city with all the glorious prospects to be expected of a location which has changed dramatically with the coming of North sea oil, youngsters have no hope and really are in despair.

What is happening in the city of Aberdeen and its immediate surrounds in a sense is a microcosm of what is happening elsewhere in Scotland. Traditional industry is on the decline. The fishing industry is largely in decline —not that I blame that on the Government. There have been difficulties with over-fishing. It is probable that the fishing industry would have declined anyway. But I ask hon. Members to consider the example of fish processing, which is in very serious difficulty even at its much reduced level. We have the idiocy that Aberdeen firms are thinking of leaving to go to Motherwell Food Park because they can get a better financial deal there.

I do not take the traditionalist line that, because a commodity has been produced in an area, it always has to be produced there. However, it does not make sense to move companies away from the base of supply to a place hundreds of miles away where there is no local supply.

That shows the idiocy of the Government's policy. It makes no economic sense whatsoever. These, in the main, are the companies so beloved of the Prime Minister and the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart). They are small companies, the backbone of the nation, which should be expanding, but when they go the Government seeking help they get the brush-off. They are told that there is nothing that can be done about it. However, I believe that the Government must give aid to small fish-processing firms.

May I turn to another aspect which does not affect my constituency, although I regard it as being in my constituency? That is Hall Russell Shipbuilders. It is time that the Government made up their mind and told us what is to happen at Hall Russell. Leaving on one side for the moment my total objection to privatisation, the fact is that we have to live in the real world. The Government will privatise the shipyard. However, so confident are the Government about their privatisation policy that they will not tell us how many bidders there are for the yard, let alone who they are. They will not let the work force speak to the prospective buyers. This splendid work force has co-operated with management and done everything that was asked of it, yet it is being treated as though it can be bought an sold as a mere chattel.

Mr. Malone: I should not like the hon. Gentleman to be unaware of the fact that one of the potential buyers is at the yard this weekend. It is hoped that they will speak to the work force. The hon. Gentleman and I have been substantially at one on this issue. Therefore, I should not like him to be unaware of that fact, which came to my attention extremely recently.

Mr. Hughes: It may be that one of the prospective buyers is going to the yard this weekend. If the hon. Gentleman in whose constituency Hall Russell now is had said that they will be meeting the work force this weekend, I should have regarded that as progress. But today is Friday. The weekend presumably starts tomorrow. The hon. Gentleman is only able to tell me now that he hopes that the prospective buyers will be able to speak to the work force. That emphasises the point I am trying to make.

We need to remove uncertainty not only about who owns the yard but also about future orders. It is possible that fairly soon an order will be placed for two offshore

patrol vessels, class II, but we do not know when those orders will be placed. The Government are still making up their mind. Even more important, a major part of the funding for further research into the new OPVIII vessels ought to be forthcoming from the Government. Money has been made available by British shipbuilders to carry out research into the early development of the OPVIIIs. It is necessary to remove uncertainty.

Engineering companies in Aberdeen and the surrounding area have been closed. Closures have taken place even in the constituency of the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. McQuarrie). No mention was made of the fact by the hon. Gentleman in his speech. Engineering works have been closed in his constituency, as in mine. The paper manufacturing industry is in serious decline. Oil-related employment has masked the structural decline of industry and employment in the city of Aberdeen and throughout Scotland. The Government's response is to wring their collective hands and say, "We cannot do anything. It is not our fault. We have only been in Government six years. It takes time for things to change." The White Paper reflects that view. It says:

"Government cannot do what the nation will not. It cannot on its own create jobs."

I think that they can on their own create jobs. I do not say that they can create all jobs on their own but the White Paper's philosophy is totally defeatist. The Government's record is one of destroying jobs. They have not even been neutral. Their policy has been antagonistic to job creation.

It is almost impossible adequately to describe the change which has taken place in the past six years. The change in regional policy has certainly destroyed jobs. I remember the surge of optimism in Scotland when the regional policy began to have an effect.

I remember, as does my hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan) the setting up of the car factory at Linwood, the pulp mill at Corpach and the aluminium smelter at Invergordon. The Labour party had to fight for many years to get those companies established. Where are they now? They have all gone. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman, who is so free in giving advice, should take his own advice. If he wishes to intervene, I will gladly give way to him.

Mr. McQuarrie: The hon. Member mentioned my constituency and engineering firms closing. I have good news for him. Every engineering factory in my constituency that closed has been reopened and men have been taken on. Consolidated Pneumatic Tool Co. Ltd. at Fraserburgh has taken on an extra 100 men this year. He also mentioned Invergordon. If the Labour party had put a power station beside the Invergordon smelter it might never have closed.

Mr. Hughes: Wherever the Government are directly responsible — they could have kept Corpach and Invergordon open — it is always someone else's fault further back. The Government are never willing to face up to their responsibilties. We see that everywhere we look. The White Paper boasts that the Government are financing the "support for innovation" programme for industry. We all support innovation and the exploitation of new technology because that is what the future is based on, but, what is the reality? What is behind the weasel words in the White Paper? The reality is seen in *Hansard* on Monday in the Budget debate. My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) intervened during the speech of the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. He was pointing out the Government's great support for innovation. My right hon. and learned Friend asked:

"With regard to support for innovation schemes, in the forthcoming year does the Secretary of State anticipate an increase in Government expenditure to support those schemes or a reduction?"

What was the Secretary of State's answer? It was clear and there can be no argument about it:

"There will be less expenditure in real terms."—[*Official Report*, 25 March 1985; Vol. 76, c. 39.]

That is the truth. That is what the Government are doing. They are trying to pretend that they are doing one thing while they are doing the opposite.

That is also true of regional development finance. The Government boast in the White Paper that they are concentrating finance in areas where it is most needed. If we study the figures, we see that they are spending less on regional development. They are cutting all the time. That is one of the main reasons why investment is falling. It is traditional for the Tories to say that public expenditure does not create jobs. Public expenditure creates jobs in private manufacturing industry. It has been estimated that over 70 per cent. of public expenditure goes directly into the pockets of private industry. We are having record bankruptcies because the Government are cutting public expenditure. They are hitting those whom they are trying to help. The Government cannot see that. The White Paper is completely sterile and devoid of ideas.

There has been one theme only throughout the Government's six years of office. It has been common to every Budget and it is common to this White Paper, which has a blue cover. I do not know what they are trying to pretend by putting a blue cover on it. It is the insulting philosophy upon which the Government have based their whole programme—the rich will only work when they get paid more, but the poor will only work when they get paid less. That is the philosophy of the dinosaur. It is one of the reasons why the Tory party and the Tory Government, like the dinosaur, will soon be extinct in Scotland, and the sooner the better.

1.5 pm

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I apologise for intervening, but this is a matter of importance to the whole House.

There was great concern in the House yesterday that the Government had produced a so-called White Paper on employment without any statement or opportunity for questions. I believe that it also proved impossible for my colleagues to put their side of the case on the BBC today.

There has now been a repetition in that we have another blue-covered document, although it does not have the same status as yesterday's blue-covered document, which was indeed a White Paper. Apparently, a press conference was held this morning by Lord Young and the Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on the options for removing the burdens on small businesses. Many of the proposals will have an important impact. For example, one suggestion was that people taking proceedings for unfair dismissal should be required to put down a deposit which they would lose if they lost the case.

These are matters of great importance not just to our constituents but to the House. Yet not only were the Opposition not even notified through the usual channels that the press conference was to take place, but the House

[Mr. Alan Williams]

was not notified that the document would be available in the Vote Office at 11.30 am. Moreover, although Ministers were happy to parade before the Press, no Minister has come here to make a statement and to lay himself open to questioning by the House.

I therefore ask you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what options are open to us at this time on Friday. Clearly there is little likelihood of getting a Minister here to make a statement at 2.30 pm. If that cannot be done, what help can you give us to ensure that, on a matter of such fundamental policy importance, a statement will be guaranteed to take place at the end of Question Time on Monday?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I understand the right hon. Gentleman's point, but he will appreciate that it is not a matter on which I can help. No doubt his comments have been noted and I am sure that he will use his ingenuity to pursue the matter on another occasion.

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. There is an issue of even more fundamental importance. During the protest yesterday at the publication of a White Paper without a statement being made to the House, my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition and other Members challenged the Leader of the House and asked him to reconsider the position and to arrange for a statement to be made to the House on the first White Paper on employment in 40 years. After much pressure from the Opposition, the Leader of the House gave an assurance that the matter would be considered.

While the Leader of the House was considering the possibility of a statement next week, another Department — the Department of Trade and Industry — and a Member of another place were rapidly putting together a press announcement on the very matter to which our protest related and gaily going ahead with a repetition of the same mistake, despite the assurances given by the Leader of the House.

I appreciate that matters of business between Government and Opposition should be dealt with through the usual channels, and the usual channels have been working on the matter. Through a colleague, I sought assurances from the Department of Employment yesterday because we had heard on the grapevine that a further document was to be produced, but we were told that that was not to be. The second document is presumably not a White Paper. It, too, has a blue cover but it does not bear the usual command number, which makes things even more confusing. Presumably the Department of Employment felt able to assure us that no further document was being produced, because the document in question was to come from the Department of Trade and Industry.

It is utterly unacceptable that such offensive recommendations as obliging workers to put down a deposit before a court will hear an unfair dismissal case should be made in this unprecedented fashion, and it will cause great consternation. The Opposition are already being pressed by the media for statements. When I approached the Vote Office, having heard about the press conference, I discovered that the document was available from 10.30 am. It is totally unacceptable——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Gentleman, but I have got his point. He has answered his own question. This is a matter which no doubt he will pursue through the usual channels.

Mr. Millan: Further to the point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This has come as a complete surprise to me as well. It is especially discourteous as we are discussing industry, albeit Scottish industry, to which the document is obviously relevant. It is bad enough having the thing published yesterday without there being a statement in the House or any notice, but this has happened in the middle of a debate. Moreover, Ministers have made statements to the press rather than come to the House. I understand that this is not principally a matter for you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but one of your functions is to protect the interests of Back Benchers. I have no wish to hold up our proceedings, as I represent a Scottish constituency and, having spoken, do not wish to prevent my colleagues from doing so. Nevertheless, I hope that we shall have some statement from the Leader of the House before the end of the debate on this quite extraordinary procedure.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I think that this matter has been ventilated now, and we are taking time out of a private Member's day.

Mr. Williams: Further to the point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I do not want to impose upon your tolerance, but this is a matter of great importance for the standing of the House. If it were one off, we should not be pressing it so hard, but it is the second time in two days that the House has been treated with arrogant contempt. A major part of your role is to protect the standing and status of the House. As the Leader of the House has not been present, I wonder whether we could ask you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to use your good offices to ensure that the right hon. Gentleman comes here before 2.30 pm to let the House know whether the Government intend there to be a statement on the blue document on Monday.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Allan Stewart): Further to the point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I shall of course report to my right hon. Friends the views that have been expressed.

1.11 pm

Mr. Gerald Malone (Aberdeen, South): In view of the length of time that has been taken up with points of order and the number of other hon. Members who wish to speak, I shall curtail my speech as much as possible.

With regard to Hall Russell, I agree entirely with the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) that we have reached the stage in the sale of that shipyard at which, for the sake of management and work force, it is important that a conclusion be reached as rapidly as possible. I thoroughly endorse everything that the hon. Gentleman said on that matter. I hope that, in our representations to those responsible for taking decisions, we have made those views clear and that there will be progress soon.

I shall confine myself to discussing the role that the Scottish Development Agency plays in Aberdeen and the north-east of Scotland. There have been important developments in that role during the past 12 months. The right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) mentioned the SDA and what Conservative Members say about it. It now fulfils a role which is quite different from that which it fulfilled under a Labour Government. Rather

than a fire engine that rushes from industrial crisis to industrial crisis, it now has the opportunity to be constructive, and it has been exceptionally constructive in Aberdeen and the north-east of Scotland in the last 12 months.

It is worth considering the SDA's achievements in the past 12 months. They are remarkable. It has got off its marks since it set up its office in Aberdeen. In company investments it has published business plans for some 70 companies.

The SDA has set up loan and equity investments in the north-east of Scotland totalling more than £1 million. The figure for the previous year was only £231,000. It has participated in the building of custom-built premises for industry and business in general, and in many local initiatives. One of the most important for the north-east is the new Aberdeen exhibition and conference centre, which will accommodate "Offshore Europe," which is the major European oil and gas exhibition outside Houston, Texas. The SDA property investment is about £750,000, and is exceptionally important.

My hon. Friend the Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. McQuarrie) will be well aware that the SDA has provided great support for the Enterprise Trust in Fraserborough. Its contribution of £193,000 over three years is welcomed in his constituency and throughout the north-east. It is important that the north-east is seen, not as consisting of separate units, but as having an economy of its own. As an hon. Member for Aberdeen city, I welcome that initiative.

I welcome the establishment of the Aberdeen Enterprise Trust. Although the SDA contribution may look relatively small—£15,000 a year for three years—the principle of the trust is important for Aberdeen city, and I am sure that it will be successful. Indeed, the work that it is commencing has already shown signs of success. I trust that that will continue into the indefinite future.

Property developments in my constituency have also been assisted by the SDA. There is a new development at Altons industrial estate, which consists of 30,000 square feet of new units. Most of them will be leased to new businesses which are coming into Aberdeen and to expanding existing businesses in the city.

That is a first-class record for an office that was only recently set up. There were fears at the outset that there might be a conflict of interest between the SDA and other agencies operating in the north-east, especially those funded by Grampian regional council. I am sorry to report that there has been some evidence of a conflict between those agencies recently. Indeed, it was suggested that perhaps the SDA office in Aberdeen was being used to attract investment from Grampian region to other parts of Scotland. It is important to put it on record that investigation showed that that was not the case. I understand that both the agencies involved—the north-east of Scotland development agency and the SDA in Aberdeen—have resolved their differences and clarified matters.

The SDA was described somewhat irresponsibly by a Grampian regional councillor as a

"Trojan horse to poach industry from Aberdeen and the north-east of Scotland".

That is not true. The SDA does the opposite. It has contributed substantially to industrial development and inward investment in Aberdeen. It is doing a worthwhile and thorough job in ensuring that high technology projects in particular are attracted to the city and the region. I congratulate the SDA on achieving that important task on what is approximately its first birthday.

The hon. Member for Aberdeen, North referred to the fish processing industry, which is another interest that we have in common. The formation of a new organisation in the north-east, which represents the fish processing industry, will bring some coherence to the policies that it needs to ensure that it is of the proper scale to process catches landed in the north-east, and to add as much value as possible to the catches before they are sold throughout the rest of the United Kingdom, and exported to many other quarters of the world.

Since I became the Member of Parliament for Aberdeen, South, I have noticed that, until now, those who represented the fish processing industry had no coherent approach. The representative organisation would say one thing—perhaps requesting Government aid, as it did some time ago—while the processors operated on a completely different basis. The coherence which the new organisation should bring to the policies that they believe are needed for restructuring the industry in the north-east will be more than welcome.

Mr. McQuarrie: I was seriously disturbed by a press report yesterday about that organisation, which was created to bring the fish processors together. Unfortunately, Aberdeen port is covered by the national dock labour scheme. A foreign vessel which arrived at Aberdeen was refused permission by the fish porters to offload there, so it had to come to my constituency instead. Are not such practices extremely detrimental to the principle behind what my hon. Friend is saying? Do they not damage trade in his constituency?

Mr. Malone: This is a unique occasion. My hon. Friend is regretting that something went from my constituency to his. He must be truly motivated by a generous spirit this morning. He certainly has a point. It is sad that much business is not attracted to the port of Aberdeen because vessels are sometimes not allowed to offload there. But that is not the main thrust of my speech.

The Government's policies are working in the north-east. The Scottish Development Agency is a prime example of what the Government can do to promote sensible investment which works and which provides a real return. Neither I nor my hon. Friend the Minister believes that, as Opposition Members allege, the Government have a completely hands-off approach. Of course they do not. It is an interventionist approach, but of a completely different nature to the sort of intervention that we experienced when the Labour Government were in office. The Government's intervention in the north-east is welcome and constructive, and what is more, it works.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) on being as successful in the parliamentary raffle as I was this week. No doubt it will be many a long day before either of us is as successful again.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The wind-up speeches are expected to begin at 1.35 pm. I hope that the two hon. Members who wish to speak will divide the remaining time between them.

1.23 pm

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): I make no complaint about the absence of representatives of the alliance or the Scottish National party, because it has given me the opportunity to speak in the debate. I know that the hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mrs. McCurley) believes that this is my maiden speech on Scottish affairs, but I have had the opportunity to hear many Scottish speeches in many debates.

This has been a most interesting debate, and I join hon. Members in congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) on initiating a debate on the most important subject for Scottish people today. The debate is essentially about resources and people and how best we can use and encourage both. In the short time available, I shall refer to three major aspects of Scottish industry and of the Scottish outlook: the construction industry, the steel industry and the problems of youth unemployment.

It is a great tragedy that we are seeing a decline of the construction industry and the numbers employed in it, despite the fact that the need for it is so great. I join my hon. Friend the Member for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth (Mr. Hogg) in support of the Stepps bypass. That will provide essential jobs and the delay has been undue. I hope that the Secretary of State will not use the various public inquiries as an excuse for doing nothing. It is essential and there should be a specific commitment on that bypass with a specific date in mind.

We should today be discussing the potential for Scottish industry and jobs based on the oil revenues that have been made available. Had we been using those revenues in a positive way we would be talking about investment in the public sector and private industry which would provide essential jobs. We are not doing that because we have squandered our oil resources by paying for substantially higher levels of unemployment than any of us find acceptable.

We are not even necessarily asking today for more public expenditure. Yes, public expenditure, even under this Government, has increased from 39·5 per cent. in 1979 to 42·5 per cent. now, but where has it gone? It has not gone to finance industry, to improve the future of the steel industry or to enhance Scotland's infrastructure. It has gone on levels of unemployment that are utterly unacceptable. Of those unemployed in Coatbridge in my constituency, 22·5 per cent. have been on the dole for two years or more and in Chryston and Kelvin Valley it is 19 per cent. One of the reasons for that is that the Government, in making those claims for public expenditure, as was the Prime Minister's case not so long ago, have failed to appreciate the association between revenue and capital and the consequences of capital commitments for current expenditure. That is a great blow to the construction industry.

Let me give an example from my constituency. Under the principal of Coatbridge college, that very able man Mr. Edward Dowdalls, Strathclyde region spent £1 million to provide a leisure centre with changing facilities, squash courts and so on. That has been standing unused for over a year because Strathclyde region has not found it possible —I make no criticism of it—to find the extra £25,000 that it needs for four or five people to keep the leisure centre going. Those are the revenue consequences of capital expenditure. If the Government will not accept that local authorities need money in addition to capital, that will be a grave blow to our communities in Scotland.

Two hon. Members have mentioned the future of Ravenscraig and I want to put my question as well. I put it in the context of my concern about the industry in Gartcosh in my constituency. Its future is tied closely to that of Ravenscraig. I had a meeting some weeks ago with the chairman of the British Steel Corporation, Sir Robert Haslam. He was unable to give me any assurance about investment. He said that there would be major Government decisions about the capital that would be made available. We believe that it is essential for the Government not just to encourage supporters to speak about Ravenscraig or Gartcosh but to show their commitment to the steel industry by making investment available.

I want to draw attention to an article on the front page of yesterday's *Financial Times* which was headed:

"EEC ministers to allow new steel subsidies".

That shows that yet again France and Italy are being allowed to continue steel subsidies to a degree which even they find surprising. That is not acceptable to my constituents, especially to those whose futures are bound up with Gartcosh. I hope that the Minister can give a specific assurance that the Government are committed to a future for Gartcosh and Ravenscraig.

Youth unemployment is a problem. Strathclyde region recently published a document showing that 246 young people are chasing every job available in the region. No one should be surprised if we are suspicious about the various training schemes and the Government's attitude to them. Young people themselves are extremely suspicious of the training schemes because they do not lead to real jobs. The budget announcement simply means that even more young people trained to an extent greater than originally planned by the Government will be looking for jobs which are not available. That is not acceptable.

Even without the problems of the recession, even if we had not been unwise in the use of our resources, we would face great changes in technology which have an influence on industry. I can remember when factories posted notices saying "Hands wanted". Today we should be looking for minds as well as hands. Education, training and public investment should take account of that. I believe that Scottish industry offers a great deal more potential than the Government recognise.

1.32 pm

Mrs. Anna McCurley (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): The hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) was not as pessimistic today as I feared. Apparently he has not yet caught the Scottish sickness of publicly cutting our throats in despair and privately scooping up all the subsidies from the EEC and the Government that are going. Possibly the hon. Member is a reasonable man, as my hon. Friend the Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Henderson) said. And so he should be. In spite of the Greek tragedy chorus from the Opposition about how awful Scotland is, Scotland survives—even with Socialist policies at local level. Indeed, Scotland continues to attract inward investment and new industries in the face of fierce competition from the EEC and the Irish Republic.

The hon. Gentleman's constituency is heavily involved in the regeneration of industry. Our two constituencies form the Inverclyde district, which is about to experience a long-awaited and welcome regeneration.

The survival of Scott Lithgow is acknowledged by the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow. This survival was entirely due to Government assistance and private enterprise. If we had gone down the road suggested by the hon. Member at the time we should have had the same old problems of overmanning, inefficiency and low productivity that have dogged the shipyard.

Perhaps some of the local teachers did not like my judgment of their latest fracas in my constituency the other day, but I doubt whether they could fault my judgment in my determination to ensure that Scott Lithgow survives through the intervention of the private sector. If Scott Lithgow had closed, it would have been catastrophic in social terms for the area. Now, with considerable and justifiable faith in the area, the Government have involved themselves in the Inverclyde initiative, which in the next five years will establish 2,000 jobs in the Inverclyde district. About £60 million is involved and the scheme is private capital-led. The SDA, the Manpower Services Commission and the Inverclyde district are involved. The project includes training initiatives in addition to the existing successful training schemes in the area. There will be developments in microtechnology, biotechnology, health care, electronics and, above all, reclaiming some of the derelict areas that persist in the region.

The hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow failed to analyse industrial decline, although the subject was at least alluded to by the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke). The industries which were labour intensive in our area are now more mechanised and streamlined. Nevertheless, one of the greatest complaints of employers in Scotland is that in certain industries they are not getting a fair week's work for a fair week's pay.

Although the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) insisted in a recent debate on this issue that I was talking nonsense, if he spoke to some industrialists in my constituency he would be told that, when they are tendering for contracts, they estimate on getting under 20 hours' worth of work per man per week.

However, significant changes are taking place in the west of Scotland and the industrial initiatives, to some of which I have referred, will benefit us enormously. I pay tribute to the value of the microtechnological industry in Inverclyde. IBM has been with us for many years and has recently made local investment totalling £100 million. That is having a remarkable spin-off effect on small businesses which serve the company, and IBM's record in sub-contracting to those small businesses has been excellent. IBM has been awarded a contract by the Scottish Office for new equipment. The company supports 5,400 jobs in the west of Scotland and despite some of our vicissitudes, IBM is determined to stay.

The hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow failed to mention certain matters. For example, when I spoke to the manager of the jobcentre in Greenock I was told that the number of job vacancies in Inverclyde had never been higher and that the enterprise allowance scheme was a great success. As a result of the Budget and the new training places that will come in the community programme, about 700 places will be available in Inverclyde. That, among other things, is what the Government are doing for my area.

The hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow mentioned that Tate and Lyle had managed to survive in Greenock. I hope, should such a dreadful thing happen that a Labour Government were returned, the hon. Gentleman would strongly oppose the message that came from the Labour Front Bench recently to the effect that the Opposition would put a tax on sugar. If anything could destroy the chances of the survival of Tate and Lyle in Greenock, it would be that.

1.38 pm

Mr. Gordon Brown: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I will hear the hon. Member, but I ask him to be extremely brief because he is taking time out of the debate on his hon. Friend's motion.

Mr. Brown: I promise to be brief. Was it in order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the Prime Minister and the Minister for Sport to have intervened this morning to change arrangements for the Scotland-England football match without there having been a written or oral statement to the House about the matter? Were they not treating the House with contempt?

Will a statement now be made to the House exonerating Scottish football fans from any slur against their reputation caused by the transfer of this fixture? Will hundreds of Scottish fans, including many in my constituency, who stand to lose thousands of pounds because of the transfer of this fixture, be fully compensated by the Government?

Will the Minister with responsibility for sport in Scotland be in a position to say this afternoon when a statement will be made on the matter? Or will you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, ensure through the usual channels that the Prime Minister or Minister for Sport come to the House to make a statement on this serious issue which affects Scotland and Scottish football?

Mr. Craigen: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As Scotland's Minister with responsibility for Sport is with us today, may I ask him to say whether he was consulted over the change from Wembley to Hampden, or was he simply told by the Minister for Sport and the Prime Minister? We understand that the change has been made following concern over disorder in the London area. Are we to assume that the Prime Minister's approach to these matters is to pack up her problems in a tartan bag?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I think that the hon. Members for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) and for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mr. Craigen) know that this is not a matter for me.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It may be for the convenience of the House if I say that the Government asked the Football Association to move the match from the holiday weekend. That was done in 1983 on the advice of British Rail and the police. Congestion of fixtures prevented the fixing of an alternative Wembley date. The FA and the SFA agreed to transfer the game to Hampden. It will be played at Wembley next year but avoiding the bank holiday.

The Government have been discussing football violence, but we were not consulted about the change of venue. The change was not intended to reflect on Scottish supporters, whose recent behaviour has been exemplary.

[Mr. Allan Stewart]

Indeed, it is an acknowledgement of the good behaviour of Scottish football fans that the match has been transferred by the associations to Hampden.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Let us now return to the debate.

1.42 pm

Mr. Jim Craigen (Glasgow, Maryhill): I commend my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) for having taken the initiative to raise the subject of Scotland's economy and industry. I congratulate him on the way in which he introduced the debate. I cannot think of any hon. Member who endured such a trying baptism so soon after his election to this place. The crisis of the lower Clyde hit him immediately he became a Member. The concern, sagacity and approach which he adopted to the problems facing his constituency at that time understandably earned him considerable respect in the House.

My hon. Friend talked about decline in manufacturing and the prospects of growth in the newer industries. My hon. Friend does not need to wax eloquent about Silicon Glen. After all, he has Spango Valley in his constituency. With the home of the Scottish division of IBM in his area, he is able to see the interaction between the two trends in Scottish life.

The hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mrs. McCurley) referred to the Inverclyde initiative. I am sorry that the hon. Lady is temporarily absent. She suggested that the initiative was entirely one of private enterprise. It was public enterprise which initiated the prospect of the Inverclyde study, but it will be an embracing of the two sectors which, we hope, will make a success of the venture. My hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow specifically mentioned to me the part that Provost Harry Mulholland of Inverclyde played in the initial stages of the project.

It is essential to appreciate that balance between the sunrise industries, which we want to support in Scotland, and the staple manufacturing industries, which have done so much in the past to build up the Scottish economy. We still need these staple industries for the future. We cannot afford to let them sink with the sunset.

Electronics has understandably featured often in the debate, but I think that the Minister will agree that there are alarming signs that some of the considerable investment that was being directed to Scotland seems to be veering towards the south of England. Does the Minister agree that the Government's changes in regional policy may accentuate that trend? Will he tell us about the role of the SDA in further encouraging the electronics industry in Scotland? As the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton) pointed out, there is considerable defence orientation in employment in that industry.

Scotland is one of Britain's centres for the development of artificial intelligence or knowledge-based systems—I sometimes wish that a little more artificial intelligence were available at the Scottish Office—but what are the Secretary of State's officials doing to stimulate that sort of work, which has considerable potential for future developments?

A number of hon. Members have mentioned the decline in manufacturing industries. All those industries have declined faster in Scotland than in the United Kingdom as a whole. Construction has declined particularly fast, and last week's Budget did nothing for the industry. The message that I get from builders is that they are only relieved that the Chancellor of the Exchequer did not do more damage than he did in last year's Budget. They are still suffering from the shell-shock of the imposition of VAT on home improvements.

Figures for the final quarter of 1984 show that production in the construction industry is down. That is not only because of the fall in the volume of improvement work; it largely reflects changes in the pattern of Government expenditure.

Housing represents only about a quarter of the work of the construction industry. Private house building has held steady, but new housing in the private sector has dropped by 19·5 per cent. and public sector construction work other than housing has dropped by 9·8 per cent. in the past year.

We bandy about figures of the number of people in employment now compared with yesteryear, but we have to remember that more people are now in part-time employment. That is a significant trend, particularly among women. The Under-Secretary confirmed to me that the number of women in part-time work increased by 20,000 to 389,000 in the 12 months to September last year.

The hon. Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Henderson) referred to the Transport Bill. Having spent 90 hours in that Standing Committee, I have become fairly knowledgeable about what that Bill will inflict on the travelling public. It is mind-boggling. But section 20 payments have a particular concern for Strathclyde, which has the largest urban rail network outwith London. It is important to safeguard the rail network. As the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) remarked earlier, in the context of the electrification of the Ayr-Glasgow line, there is considerable potential.

I hope that British Rail will set about opening a rail halt at Prestwick airport. When I think of the Gatwick-Victoria link and the possibilities that that has created, I am reminded that years ago Gatwick seemed at the back of beyond.I have in mind the potentialities of the tourist industry. A great volume of tourists from north America tend to come to London, and a visit to Scotland is an additional on-cost. I want to see Prestwick airport given a clear bill of security for the future so that we can develop its full potential. I want to see a visit to London as an on-cost for those who make the transatlantic journey. We must try to develop our lowland airport strategy. I hope that the Minister will say a word about that. He must not forget that the billion-pound tourist industry employs a great many more people than all the Silicon Glens in Scotland.

I am glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth (Mr. Hogg) referred to the British Rail Engineering workshops at Springburn. Those of us at the bottom end of the line have constituents whose future is bound up with the decisions on those workshops. I hope that the Minister will tell us about the ability of the manager of Scot Rail to direct some of the work and investment in Scotland to those workshops in the north of Glasgow.

My hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) discussed the steel industry. I should like the Minister to dispel the uncertainties about Ravenscraig by saying that he is giving his full support to the re-investment

in the coking ovens. The British Steel Corporation is not saying what those figures are, although one hon. Member quoted some figures today. It would help greatly if the Minister promised to do his best to get British Rail headquarters to freeze any increases in freight charges in Scotland for the foreseeable future. It would also help if the Government changed their policy on high electricity charges.

On other energy matters, the Minister will know that my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar)—who cannot be here today because he is attending the annual conference of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities at Oban — along with a number of other colleagues, met Ian MacGregor on 20 March. I should like the Minister to put his not inconsiderable weight behind investment decisions affecting the Francis and Seafield collieries and assure us that there is a prospect towards which we can work.

My hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan) referred to textiles. I understand that the Minister attended yesterday's meeting between employers, trade unions and the Minister of State, Department of Trade and Industry and discussed extending the multi-fibre arrangement. I hope that the Government are not adopting a position of neutrality here. The Minister must appreciate, when we talk about rural aid funds, that many small communities in the Borders, Ayrshire, the Highlands, athough even big communities such as Glasgow depend on the textile industry. It is still a substantial employer in Scotland, despite having lost more than one third of its work force in the last 10 years.

I met the employers and the trade unions yesterday. They say that firms want to invest but that there is uncertainty. I hope the Minister will tell us what he is doing to dispel that uncertainty. There has been a downturn in offshore North sea oil work. Some of it seems to be going to Scandinavia. Will the Minister tell us what the Offshore Supplies Office is doing to try to reverse this trend and involve more of Scotland's manufacturing capacity in the potential of North sea oil development? Perhaps the Minister can also say a word or two about the Firth of Clyde. There may be a defence aspect to this, because of the problems connected with the magnetic field. However, it could open the way to a switch in the imbalance between the east and the west of Scotland.

On employment, having looked at my copy of the White Paper which was published yesterday, I reflected upon what was contained in the employment White Paper of 1944. The White Paper published yesterday does not equal in content and foresight the White Paper of 1944. All I can say is that the Prime Minister would find it more difficult to get the recently published White paper into her handbag. It contains a vacuous, empty and unpromising prospect for future jobs in Scotland. The Prime Minister's predecessor put Britain on a three-day week by the time he left office. This Prime Minister is putting Britain on part-time employment, quite apart from the millions who are out of work.

Reference has been made to the jobcentres. These were debated extensively last year. Uncertainty hangs over the jobcentre network. A great deal of local knowledge is being dissipated. Employers are becoming more reluctant to feed information into the jobcentres, their staff are becoming more and more demoralised and customers are becoming less satisfied with the service provided. Distance learning and assistance at a distance is all very well, but it is no substitute for local knowledge and availability.

I do not intend to deal with the youth training scheme or the community programme because I do not believe that they provide solutions to the employment difficulties faced by this country. The Government need to adopt a much more fundamental approach to youth employment and training. It needs to be much more visibly matched to the availability of employment and to the areas in which the Government intend to invest in Scotland.

My hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow referred to the book edited by Neil Hood and Stephen Young entitled "Industry, Policy and the Scottish Economy." When I read the various essays contained in that book I recognised that during the early 1960s the Scottish Office was a pioneering Department of State. It pioneered regional development. Look at it now. As the authors point out, the Scottish Office is largely reactive to leads from the greater Department of Trade and Industry. I want confidence to be generated in Scotland. Industry and commerce have to be involved in generating that confidence. However, political will is also called for, but that is absent. When I look at the Ministers in the Scottish Office who have custody of Scotland's future, I can see no flicker of imagination or any shred of will power that will lead to developing the prospects for our country.

There is a shortage of will power for developing the prospects of our country. I want no more of those tom-tom men who beat out on the drum the messages that emanate from No. 10 Downing street. The tom-tom chief himself, the Secretary of State for Scotland, sits in the Cabinet room agreeing with it all. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Govan said, those Ministers and their supporters—they are becoming fewer all the time —do not appreciate the demoralisation and despair that exist in many homes and parts of Scotland. In recent weeks, I have seen how rating and revaluation can concentrate their minds because, as one of their council members—I think she came from Perth and Kinross—said, "We face extinction." I do not worry about the extinction of the Tories in Scotland, but I do not want them to extinguish the future hopes of Scotland and those of our young people who have every right to expect a job and to be able to live in their own country rather than do what so many had to do before—emigrate.

I hope that when the Minister replies he will take up the points that have been mentioned by my hon. Friends, because the Government are singularly wanting in the way in which they have handled the affairs of Scotland over the past six years.

2.1 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Allan Stewart): I join hon. Members on both sides of the House in congratulating the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) on his good fortune in obtaining the debate and on his choice of subject. A point of order was raised earlier by the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan). I undertook to refer to my right hon. Friends the anxiety expressed about the publication today of the document entitled "Burdens on Business", copies of which are available in the Vote Office. I shall of course fulfil that undertaking. In the meantime, I should make it clear that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and

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Industry announced in the course of his contribution to the Budget debate on Monday that the document would be published today.

This has been something of a Scottish week. Hon. Members often complain that we have insufficient time to discuss Scottish affairs. They cannot make that allegation this week because we started on Monday with the five-hour debate in the Scottish Grand Committee, we had a four-and-a-half hour debate on Scottish matters during the debate on the Consolidated Fund, an order, and a full debate today. I congratulate the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow on his choice of subject but not on the terms of his motion.

Many hon. Members have attended the debate, and many have commented on the absence of Liberal, Social Democratic and SNP members. The House will understand that some hon. Members who have spoken during the debate have not been able to stay for the replies because of travel commitments, and they have asked me to apologise to the House for them.

Many points have been made in the debate. I shall endeavour to answer as many as possible. Hon. Members will accept that not all of the points mentioned are strictly speaking for the Scottish Office. I listened with great care, for example, to what my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton) said about Ferranti. We recognise its importance to the Scottish economy, but he will recognise that his remarks were directed primarily towards the Ministry of Defence.

A number of hon. Members raised constituency points. The hon. Members for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan), for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) and for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Malone) referred to Hall Russell. I especially welcomed the tribute to the Scottish Development Agency office in Aberdeen. I have visited that office and the impressive group of people there. I am sure that the House will join me in very much appreciating the tribute paid by the hon. Member for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth (Mr. Hogg) to Brigadier Cowan for his work at Cumbernauld and I am sure that we all wish Mr. David Anderson well. The hon. Gentleman questioned some of the figures, but I hope that on reflection he will agree that the figures that we give to the House are those supplied to the development corporation by companies in Cumbernauld.

As the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow introduced the debate, I want to be sure of answering his specific point about a replacement fishery protection boat. We are considering a replacement for FPV Norma, which was commissioned in 1959, and a contract has been placed for the preparatory design work, which is being undertaken by Ailsa. It is, however, too early to say when tenders might be invited and an order placed.

The hon. Member raised a number of general points in his opening speech, which provided a most interesting start to the debate. He rightly emphasised that many of the trends about which Members are concerned did not begin in 1979 or 1974 but went back deeper into Scotland's economic history. Hon. Members on both sides gave figures which showed clearly that Scotland as been and still is going through a process of fundamental change. Keeping up with technological developments, implementing research and meeting new consumer demands provide the competitive edge for an economy. Some people would like to preserve the Scottish economy like a medical specimen in a jar of formaldehyde, but we must look forward to the future.

Mr. Robert Hughes: It is no use attacking Scottish National party Members, because they are not here.

Mr. Stewart: I confirm that the charge was not directed at any hon. Member present in the Chamber.

The change has been fundamental. As the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow pointed out, the service industries now account for about 65 per cent. of employment in Scotland and 60 per cent. of the gross domestic product, whereas manufacturing industry accounts for about 25 per cent. of output and employment — a structure broadly comparable with that of the United Kingdom as a whole. The hon. Gentleman also pointed out that there had been structural changes within the manufacturing sector. The right hon. Member for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. MacKenzie) referred to the traditional industries such as engineering, which have declined in importance not just in Scotland but elsewhere. There are also the growing industries such as electronics, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Henderson) and others referred.

As the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow has pointed out, the same thing has been taking place in the service sector. For example, transport and communications have been declining relatively in employment terms while there has been growth in professional and scientific services, insurance, banking and finance and in tourism.

What is important in the long term is our economy's competitive edge, as my hon. Friend the Member for Fife, North-East said. When examining the trends and what creates jobs, we should compare our performance with that of the United States, for example. During a 10-year period, 17 million new jobs were created in America while real wages fell. In the United Kingdom, we lost 1·1 million jobs and real wages increased by 15 per cent. We cannot ignore that fundamental relationship. A competitive economy creates and maintains jobs.

Mr. Norman Hogg: I am unable to understand the correlation that the Minister finds between wage levels here and in the United States and the creation of jobs in the United States and the loss of jobs here. Surely the correct correlation is between jobs and investment. Does the Minister agree that there simply was not the necessary investment in high-tech industries in Britain?

Mr. Stewart: The hon. Gentleman is right to suggest a relationship between employment and investment, but we must recognise that people can price themselves out of jobs. The easiest way in which to destroy jobs is for an economy to price itself out of its world markets.

Mr. Craigen: The hon. Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Henderson) said that many of our manufacturing firms depend on overseas markets. Interest rates and exchange rates matter more to such firms than do wage rates or even inflation rates.

Mr. Stewart: My hon. Friend fairly observed that we depend on international trade more than other comparable economies. Exchange rates are important and the Government's strategy of controlling inflation is essential to reduce the costs that industries incur, including interest rates.

Several hon. Members referred to the relative performance of the Scottish economy. As my hon. Friend the Member for Fife, North-East said, we are in the fifth year of economic growth. In 1983, Scotland ranked third in gross domestic product per head of population, behind the south-east and East Anglia in the British regions. It is important to recognise that the output of our production and construction industries was 3 per cent. higher in the third quarter of 1984 than one year earlier and that manufacturing output was nearly 7 per cent. higher.

Recent surveys have been optimistic, most manufacturing firms reporting either no change in employment or recruitment. We must take a balanced view of the Scottish economy. It does nobody any good to suggest that the whole of Scotland is an industrial desert, as that is far from the truth. To be fair, several hon. Members have put forward a reasonably balanced view of the Scottish economy today.

The central point of the debate is employment and unemployment. We should all like a considerable increase in employment. Of course we know about the social misery created by unemployment, especially long-term unemployment. The number of jobs is rising, as my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) said, but unemployment remains extremely high. The difference between the Government and the Opposition is about how to achieve the many more jobs which are necessary. The right hon. Member for Rutherglen rightly pointed out that there was no magic wand that could be waved to create the necessary jobs. I must remind the House that under the Labour Government, unemployment in Scotland doubled. That was not their objective, but it happened. The Labour party now constantly urges us that higher public spending is the simple answer to the problem of unemployment. That is totally absurd. Where that has been tried in other economies recently, it has had to be abandoned. That is not the answer.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) pointed out, there is no lack of demand; indeed, demand has been rising. He said that what was needed was competitive products that can maintain and improve their position in world markets. The right hon. Member for Govan (Mr. Millan) rightly said that our overall economic policy was the primary determinant of what happens in Scotland. The control of inflation which is at the core of the Government's economic policy is an essential prerequisite for a sound competitive economy. The measures announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer will help because they will improve the operation of the labour market by sharpening incentives both to find work and to take on new employees.

Many right hon. and hon. Members referred to the problem of youth unemployment, and paid tribute to the youth training scheme. It has been successful in Scotland, with more than 83,000 youngsters entering the scheme since 1983. Evidence shows that about 65 per cent. go on to employment or further training. The hon. Member for Govan raised the question of the quality of the scheme. That is important and the Manpower Services Commission is constantly working to improve it.

Mr. Buchan: Will the Minister tell us how many pass out from the schemes into employment? It is no use telling us how many pass to employment or further training. How many become unemployed? How many go into employment? How many go on to further schemes? There may be 1 per cent. in two categories, and 98 per cent. in the third. He must answer the question.

Mr. Stewart: I shall be happy to provide the hon. Gentleman with detailed figures. Broadly speaking, about 65 per cent. go on to employment or further training. The proportion varies between the different schemes. The construction industry scheme, for example, is particularly successful.

My right hon. and hon. Friends have welcomed the fact that we are expanding the scheme from April 1986 to a two-year programme of work-related training for 16-year-old school leavers, and to one year for 17-year-olds. I echo the hope expressed by many hon. Members that the extension of the YTS will lead to recognised qualifications.

I emphasise the fact that the Government have said that the Manpower Services Commission will consult on the detailed proposals, and that if they are satisfactory, they will provide £125 million in 1986-87, and £300 million in 1987-88 over and above the existing £800 million for the YTS, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. McQuarrie) referred.

My hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, West referred to education. We are adapting formal education in Scotland so that our students are better prepared for employment in a changing society through curriculae changes, TVEI, the action plan and the increased provision for central institutions. We have provided £14 million extra to increase the output of engineers and technologists. Of course I recognise the importance of his remarks about Scottish universities receiving a full share of the £40 million that was announced recently.

Mr. Craigen: Has a figure been set? What discussions has the Minister had with the universities?

Mr. Stewart: The details have not yet been announced, but I assure the hon. Gentleman that we are well aware of the discussions that are continuing.

Several of my hon. Friends mentioned the problems of rural areas. I confirm that we shall be considering carefully the Select Committee report on the Highlands and Islands Development Board and will respond to it once we have completed our consideration. I was glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Fife, North-East referred to SDA initiatives, including the programme for rural initiatives and developments—known as PRIDE—and the rural workshop scheme. They will help to stimulate private sector investment in development, especially suited to the needs of rural areas.

Ravenscraig was mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, West and by the hon. Members for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) and for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mr. Craigen). I join hon. Members in paying tribute to the achievements of the work force and management at Ravenscraig in continuing production during a difficult period. They deserve the congratulations of everyone. The present position is that no corporate plan has been received from the British Steel Corporation.

Several Opposition Members mentioned infrastructure and the construction industry. I emphasise that more public expenditure simply means higher borrowing, higher prices and a less competitive economy. But, of course, capital expenditure is valuable where there are good returns for that expenditure. I remind hon. Members that

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between 1979-80 and 1984-85, gross capital spending on the programmes for which the Secretary of State for Scotland is responsible increased by 17 per cent. in real terms.

Mr. Millan: That includes Torness.

Mr. Stewart: As the right hon. Gentleman says, that includes the nationalised industries and capital spending on Torness. But if we exclude the nationalised industries, capital spending on the programmes under my right hon. Friend's control has been broadly unchanged in real terms, and the construction industry generally is recovering from its low point in 1981.

The hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow referred especially to North sea oil-related industries. They were also mentioned by the hon. Member for Maryhill and by my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, South. I emphasise that the Government's policies have given a substantial boost to the development of North sea oil, leading to orders for goods and services for Scottish-based companies. Following the 1983 Budget, there was a record total of 182 wells drilled in 1984. Development approvals also present an encouraging picture. I should tell the hon. Member for Maryhill that there were 10 in 1983, 15 in 1984, and there are an expected 20 in 1985.

The fabrication yards in Scotland are showing considerable success in winning orders and there are other encouraging new developments, such as the upsurge of rig repair activity in the Cromarty firth.

The oil industry is optimistic about the future prospects of North sea oil development. The recent United Kingdom Offshore Operators Association report forecast expenditure of £60 billion by the year 2000 on the development of about 80 new fields. The hon. Member for Maryhill asked how much of that will be taken by British and Scottish firms. I emphasise that our licensing policies are designed to contribute to the further development of the North sea in ways which bring the maximum benefit to British industry.

In the ninth round of licensing that is currently under way, we aim to ensure that the maximum benefit from new technology comes to British firms. That will be particularly helpful to Scotland and should help consolidate and enhance the already substantial contribution which North sea oil is making directly and indirectly to employment. That was referred to by the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow.

The right hon. Member for Rutherglen and others have referred to the importance of the electronics industry. The right hon. Gentleman was right to say that not everyone can be employed in electronics. Nevertheless, Scotland is an important centre for the expansion of electronics. My hon. Friend the Member for Fife, North-East referred in particular to inward investment. He will be interested to know that in the first 10 months of 1984-85 "Locate in Scotland" secured over £600 million-worth of inward investment in electronics and other industries, creating the promise of more than 7,000 new jobs and safeguarding 900.

It must be a matter of great potential strength to the Scottish economy that we are achieving not just quantity in terms of investment but quality as well. We are developing a chain of manufacturing capability. We now have 80 per cent. of the United Kingdom's integrated circuits and 50 per cent. of the United Kingdom's total of personal computers. Yes, the electronics industry is important. It is central to the Scottish economy. But other industries have a key and important role as well.

The hon. Member for Maryhill and several others asked about the textile industry. That is clearly important to the Scottish economy. It is a tribute to that industry that it has invested in the higher end of the market. I was at the meeting yesterday with my right hon. Friend the Minister for Trade and both sides of that industry when the importance of the industry was underlined by the delegation. My right hon. Friend emphasised that the Government were open-minded on the multi-fibre arrangement, that the consultation was genuine and that there would need to be a process of consultation with our partners in the EC.

The hon. Member for Maryhill asked me about a rail link for Prestwick. That suggestion has been made in the past, and I can only tell him that the report of the working party on lowlands airport policy is still being considered by Ministers.

Several hon. Members referred generally to the effect of regional policy. The regional policy changes which were announced were sensible. They will lead to a much more cost-effective regional policy.

Hon. Members should heed the extension of regional incentives to a range of service industries and the provisions for small firms. My hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, West asked about the cost-per-job limits affecting companies such as NEC. The ceiling on regional development grants will not be reached until companies——

It being half-past Two o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Orders of the Day

Recreational Gardening Bill *[Lords]*

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West) *rose——*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Does the hon. Member have the authority of the hon. Member in charge of the Bill to name a day?

Mr. Clarke: Yes, Sir—Friday 19 April.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 19 April.

Defence School of Music

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Durant.]*

2.31 pm

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton (Fife, Central): The proposed siting of the new defence school of music at Deal in Kent has aroused suspicion and criticism, primarily on the ground that it might involve financial jiggery-pokery. The basic principle underlying the Government's approach to public expenditure is the need to cut out waste and to get value for money. Nobody has been more ruthless in that course than Treasury Ministers, not least the Chief Secretary, the right hon. and learned member for Dover (Mr. Rees), who is also the Member for Deal.

I shall give my interpretation of the facts, and the Minister can correct me if I am wrong. In 1981, a study group was set up in the Ministry of Defence to cut out wasteful military spending. That was at the suggestion of a Mr. Clive Ponting, whose name has cropped up from time to time inside the House and elsewhere.

Ponting turned his eyes to the cost of military bands and their training facilities. He discovered three separate training schools. One was at Kneller Hall near Twickenham. I am glad that the hon. member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) is in the Chamber and I hope that he catches your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That was an Army site and was disadvantageous in some respects, not least because of the noise of aeroplanes at Heathrow.

A second site was at the RAF school at Uxbridge, which had a leaking roof; its music rooms were not even soundproofed. The third was at the Marine school at Deal in an almost derelict 19th-century barracks.

After examining the three schools, against violent opposition from all three services, Ponting recommended that the three schools were uneconomic and should be amalgamated. Long delays occurred because of the Falklands war and the 1983 election, but eventually the Ministry of Defence agreed to a single military music training school.

Just before the 1983 election, it was agreed in principle that the school should be situated in an empty barracks at Eastney outside Portsmouth. After the 1983 election, Ponting was asked to write another report on the choice of a site for the school. Three possible sites were listed—Kneller Hall, Eastney and Woolwich, where there were some vacant buildings.

At that point Ministers in the Department agreed that Deal was out of the question on the grounds that it had no married quarters and that they would have to be built, at great cost. That should have impressed Ministers, especially Treasury Ministers who are always looking for ways of cutting public expenditure.

In the event, Woolwich was found to be unsuitable for a variety of reasons. Kneller Hall was ruled out on the grounds that there was no room for extra buildings, and Ponting's report came down on the side of Eastney as the perfect solution. He produced figures to show that it would be £4·5 million cheaper than anywhere else. In addition, he showed that there would be a £2,000 a year saving on running costs compared with the existing system. Thus, Ponting's plan would save significant sums of taxpayers' money.

By now the Chief Secretary to the Treasury should have been jumping with joy at the prospect of saving so much

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public money. However, there were hurdles still to be jumped. The hon. Member for Twickenham—I have no complaint about the way in which he conducted himself —properly lobbied for the school to be at Kneller Hall, in his constituency. He saw Ministers, but he was a lightweight compared with the heavy batteries that were to pursue Ministers from elsewhere.

The Minister of State for Defence Procurement finally approved the Ponting recommendation to site the school at Eastney and all that was needed apparently was the rubber stamp of the Secretary of State for Defence. But the trouble was only just beginning. The Secretary of State sat on the issue for some weeks and then, after the previous inquiries over about two years, decided that he would like to have a defence school of music situated north of Birmingham. I applaud that. There is a good case for having it north of Birmingham, possibly somewhere in the north-east or in Scotland. However, it would cost more to do that.

So Ponting went forth once more and found an empty barracks outside Edinburgh. At that critical point, Ponting was transferred to some other work and at about the same time the Chief Secretary to the Treasury exerted his considerable influence on the defence Ministers to get the new school sited—guess where?—in Deal.

In due course, the Ministry of Defence decided that Edinburgh would be too expensive and that Deal would cost £4 million more than the proposed site recommended by Ponting at Eastney; Eastney would actually show a £2 million profit because the other sites could be sold once that had been accepted.

Treasury Ministers should have been wildly excited by this prospect of making a profit out of the situation. But the Government, and particularly the Ministry of Defence, are nothing if not devious. It was now abundantly clear that the Secretary of State for Defence was being nobbled by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury. Despite all his previous advice and instructions about sites north of Birmingham, he decided to put the school in Deal.

The formal announcement was sneaked out in the defence White Paper. It was justified on the grounds of efficiency and securing value for money. It was sneaked out in July 1984, only a few days before the House went into recess, under the heading "Central Organisation for Defence". One particular sentence talked about integration, the co-location of catering training at Aldershot and the integration of language training at Beaconsfield. It stated that music training was to be

"concentrated at a single location. A period of consultation will now begin on plans to establish the new defence school of music at Deal."

There was nothing else. No comparative costings were provided. There was a bald statement in one sentence. There was no opportunity for questions to be tabled before the summer recess and there was no possibility of a debate. No mention was made of why the search for a new site had not ended with the cheaper choice of Eastney, which would have saved £4 million. All the parliamentary questions tabled by the hon. Member for Twickenham and others were evaded, avoided or side-stepped, despite the repeated attempts to be supplied with costings.

According to the story that appeared in *The Observer* on 23 December 1984, at the invitation of the hon. Member for Twickenaham, the Comptroller and Auditor General began asking awkward questions. The Ministry of Defence began a frantic rewriting of the relevant papers. To put it bluntly, it engaged in a frantic cooking of the books or fiddling with the figures to prove that somehow Deal had become more economic than Eastney.

No mention was made of the fact that the cost of modernising the decaying Deal barracks and erecting other buildings would result in a net loss to the taxpayer of £2·5 million. *The Observer* claimed also that Sir Clive Whitmore, the permanent secretary at the Ministry of Defence, took the extraordinary step of asking for a power of directive from the Ministry of Defence, which would have enabled the senior civil servant in the Ministry to say, if he were questioned by the Public Accounts Committee, that the decision to locate the school at Deal was the Minister's choice against the advice of his senior civil servants. Treasury regulations of that kind, which are rarely invoked, enable accounting officers to distance themselves from ministerial decisions if such decisions involve payments which the accounting officer considers would

"infringe the requirements of propriety or regularity."

The clear implication is that the Minister's own permanent secretary considers the Deal siting to be a misuse of public funds.

A report in *The Guardian* this month states that the Secretary of State for Defence has now ordered his officials to come up with new figures to justify siting the school in Deal and to avoid an embarrassing confrontation with Sir Clive Whitmore and the PAC. Certainly the Ministry of Defence is changing its tune. In July it said that, while other sites appeared cheaper, Deal was chosen for

"other than financial reasons".

It is now reported as saying that it has made a "further investment appraisal" which reportedly shows the Deal site to be "slightly cheaper". However, it refuses to release its costings. It has consistently refused to give the figures on which its assessment is based.

I shall not go into the arguments of the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, who presented his lobby on the ground of unemployment. If that is the criterion, there is an outstanding case for placing the school at Bawtry near Doncaster, where unemployment rates are very much higher, both short term and long term, than at any of the other proposed sites.

The only consideration that has motivated the Secretary of State for Defence in siting the school at Deal is a rather squalid and indefensible one. The siting of the school in Deal would help the Chief Secretary to the Treasury in his fight to retain his parliamentary seat. The assertion is that the retention of that parliamentary seat for that Cabinet Minister is worth £4 million of taxpayers' money.

The Ministry of Defence has a shameful record of deception, secretiveness and irregularities over the past few years, which has been unmatched by any other Department in recent history. Let me go through the names of the civil servants who have revolted.

Sarah Tisdall was got rid of after leaking documents because she was affronted by the Secretary of State's manipulation of the arrival of cruise missiles. Clive Ponting leaked documents because of the Secretary of State's cover-up over the Belgrano. Cathy Massiter, the MI5 officer, resigned and disclosed that the Secretary of State had set up an inquiry into the activities of CND. Sir Clive Whitmore threatened to report the Secretary of State

to the Public Accounts Committee for giving the band school to the constituency of the Chief Secretary to the Treasury. Finally, the Civil Service Commissioners threatened to resign over the Secretary of State's appointment of Mr. Peter Levene to the Procurement Executive at £95,000 a year.

I have given the Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement notice of some questions and I hope that he will answer them. Why was the decision taken to site the school at Deal rather than Eastney, despite all the evidence against such a move? Why does the Minister still refuse to publish all the estimated costs of the establishment of the school at all the possible sites considered? Can he explain what were the other considerations that he mentioned in answer to a question from the hon. Member for Twickenham? Does the Minister deny that his Department was improperly lobbied by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury simply to further his own political interests, with no account being taken of the cost to the taxpayer?

How can the Minister reconcile his pledge in the July White Paper to get better value for money with his decision to site the school at Deal rather than at Eastney? Can he confirm that Sir Clive Whitmore asked to be dissociated from the decision made by the Secretary of State? Will the Minister release to the PAC all the figures that have so far been denied to the House? As a former member of the PAC, I know that, if the Comptroller and Auditor General and the Public Accounts Committee ask for those figures, the Ministry is bound to give them, unless it pleads grounds of security. I doubt whether figures concerning a school of music could be refused on security grounds.

This is rather a squalid affair. It is proper that it should be aired in the House, and I am sorry that this is not a longer debate.

2.48 pm

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): The Government are well aware of how hotly I have objected throughout to the proposal to remove in 1988 the Royal Military school of music from Kneller Hall in Twickenham and to set up a joint school at Deal or anywhere else.

I have raised the subject in an Adjournment debate, in the Army debate, by putting questions and in four meetings with various Ministers. I remain unconvinced that the proposal will save enough money to justify the upheaval.

If, as we are now told, Deal has become, after all, the cheapest site, I see no compelling reason why the Government should not publish the figures, and I hope that they will do so today or very soon.

2.50 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. John Lee): I should like first of all, to congratulate the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. Hamilton) on having secured the opportunity to raise this subject today and for his courtesy in giving me an indication of some of the issues he would be raising.

Enormous interest is shown by hon. Members and the public in military bands and the contribution they make to the tone of any ceremonial occasion, whether a solemn affair or a celebration. I welcome this opportunity to pay my own tribute to the bands of the Royal Marines, the Army and the Royal Air Force. They have a long tradition of musical excellence and a deservedly high international reputation.

The great affection which we all, both within the services and outside, have for our military bandsmen was most recently demonstrated after the tragic accident in Germany in which the lives of 19 RAF bandsmen were lost. I am very pleased to be able to tell the House that the Royal Air Force band in Germany will be back to full strength on 15 April and will resume its complete programme of engagements from 16 April. In the meantime, a special additional engagement took place earlier this month when the band combined with a band from the Royal Artillery to form part of the joint Army-RAF guard of honour for the President of the Federal Republic of Germany. It is a great tribute to the band that so many musicians throughout the service volunteered to take up the places left vacant by this terrible accident.

The effectiveness of our service men, whatever their trade, depends crucially on the training they receive. I believe that the training we provide in our military establishments is amongst the best in the world. We can be justifiably proud of our standards. The service schools of music are no exception. The Royal Marines school of music, Deal, the Royal Military school of music, Kneller Hall and the RAF school of music, Uxbridge, are internationally renowned for the excellence of their training. Our bandsman courses our among the most popular with foreign students.

But training is not exempt from the drive to improve efficiency. My noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces has paid particular attention to training, to ensure that our operational requirements are being met in the most cost-effective way. Any resource savings that can be made in the support are enable us to devote more effort to our front-line capabilities.

Musician training is one of several areas which have been reviewed in recent years. Quite naturally, concern has been expressed, both in the House and elsewhere, that we should not allow standards to fall in order to save money. I can assure all those who entertain such doubts that one of the basic assumptions of our studies is that standards should be maintained and preferably enhanced.

I should like to concentrate now on our review of musician training. The study started in 1982 and was conducted in several stages. Having first established in general terms that the creation of a joint music school would have some advantages, we sought the assistance of a distinguished civilian musician to advise on the feasibility of integrating service music training. We were anxious to ensure that the very different types of music played by the services, with their emphasis on different instruments, could be maintained within a common training system. The consultant's advice was that this could be done and that a defence school of music would be of advantage to the services.

Encouraged by these findings, we pressed on with detailed planning. The scheme which emerged was a joint school in which most of the training would be integrated but which also provided single-service courses so that the unique requirements of each service could continue to be met. In that way, we could be confident that the distinctive ceremonial traditions of the individual services could be preserved.

Having taken a decision in principle to establish a defence school of music, we turned out attention to its

[Mr. John Lee]

location. Several sites were considered: Kneller Hall, Deal, Eastney, Woolwich, Redford infantry barracks, Redford cavalry barracks, Prince of Wales depot, Crickhowell, and RAF Bawtry. The RAF school of music, as a small lodger unit at RAF Uxbridge, was not suitable for expansion. Some of the others were quickly dismissed.

I should just like to mention the reasons why Kneller Hall was not considered further, since this has caused some public concern. I know this is of particular concern to my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel). No one could have done more for the cause of Kneller Hall. He has lobbied Ministers hard and continuously and he raised the issue in an Adjournment debate in 1983 and again today. His constituents should be very appreciative of his efforts.

But Kneller Hall is too small to accommodate the defence school of music, and an extensive newbuild and major refurbishment would have been required. Even if planning permission had been granted, which we were advised was unlikely, the newbuild would have meant that 80 per cent. of the site would have been covered with buildings, thereby removing the sports facilities. In addition, there would have been difficulties in providing the married accommodation required.

We were left with three serious contenders: Deal, Eastney and Redford infantry barracks. A detailed study of these was set in hand.

Hon. Members will appreciate that these are never straightforward decisions. There are many factors to be taken into account, apart from the obvious question of costs. We considered, amongst other things, how many staff would have to be made redundant, the unemployment situation at each location, what revenue might be generated from the sale of surplus land, as well as how effectively and how soon any site could meet the requirements of the defence school of music. None of the sites offered the perfect solution; but, taking account of all the factors we had to consider, we decided on balance that Deal was the best choice.

There have been suggestions that my right hon. and learned Friend the Chief Secretary, the Member for Dover (Mr. Rees), whose constituency includes Deal, has exerted improper influence over the decision stemming from his position as a member of the Cabinet. I very much resent the comments made about the integrity of my right hon. and learned Friend the Chief Secretary and of my hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence.

My right hon. and learned Friend approached us in early 1984, as a constituency Member, when he learnt that one of the consequences of our study might be to close the Royal Marines school of music at Deal. Speaking on behalf of his constituents, he emphasised the value he attached to a continuing defence presence in Deal and expressed the hope that we would find further use for the military establishment there. In much the same way, my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham approached us on several occasions to argue the case for keeping open Kneller Hall. These and other representations were borne in mind when we made our final decision.

Though Redford is sited advantageously near Edinburgh—a musical centre of international renown—it would have taken the longest to establish the defence school of music there. Eastney could have been ready the earliest. On the other hand, Deal is the present home of the Royal Marines school of music and has had an extremely long association with the armed forces in general and the Royal Marines in particular, who are freemen of the borough. Housing the school there will keep redundancies to a minimum and, indeed, will bring extra jobs to an area which has the highest unemployment rate of the three options. We therefore announced in July 1984 that the defence school of music would be located at Deal.

I appreciate the disappointment that was felt by those who had hoped to have the defence school of music in their local area. I sympathise, in particular, with the music-lovers in the areas around Kneller Hall and Uxbridge who will lose the Army and RAF schools of music. However, we believe that it is in the long-term interests of the musical services and the military bands that their talents, expertise and experience should be pooled and shared to the advantage of all. We believe that the creation of a defence school of music will become an important landmark in their distinguished history.

I should like to say a word about costs, since it is this aspect of our work which has attracted most parliamentary and media attention, and indeed to which the hon. Member for Fife, Central referred in his speech.

First, there has been some speculation about the accounting officer's alleged disagreement with the choice of Deal. An accounting officer is entitled to draw attention to the implications for his own accountability to Parliament if decisions are taken by Ministers contrary to his advice on financial issues. In certain situations he can seek a ministerial instruction. In the case of the defence school of music it did appear at one stage that the choice of Deal was not supported by the assessment of relative costs and the position of the accounting officer therefore came into question. It was decided to undertake a fuller investment appraisal, the result of which did not support the view that the accounting officer's position was at risk.

Relative costs are necessarily a central consideration in any assessment of alternative options. These include capital and running costs and receipts for land disposals, and account is taken of their timing. In this case our assessment of costs showed that there was little to choose between the options finally considered. Costs should not therefore be regarded as a determining factor in the choice of Deal. There were, however, significant cost considerations involved in the decision to rationalise the schools of music in the first place.

The establishment of the defence school of music is expected to achieve savings of about £1 million a year in operating costs, although this figure must be treated with some caution until the final shape and size of the school is agreed. We will also make capital savings on planned works which will no longer be needed. For example, a £2 million modernisation programme at Kneller Hall will be cancelled, and we expect to earn revenue through the disposal of surplus assets. If no alternative defence use is found for Kneller Hall and Eastney, they will be passed to the Property Services Agency for disposal in the normal way. Indications are that proceeds from Eastney would be significantly greater than originally anticipated. I cannot, I regret, give the House the detailed figures we have used in arriving at our decision, since to do so would prejudice the competitive tendering for the building work to be carried out at Deal and also the sale of surplus land. But I can assure the House that we are determined to see this project secure economies for the defence budget, and I

know that, with this in mind, my noble Friend is keeping a firm grip on the planning and implementation phase, to which we have now proceeded.

During the implementation phase of this exercise we are engaged in refining both the manpower numbers and the facilities required for a defence school of music. We shall also be considering what might be termed "optional extras." This work will inevitably have an effect on the costs, but it is far too early to say what it will be.

Since our decision was made last July we have set up an implementation group, comprising service musicians, manning staffs, quartering and financial experts and representatives of the Property Services Agency. They are tasked with planning the defence school of music in detail and with monitoring the project up to the stage when the school opens in about 1988. This is clearly an important phase in which all the fine detail will be worked out and construction actually begins. A number of new proposals are being considered which might modify the original plan. We have, for instance, to decide whether to provide additional facilities, such as an open-air bandstand, in the initial build or whether these would be better left until the school is open and operating.

We have made good progress towards the establishment of a defence school of music, but there is stil a long way to go. Anyone who has visited Deal recently will appreciate the work that has to be done. I am pleased that we shall be maintaining a military presence in Deal. Having housed, in the course of its long history, various army units, a naval hospital and, since 1861, the Royal Marines, it is particularly fitting that Deal should now be used as a joint service establishment.

I believe that this is an exciting project which will be of enormous benefit to the military bands of the future. I am confident that the defence school of music will come to rank among the most respected academies of music both in this country and overseas. I hope it will receive the support that it deserves from the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at Three o'clock.

House of Commons

Monday 1 April 1985

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

ENERGY

Coal Industry

1. **Mr. Dykes** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the extent of the resumption in normal working in National Coal Board mines and other installations.

The Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Peter Walker): I understand from the NCB that the return to normal working within the industry is well under way. Production and deliveries of coal have substantially increased.

Mr. Dykes: I thank my right hon. Friend for that answer. Is he entirely satisfied that the way in which the National Association of Colliery Overmen, Deputies and Shotfirers misunderstood the short-term procedural adjustment last week has now been clarified by the NCB and that there is no ground for any industrial action?

Mr. Walker: If, following tomorrow's delegate conference, the NUM decides to resume its involvement in the normal consultative procedures between the NCB and the unions, the NCB would suggest that a meeting of the coal industry national consultative council should take place next week to discuss, among other matters, steps leading to the introduction of the modified colliery review procedure as soon as possible. Certainly the objective of the Government and of the NCB is that that modified procedure should come into effect as quickly as possible.

Mr. Foot: Has the right hon. Gentleman had his attention drawn to the headline in *The Guardian* today, which says:

"Local management 'instructed to give union a hard time'. NCB 'launches closures drive against Nacods'"?

Even if those reports are one tenth true, are they not appalling? Cannot the right hon. Gentleman do something about the chairman of the board? He is not fit to be in charge of industrial relations in the coal industry in Britain. We know that in his notorious interview he boasted that he had no conversations with the Secretary of State. Cannot the right hon. Gentleman stop this madness from going on?

Mr. Walker: I had a meeting this morning on other matters with the chairman of the NCB. He has no knowledge of the items mentioned in *The Guardian* or the sources from which they came. It may be that there are those who are involved in stirring up mischief around this subject. The chairman of the NCB is anxious that the modified procedure that he agreed with NACODS should come into operation as swiftly as possible.

Mr. Hardy: Will the Secretary of State reconsider the whole matter? I spoke to the general secretary of NACODS a little while ago, and the situation is grave. Will the Secretary of State not merely rely on the comments offered by the NCB, but have a further meeting with NACODS? He will recognise that I am not particularly interested in seeing strife in the coalfield. We have seen enough of that. A grave situation is developing, and it requires urgent attention.

Mr. Walker: As the hon. Gentleman knows, I have always been willing to see any trade union connected with my Department at any time and have always done so. That applies to NACODS, the NUM or any other union. With regard to the present dispute, the pronouncements coming out of NACODS and the pit closure in south Wales, I can only say that two weeks ago the south Wales area director met all the unions to discuss the prospects for that pit. The unions called for a technical inspection, which was made two days later. In the light of that inspection the board expressed the view that there were no prospects for the pit. The NUM's response was that the rundown should be dealt with quickly and that voluntary redundancies should be initiated immediately as that would benefit the miners concerned. A majority of NUM members at the pit voted in support of that. If the Coal Board had rejected that request and taken no notice of it, we should have been strongly criticised by the NUM.

Mr. Nicholls: Has my right hon. Friend noted reports in the *Daily Mail* at the end of last week which suggested that those miners who had applied for transfers to areas where they would not be victimised were having their applications processed slowly? Can he assure us that that matter will be looked at and that those who have applied to move to other areas to ensure that they will not be victimised will be dealt with speedily?

Mr. Walker: I assure my hon. Friend that the NCB is looking into all individual cases. It has set up a Freefone system and is looking into every possible case. If any form of intimidation is taking place, the important thing is to stop the intimidation. The NCB is taking a great deal of action—it has set up a special unit—and I hope that it will succeed.

Mr. Ron Davies: Will the Secretary of State reconsider his previous answers? He referred to Bedwas colliery in my constituency and to the fact that an underground inspection took place a fortnight ago last Wednesday. Is he aware that while that inspection was taking place the pit manager was interviewing members of the NUM on the surface and that offers of transfer or redundancy were made before any firm decision had been taken or discussions had taken place on a review procedure? Is he further aware that the NCB's actions in south Wales are regarded as being deliberately precipitate and provocative? Will he tell us whether either the modified review procedure or the existing review procedure with NACODS will be used before there are further pit closures?

Mr. Walker: The right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) referred earlier to *The Guardian*, and

I see from that paper today that the president of the NUM in south Wales has made it clear that the NUM was in favour of the closure taking place there. He said that he would not support any NACODS strike that stopped that taking place. In the case of Bedwas, a considerable majority of the miners recognise that prospects for that pit are poor. By agreement between the NUM and the board, transfers to other pits and voluntary redundancies are already being arranged. That seems much more acceptable than simply laying men off because there is no work for them to do. By its nature, this is an interim arrangement. If, as a result of its continuing assessment, the board judges that the pit must remain closed, the procedures and agreements that relate to closure will, of course, be fully operative.

Mr. Wallace: Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that there is still great concern in the Scottish coalfields, where there has not been what could be called a normal resumption of work because of what appears to be the intransigence of the Coal Board management and, in particular, its unwillingness to discuss individual cases of dismissed men, many of whom seem to have been dismissed for trivial reasons? Will the right hon. Gentleman use his good offices to urge common sense on the management of the NCB in Scotland and, particularly, to urge the management to use the conciliation procedures to examine individual cases of sacked miners?

Mr. Walker: When normal working resumes, as I hope that it will later this week, all the procedures available within the Coal Board will be available to any person involved in dismissal.

Mr. Gerald Howarth: Knowing the concern throughout the Conservative party about employment, does my right hon. Friend agree that reduced energy costs would have a direct benefit on employment costs, and does he also agree that a campaign of sabotage or non-co-operation underground would do great damage to the coal industry and to the nation generally?

Mr. Walker: I certainly agree that it is in the interests of every miner and everybody connected with the mining industry to see that it succeeds.

Mr. Orme: Does what the Secretary of State has said today about the NACODS agreement mean that there will be no more closures before the modified review procedure is in place? We want a categorical answer to that question. The answer is not clear from what has been said, certainly by the NCB. For example, will the 10 pits in south Wales for which closure is forecast go through the modified review procedure? The Secretary of State's views are before the House. He said that the agreement was sacrosanct. Is it still sacrosanct?

Mr. Walker: Yes, certainly. The right hon. Gentleman knows full well that when the NCB put its proposals to the TUC it made it clear that, in the event of a failure to agree on those procedures by, I think, 1 June, the normal procedures, as exist at the moment, would have to go on. Obviously we will not agree to the NUM having a right to veto all future pit closures if it rejects the details of any NACODS procedures. I think the right hon. Gentleman will agree that that is a valid and fair point. The proposal put to the TUC is still the basis of the NCB's view. I said earlier that we wish to get down to discussing the details of that agreement next week.

I have been asked about pit closures between then and now. The only two closures involved are at pits where there is no possibility of men working because the coal faces have been destroyed as a result of the strike. If the right hon. Gentleman disagrees with the south Wales NUM and is against those men being given voluntary redundancies, he should say so.

National Energy Policy

2. **Mr. Willie W. Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will now initiate discussions on the formulation of a national energy policy.

Mr. Peter Walker: I shall continue to discuss all aspects of national energy policy as appropriate.

Mr. Hamilton: As there is now the possibility of an expedited pit closure programme, will the right hon. Gentleman assure us that the £10 million currently assigned for the economic and social consequences of such a programme will be almost immediately vastly increased? That money could be spent in Fife alone, let alone in coalfields throughout the United Kingdom.

Mr. Walker: I repeat that I am anxious for NCB (Enterprise) Limited to have considerable success. I realise that if it is successful it will need considerably more finance that has been made available so far. I have always made it clear that it is absurd to allocate to that organisation money that it has not yet spent. However, I am pleased to say that 10 allocations of funds have, I think, already been approved. There are many more applicants, and I certainly wish to see that body adequately financed.

Mr. Skeet: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the last attempt to have a national energy policy was in 1978? Does he agree that flexibility is the most important thing, and that it would therefore be unwise to lay down clear objectives now?

Mr. Walker: I think that there is something more positive than that. This country is fortunate enough to have considerable offshore oil and gas industries. We also have a considerable ability in mining machinery, coal mining and nuclear power.

All of those factors have a substantial international application. I am anxious to ensure that in all those areas the options are kept open and active, and that they are applied internationally to the maximum.

Mr. Wrigglesworth: Cannot those options be kept open and the uncertainty faced while still publishing some objectives and priorities? Do not most well organised big businesses have corporate plans which run for, say, a five-year period and which can be revised every year or so, taking into account the differing circumstances?

Mr. Walker: I can only unfairly and unreasonably remind the hon. Gentleman that the Labour party, which he used to support, had such a corporate plan and that every one of its projections proved to be wrong.

Mr. Orme: Before we go for a new policy, we need to clarify the present situation. The Secretary of State did not answer my question. Mr. McNestry went to the High Court——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I should be obliged if the right hon. Gentleman would stick to the subject of question No. 2 and not return to question No. 1.

Mr. Orme: But, Mr. Speaker, I——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that the right hon. Gentleman will agree that the same rule must apply to both Front Benchers and Back Benchers. Will he please relate his question to question No. 2?

Mr. Orme: The point is that in order to obtain the sort of new energy policy that the question mentions, we must clarify the present position. The Secretary of State did not answer the question about the modified review procedure or about what Mr. McNestry told me concerning the present procedure not being carried out. When will the Government carry it out?

Mr. Walker: I repeat that the NCB wishes to get down to negotiating and talking about the modified procedure, if possible, next week. Earlier, there was a lot of shouting and perhaps the right hon. Gentleman did not hear me. However, I repeat that, with regard to the Bedwas pit, an interim arrangement has been made at the request of the NUM. If, as a result of its continuing assessment, the board judges that the pit must remain closed, the procedures and agreements relating to closures will be fully operative.

Energy Audit Schemes

3. **Mr. Deakins** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what action is being taken by his Department to promote energy audit schemes.

8. **Mr. Barron** asked the Secretary of State for Energy how much grant-aid was provided by his Department to the home energy advice and treatment scheme.

17. **Mr. Haynes** asked the Secretary of State for Energy how many customers took up survey offers under the home energy advice and treatment pilot scheme in the east midlands.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. David Hunt): There are 50 per cent. grants available for energy efficiency surveys of non-domestic premises. We have also supported the initial commercial development of the home energy audit, carried out by professionals—surveyors and valuers—a do-it-yourself audit and a semi-personalised audit relating to house type and fuel in conjunction with a commercial promotion. My Department provided a 49 per cent. grant for the home energy audit scheme to enable the company to prepare for and conduct a commercial pilot of the scheme in the east midlands.

There have been 500 inquiries about the scheme, which have resulted in 56 audits and labels to date. The company is evaluating the market research on the pilot and I now await a report.

Mr. Deakins: Are the operation and value for money of the home energy advice and treatment scheme being reviewed? Is the Secretary of State willing to learn from the successful experience of many local authorities, but especially from Newcastle upon Tyne, on this matter?

Mr. Hunt: Yes, Sir. Home energy audit is a relatively new, but important, area for this country. The Government believe that these systems should be developed on a commercial basis, and have been prepared to provide grants towards testing the commercial viability of what are novel developments. The pilot scheme was important and we have much to learn from it.

Mr. Barron: Will the Minister be a little more definite about contact with the public sector? Has his Department been in touch with the Greater London council, which is advising local authorities on this matter, or with the Newcastle city council, which is advising tenants about audits on energy efficiency? What contact has his Department had with the public sector and what does he think should follow from that?

Mr. Hunt: My right hon. Friend and I have had considerable contact with local authorities, which are developing a number of interesting systems, some of which I have been able to see for myself.

Mr. Haynes: Is the Minister proud of what he has done under the scheme, bearing in mind that it was introduced last October? The Government continue to tell us that they must spend money wisely. As they spent £50,000 advertising the scheme, is the Minister proud of the fact that only a small number of people have taken up the offer? When will he get off his backside and really do something?

Mr. Hunt: I have to tell the hon. Gentleman that, looking back on what has happened, it appears that the pilot scheme was not successful in itself, but it has been a very valuable experiment from which we must learn as much as possible.

Mr. Michael Morris: Is my hon. Friend aware that one reason why the pilot scheme was not successful in the east midlands was that the motivation did not appear to be only of cost benefit but of domestic convenience? Will he look at the experience in the United States, where the gas, electricity and coal undertakings handle those inquiries, rather than surveyors?

Mr. Hunt: Yes, of course.

Mr. Speller: Will my hon. Friend bear in mind that most complaints relate to high fuel bills and that energy audits lead directly to lower bills, lower fuel consumption and ultimately the need for fewer new power stations and capacity, all of which are eminently desirable?

Mr. Hunt: I wholeheartedly agree with my hon. Friend. Several thousand consumers have applied for the do-it-yourself home audit, which we have supported with the Open University and Channel 4. Several thousand more have applied for our semi-personalised audit on offer in a commercial promotion. Therefore, a major campaign of publicity and information does help the home owner to an awareness of what he can achieve.

Mr. Rowlands: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the Secretary of State for the Environment has cut home insulation grant expenditure by 15 per cent.? Is he further aware that the Secretary of State for Wales has cut home insulation expenditure by 25 per cent., therefore depriving almost 13,000 households in Wales of the possibility of home insulation? How does he square all the fine words, breakfasts, and audits with the action of other Ministers who are cutting back on the most effective and simple form of energy insulation and saving — home insulation grants?

Mr. Walker: As the hon. Gentleman knows, there has been no cut. We have the same amount to spend this year as we had last year.

Coal Industry

4. **Mr. Marlow** asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether he has had any discussions with the chairman of the National Coal Board or others with regard to the possible privatisation or development of co-operatives of the coal industry or part or parts of the coal industry.

Mr. Peter Walker: No, Sir.

Mr. Marlow: Is there any fundamental reason why the United Kingdom-based oil industry should not be nationalised, but the coal industry should be nationalised? Will my right hon. Friend tell us what changes he would like to see in ownership and organisation in this monolithic nationalised monopoly, vital as it is, in 10 years' time on 1 April 1995 in the sixteenth year of our right hon. Friend's premiership?

Mr. Walker: There were few things on which I agreed with Lord Wilson of Rievaulx when he was Prime Minister, but I cherish his statement about a week in politics being a long time. To give my views about happenings in 10 years from now would not be a sensible step for me to take.

Mr. Heffer: Will the right hon. Gentleman give a categorical assurance that the report issued by the Conservative party, emanating from a committee under the chairmanship of the present Secretary of State for Transport in 1978, is now repudiated by the Government and that there will not be any suggestion of privatising the coal industry? Will he say clearly, therefore, that from now on the miners, NACODS and all others involved in the industry can rest assured that public ownership of the industry will continue and that that report is dead and buried?

Mr. Walker: I did not read that report because, during the period concerned, I was in that charming place, which the hon. Gentleman knows well, called the wilderness. I have always made it clear that I would be willing to consider ways in which there could be greater participation on the part of those employed in the industry.

Fast Breeder Reactors

5. **Mr. Maclennan** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a further statement about progress on the European collaborative project for the development of fast breeder reactors.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Alastair Goodlad): We are continuing to make good progress.

Mr. Maclennan: In view of the expectation that both France and Germany will build commercial fast breeder reactors before this country does, what steps are the Government taking to ensure that we have a fair share of the research and development work on this collaborative programme and that we build on the expertise accumulated over the years at Dounreay? In particular, are the Government pressing for the location at Dounreay of a fuel reprocessing plant?

Mr. Goodlad: The participating organisations have already signed several of the agreements setting the detailed framework of the collaboration, and other agreements are being negotiated. As the hon. Gentleman knows, the United Kingdom is already in the forefront of fast reactor technology and has made a major contribution to the collaboration, in particular through the work at Dounreay. No decisions have yet been taken on the timing or siting of a commercial demonstration fast reactor for the collaboration. My right hon. Friend will make an announcement on reprocessing in due course.

Dr. M. S. Miller: Does the discussion with the Europeans include collaboration on the decommissioning of nuclear power stations, which is a most expensive business? It might be helpful to reduce costs if there were such collaboration with other countries.

Mr. Goodland: Yes, Sir. All aspects of the project are being discussed.

Community Heating Programmes

7. **Mr. Ron Davies** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what resources his Department is devoting to studies of community heating programmes.

Mr. David Hunt: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has announced his willingness to make grants towards studies of the prospects for combined heat and power and district heating schemes in Belfast, Edinburgh and Leicester. Grants are available under the energy efficiency survey scheme towards the cost of energy efficiency surveys of central boiler plants serving community heated dwellings.

Mr. Davies: Will the Minister confirm that, for technical and cost reasons, the most likely form of fuel for CHP schemes will be coal and that that is a further good reason why the future of the industry should be safeguarded? Will he also confirm that in planning future CHP schemes there will be a presumption in favour of the use of coal?

Mr. Hunt: I readily agree that where coal is involved it is indeed an economic scheme, and the Government want combined heat and power schemes to go ahead where they are economically viable. We believe that that is best achieved by the involvement of the private sector. The Government are prepared to assist in the initial development of these schemes.

Mr. Rost: Where CHP feasibility studies show a higher rate of return than alternative supply investment by the nationalised industries, should they not be allowed to go ahead in the interests of providing cheaper energy to consumers?

Mr. Hunt: I shall consider carefully what my hon. Friend has said. We are at an early stage in all these schemes, but I shall be monitoring the results carefully.

Energy Efficiency

9. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what further initiatives he proposes to take to encourage energy efficiency.

23. **Mr. Hannam** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he has decided to make 1986 the year of energy efficiency.

25. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he is considering designating 1986 as energy conservation year.

Mr. Walker: I am delighted at the progress that we have made during this past year. More than 14,000 senior executives have attended our early morning briefing meetings, there has been a 50 per cent. increase in extended survey scheme applications and a 300 per cent. increase in voluntary insulation projects for low-income households.

There is however, very much more progress to be made. I have decided to make 1986 an energy efficiency year in which I hope the Government, major energy utilities and industry will combine together to make a further considerable impact towards obtaining far higher standards of energy efficiency in this country.

Mr. Chapman: I welcome my right hon. Friend's decision, which will underline in the most effective way the need to improve energy use and conservation. Will he confirm that we are talking about the possibility of saving thousands of millions of pounds through the more effective use of energy? For example, in offices and shops it would be possible to save energy to the value of £500 million.

Mr. Walker: The energy bill is about £35 billion. If we operated to the best standards that are being implemented in other countries, there would be a saving of £7 billion a year. There is enormous potential for improving our economic efficiency and it is an area in which every effort should be made.

Mr. Hannam: I hope that my right hon. Friend will accept my congratulations on the progress that has been made in industrial sectors during the year. In the forthcoming year of energy saving, will he concentrate on an area in which probably the greatest potential for energy saving exists—the public sector? Will he make a special endeavour to co-ordinate the activities of local authorities and health authorities so as to make their officials more energy-conscious?

Mr. Walker: Yes. The local authorities' advisory organisation on efficiency, LAMSAC, has said that sensible energy efficient management services would reduce the rate bill by about £100 million a year. There is enormous potential within the NHS to improve energy saving. We shall do everything possible to co-ordinate the public sector to make the most progress that we can.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Will my right hon. Friend ensure that local authorities are given sufficient funds by the Department of the Environment to enable them to fund worthwhile local installations in energy-efficient schemes?

Mr. Walker: Yes. This is an area in which substantial progress has been made by the better local authorities. There is much to be done by the rest of the country and we shall be giving every possible encouragement to achieve further progress.

Mr. Eastham: Is it not a fact that many organisations are confronted with an asbestos problem? Will the right hon. Gentleman say what research is being undertaken and what advice is being given so that alternatives can be found that offer a degree of efficiency that is equal to that of asbestos?

Mr. Walker: I cannot be specific, because I must confess that I have not examined this issue in any detail. However, I shall do so and thereafter I shall write to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Wallace: Is the Secretary of State aware that my right hon. and hon. Friends will welcome the introduction of the year of energy efficiency in 1986? How much additional new money will be forthcoming from the Government to promote energy efficiency projects? Will the real value of home insulation grants be maintained in 1986?

Mr. Walker: The range covered by Government grants is quite considerable, including energy surveys, development programmes and research programmes. The majority of the savings to be made do not need Government support, in the sense that they are remunerative in themselves. About £300 million-worth of capital investment could be made by industry, which would bring a return of more than 100 per cent.

Mr. Orme: What about home insulation? Surely that is one of the most simple and understandable means of achieving greater energy efficiency. Britain lags behind most other Western countries on energy efficiency. Why does the Secretary of State not co-operate with other Departments on these issues?

Mr. Walker: We are collaborating with other Departments. As I said in my answer to the main question, there has been a 300 per cent. increase in one year in voluntary insulation projects for low-income households. I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman will rejoice in that.

Substitute Natural Gas Project

10. **Mr. Pike** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if, when he next meets the chairman of British Gas, he proposes to discuss the substitute natural gas project.

The Minister of State, Department of Energy (Mr. Alick Buchanan-Smith): My right hon. Friend and I regularly discuss with the chairman a variety of matters concerning the gas industry.

Mr. Pike: Does the Minister accept that there is a great future for substitute natural gas made from coal? To make the best use of our energy resources, and to achieve our potential in export markets, should we not be giving the green light to British Gas, saying, "Go ahead with the home market," so that we can obtain advantages from exporting?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: British Gas research into substitution is of an extremely high standard. I acknowledge the hon. Gentleman's point. There is considerable export potential. In looking towards the end of the century, Britain is fortunate in having adequate supplies of natural gas and access to liquefied natural gas. That means that we shall not need substitute natural gas for some time, but I agree that the research that has been done so far has been well worth while.

Mr. Skeet: Does my right hon. Friend agree that coal priced at £48 a tonne and rising would make it totally uneconomic to go ahead with this proposition? It will become economic at the beginning of the next century, rather than at the end of this century.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I, too, shall not look towards the end of this century. At the moment, substitute natural gas is uneconomic compared with other fuels. None the less, the work that is being done can benefit Britain, not least in terms of export potential.

Mr. Eadie: Why is the right hon. Gentleman so shy about saying to the nation, "We do not have to invent the technology of synthetic North sea gas"? We already have the technology. Should not the right hon. Gentleman be telling the House that, since we have already invented that technology, at Westfield, the nation should be considering ways and means of using it—through coal?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: Taking account of current NCB prices for substitute natural gas, present costs are running at about 45p a therm. If that is the price that the hon. Gentleman wants to charge industry and commerce, let him say so.

British Gas Corporation

11. **Mr. Eggar** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he has any plans to denationalise the British Gas Corporation.

M. Buchanan-Smith: During the past year the sale of the British Gas interest in Wytch Farm and the flotation of Enterprise Oil have been successfully carried through. The possibilities for further introduction of private capital into the gas industry will continue to be examined.

Mr. Eggar: In view of the Government's clear commitment to continue examinations along these lines, how soon will my right hon. Friend be able to come forward with concrete proposals?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: As soon as decisions are taken.

Mr. Rowlands: We hope that they are not taken during the lifetime of this Parliament. Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that the Government do not propose during this Parliament to go ahead with any sale of gas showrooms and do intend to introduce the safety legislation that is required? Will the right hon. Gentleman give us one piece of information about the existing privatisation Act? How many consents has the right hon. Gentleman approved under the Oil and Gas (Enterprise) Act, which was passed three years ago to provide for private transmission lines for gas?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I assure the hon. Gentleman that as soon as any decisions on inclusions are reached they will be announced to the House. I am sorry to disappoint the hon. Gentleman regarding his second question. I understand that there are plans for an onshore field to supply gas to two industrial users.

Alternative Energy sources

12. **Mr. Knox** asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether he proposes to have further discussions with the European Community Council of Ministers about alternative sources of energy.

Mr. David Hunt: Discussions are expected on alternative energy sources at a Council of Energy Ministers on 10 June.

Mr. Knox: Does my hon. Friend agree that research into alternative energy sources should increasingly be undertaken on a Community basis?

Mr. Hunt: Yes. We are continuing to give positive and substantial support to those renewables that are the most promising for the United Kingdom. Our views broadly coincide with those of our Community partners. I had the opportunity to discuss these matters with Dr. H. Eliasmöller, the head of the division on alternative sources in the European Commission, when I met him at the opening of the wind turbine generator in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Devon, North (Mr. Speller).

NCB (Investment)

13. **Mr. Maude** asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he is next planning to discuss investment with the chairman of the National Coal Board.

Mr. Peter Walker: I meet the chairman of the National Coal Board regularly to discuss many issues, including the very substantial investment that the Government are making in the coal industry.

Mr. Maude: Will my right hon. Friend consider with the NCB chairman the desirability of proceeding swiftly to investment in the south Warkwickshire coalfield, as this offers one prospect of providing the lowest cost coal in the United Kingdom, which would go a long way towards reducing the overall cost of coal and do a great deal to regenerate the industry?

Mr. Walker: I shall convey my hon. Friend's views to the NCB chairman. The NCB is looking on a regional basis to all the prospects and priorities for investment throughout the coalfields.

Mr. Ryman: When the Secretary of State next meets the chairman of the National Coal Board to discuss investment, will he raise the topic of the National Coal Board's asinine policy of lack of investment in the north-east of England? In particular, will he point out to the chairman that two years ago the north-east director of the NCB invested £2 million for new pit props for Bates's colliery, Blyth in respect of a seam which he now proposes to close, creating 800 redundancies?

Mr. Walker: I know that the chairman of the National Coal Board is anxious to retain the capacity for production in the north-east, where there is a strong demand for coal. He has made the appropriate surveys to see how much new investment will be needed to achieve that objective.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Honourable Members (Work Load)

30. **Mr. Dubs** asked the Lord Privy Seal how he assesses the present work load of hon. Members; and how this compares with his assessment in 1981.

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): There is no statistical basis upon which such a comparison could be made.

Mr. Dubs: Despite the lack of such a statistical basis, does the Leader of the House agree that the work load of the average Member of the House has increased enormously in recent years and is now such that the resources that we have—one secretary and 0·2 of a research assistant—are woefully inadequate? We are thus the laughing stock of members of every other Parliament and democratically elected assembly the world over. Will he consider sympathetically the plea that we should be given the resources to do our jobs properly?

Mr. Biffen: I do not believe that we are the laughing stock of every other elected assembly in western Europe

and North America. I would sooner be that than be held in ridicule by those who voted us here and who think that we have perfectly reasonable facilities for undertaking our present work. The present position, which was voted by the House last year, was in respect of a secretarial, research assistant and office level of allowance, which is increased each year by an agreed formula. That is subject to fundamental review once every four years. I believe that that is a reasonable basis on which to proceed.

Mr. Stokes: I agree with what my right hon. Friend has said. Is he aware that hon. Members' work loads were far less in the old days at the time of England's greatness? For instance, in those days there was no autumn Session, because of the bad state of the roads and partly because of the necessity for hon. Members to get in some shooting and hunting.

Mr. Biffen: It may have related to the necessity for Members to do some shooting, but if my hon. Friend undertakes even closer researches he will find that Parliament rarely rose in time for the Twelfth.

Mr. Foster: Does the Leader of the House realise that the facilities available to Members of the House are completely inadequate to begin to control the Executive? It is not at all surprising to Opposition Members that members of the Government do not want those facilities increased, because they do not want the Executive to be probed.

Mr. Biffen: The level of the secretarial, research assistant and office allowance was a level voted by the House, and the formula which governs its annual adjustment was also voted by the House last year. It is subject to a review every four years, and I believe that to be a reasonable balance in these matters.

Mr. Aitken: If we are to have the opportunity for more hunting and shooting, as my hon. Friend the Member for Halesowen and Stourbridge (Mr. Stokes) suggests, may I suggest to my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House that we set up as our quarry some of the public relations men who orchestrate completely phoney lobbies and campaigns which unnecessarily add to hon. Members' work loads? Will he study this matter as a serious issue, as well as an amusing one this afternoon?

Mr. Biffen: No words of mine should ever be interpreted as suggesting that more time should be made available for those hon. Members who enjoy hunting and shooting. I was only anxious to point out to my hon. Friend the Member for Halesowen and Stourbridge (Mr. Stokes) that he has a somewhat mistaken view of the position in the past. I think that my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) raises a serious point about the factors that make for our work here. Of course, it is something that we all keep under review.

Mr. Ewing: Is the Leader of the House aware that the work load of hon. Members has increased by reason of the stupid and idiotic decisions made by the Prime Minister, particularly in transferring the international football match from Wembley to Hampden Park? Will the Leader of the House use his good influence in telling the Prime Minister to work harder on getting the unemployed back to work, and to keep her silly nose out of things that she has nothing to do with?

Mr. Biffen: I will not say that it was an own goal, but I do not think it was a straight score.

Mr. Maclennan: Will the Leader of the House undertake to have installed, for the benefit of hon. Members, a telex on which we can both receive and send messages, as it is extremely unsatisfactory for them to have to receive their private messages from local authorities through the Cabinet Office before briefings with Ministers?

Mr. Biffen: I think that the hon. Gentleman was trying to give me a message in the rather oblique way in which he concluded his question. The installing of a telex would have to be considered in the first instance by the Services Committee. If the hon. Gentleman is serious on the matter, doubtless he will be in touch with me.

Mr. Dickens: It is common knowledge that no one works harder in this place for his constituents than yours truly, but, notwithstanding that, is it not a fact that there is no shortage of people wishing to be Members of Parliament and no shortage of people canvassing for votes at election time? How can the question be taken seriously? We ask people in industry to roll up their sleeves and work hard for the country, but Members of Parliament are rather workshy.

Mr. Biffen: I have no desire to put the argument in the somewhat crude and bruising terms of my hon. Friend. We have allowances which we ourselves have voted, they are subject to annual adjustments by a formula which we ourselves have voted, and the Government have said that there may be a fundamental review once every four years. Again I say that I think that that is a very reasonable and balanced judgment.

Mr. Shore: The Lord Privy Seal is extraordinarily complacent in his remarks about the facilities and research assistance available to hon. Members. It is not worries about the work load that concern hon. Members on either side of the House but the desire to be able to perform their duties properly. As my hon. Friend the Member for Bishop Auckland (Mr. Foster) rightly said, hon. Members wish to exercise full control, as far as they can, over the Executive. That is what makes us wish to be able to perform our duties more effectively than we can at present. I hope that the Lord Privy Seal will bear that in mind. If the Lord Privy Seal cannot measure the work load as such, perhaps he can at least give us some answers as to how far that part of our work load which is taken up by Government legislation and by the sittings of the House has increased in the past few years.

Mr. Biffen: On the right hon. Gentleman's last question, I refer him to the answer that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) on 11 March. It is clearly a matter for judgment within the House as to the extent to which we require facilities to enable us to do our job, but ultimately it is resolutions of the House that have determined what now appertains. On the last occasion on which there was a vote, the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs) suggested a figure 40 per cent. higher than was then proposed, and he was defeated by a vote of this House.

Mr. Dubs: By the payroll.

Research and Secretarial Allowances

32. **Mr. Chris Smith** asked the Lord Privy Seal whether he has any plans to propose improvements in the level of research and secretarial allowances for hon. Members.

Mr. Biffen: The resolution of the House of 20 July 1984 provides for the secretarial, research assistance and office expenses allowance to be automatically adjusted on 1 April in line with the pay of senior personal secretaries in the Civil Service.

Mr. Smith: Is the Leader of the House aware that, when the vote was taken in this House last summer, those who voted in favour of the motion were almost entirely on the Government payroll, and that many Back Benchers on both sides voted for a substantial increase in the secretarial and research allowance? Will the Leader of the House tell us when the four-year review is to take place, and whether he will listen to the demands from Back Benches on both sides of the House for a major increase in the facilities available to hon. Members?

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Gentleman is a tolerably fair controversialist in this matter. I hope that he will not disenfranchise the payroll vote merely because it is payroll. If he refreshes his memory from the voting list, he will find that many Back Benchers voted and by no means in only one Lobby. On his second point, of course I shall be happy to consult ahead of the time when a more fundamental review takes place.

House of Lords (Allowances)

33. **Mr. Willie W. Hamilton** asked the Lord Privy Seal whether, in the light of the increasing work load on Members of the House of Lords, Her Majesty's Government will seek to improve their allowances.

Mr. Biffen: The various allowances increase automatically as determined by the appropriate resolutions of the House of Lords.

Mr. Hamilton: Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that democracy is at great peril under the current dictatorship of the Prime Minister, particularly at local level, and the only way that that can be thwarted is along the Corridor in the House of Lords? Does not the right hon. Gentleman think that democracy has a high price, and that it is will worth while paying that high price to safeguard democracy?

Mr. Biffen: The fact that it is alleged that democracy is at risk, the fact that it is asserted that along the Corridor there is some effective watchdog, the fact that this is the last Parliament in which the hon. Gentleman will be serving, and the fact that, according to the *Daily Mirror* and what the Leader of the Opposition said on TV AM, the House of Lords will not be scrapped in Labour's first five years—all those facts lead me to think that where David Kirkwood trod in the past, the hon. Gentleman will be happy to follow.

CIVIL SERVICE

Principals and Assistant Secretaries

34. **Mr. Tim Eggar** asked the Minister for the Civil Service whether he intends to take any action in the light of the number of principals and assistant secretaries who have left the Civil Service in the past two years.

The Minister of State, Treasury (Mr. Barney Hayhoe): The number of assistant secretaries who have resigned has remained roughly constant over the past five years. The number of principals who have resigned has increased slightly. Those resigning represent a very small proportion of the overall numbers employed in those grades. Resignations at that level will continue to be carefully monitored, but no special action is considered necessary at present.

Mr. Eggar: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's reassurance, because the trend could become worrying. However, will he now use that information as further ammunition to press forward with the introduction of merit pay within the service and also further delegation of decision-taking down the hierarchy in the service?

Mr. Hayhoe: I am glad that my hon. Friend has recognised that the numbers resigning are very small. For principals under 40 the figure is about one in 50 and for those over 40 it is well under 1 per cent. I agree with my hon. Friend that the experiment that we are conducting on merit pay may well be helpful. I also agree with his comments about extending merit pay if the experiment that we are now conducting proves its worth.

Mr. Williams: Is it not a fact that there has been a marked fall-off in the quality and quantity of graduates now applying for posts in the Civil Service? Is not that reduction in applications the consequence of the continuous public campaign of contempt to which the Prime Minister has subjected the Civil Service?

Mr. Hayhoe: Neither the first nor the second part of the right hon. Gentleman's question is correct.

Mr. Wrigglesworth: What has happened with regard to the amount of overtime worked by civil servants in those grades recently? Has it not increased substantially? Is that not wrong at a time when people are searching for jobs and when morale in the Civil Service is so low?

Mr. Hayhoe: Overtime is not taken particularly into account for assistant secretaries and principals. They work the hours that are necessary to carry out their duties. In my experience of people of that grade, they are very dedicated indeed in the service that they give.

Dr. McDonald: Is not the Minister's reply rather too complacent? Is he not aware that there now has to be competition for post at principal level, which is a key grade? Is he not further aware that, looking to the future for the fast-stream graduate entry, it is now much more difficult for the Civil Service to obtain the lawyers, accountants, economists and statisticians who are needed? Is the hon. Gentleman aware that that is due to the unprecedentedly low level of morale in the Civil Service brought about by low pay and the autocratic style of management, coupled with the attack on trade union rights of civil servants? Is it not time that the Minister was much less complacent?

Mr. Hayhoe: I do not believe that the hon. Lady's exaggerated language is justified, but I agree that there are certain specialist recruits whom we have some difficulty in attracting. Equally, however, it is important that the Civil Service should not be seen to take more than its fair share of the bright young talent available to the country.

Unions (Meetings)

36. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Minister for the Civil Service on how many occasions he met representatives of the Civil Service unions in 1984.

Mr. Hayhoe: Other than informally, on seven occasions.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: As we have the most dedicated and efficient and the least corrupt Civil Service in the world, would it not be fair and reasonable for our Civil Service to have some pay procedure to guarantee civil servants a fair deal in pay and conditions so that they do not have to resort to the industrial action that they all thoroughly deplore?

Mr. Hayhoe: I endorse the compliment paid to the Civil Service by my hon. Friend. On the question of an agreed system for examining Civil Service pay, my hon. Friend will recall that we had a report from the Megaw commission. The Government remain willing to discuss such matters—there have already been many discussions — to try to find some satisfactory system for determining Civil Service pay.

Mr. Dalyell: Whatever the unions said about the pernicious experiment with merit awards, is not the brutal truth of the matter that those who give honest and careful but unpalatable advice to Ministers are potentially at a disadvantage as compared to ministerial arse-lickers?

Mr. Hayhoe: No, there is nothing to suggest that that is true.

Mr. Eggar: Can my hon. Friend say whether there is a ban on secondments to the Civil Service? If so, will the ban be temporary?

Mr. Hayhoe: I have seen reports to that effect in some of today's papers. So far as I am aware, they are pure speculation.

Mr. Estham: Has the Minister had a meeting with the unions about civil servants and the closing of the skillcentres? If so, would he care to tell us what he said at the meeting? We know that many of the skillcentres to be closed are profitable.

Mr. Hayhoe: That matter was not raised at any of my meetings with the Civil Service unions. If the unions had wished to discuss the matter, it would have been appropriate for them to raise it with the Secretary of State for Employment.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: As the Civil Service Minister, is the hon. Gentleman responsible for answering questions about Mr. Levene?

Mr. Hayhoe: That would depend on the question. Broadly speaking, as Mr. Levene is working with the Ministry of Defence, I believe that most questions would properly be addressed to the Secretary of State for Defence. If the question is relevant to my responsibilities, I shall of course answer it, as I always do.

ENERGY

Combined Heat and Power Schemes

14. **Mr. Rost** asked the Secretary of State for Energy, when he last met the Combined Heat and Power Association to discuss city combined heat and power schemes.

Mr. David Hunt: My right hon. Friend attended the launch of the association in November 1983, and the Department's Ministers and officials have had regular contact with the Combined Heat and Power Association.

Mr. Rost: As I know that my hon. Friend wishes to encourage city combined heat and power, will he talk to the Combined Heat and Power Association about the main obstacle — unfair competition from the taxpayer-subsidised nationalised industries? If my hon. Friend expects private consortia to develop combined heat and power by raising money in the market place, he cannot expect them to show their competitive advantage against other energy systems developed by the nationalised industries, which are able to invest at rates of return far lower than commercial rates.

Mr. Hunt: Yes, I will. The Government have removed, through the Energy Act 1983, most of the legislative barriers to the development of CHP, but there will be uncertainty about economic returns in these early days. The Government have helped to reduce those uncertainties by making available some financial help to enable local consortia to carry forward a thorough investigation of market potential over the next year or so.

Mr. Skinner: Will the Minister assure the House that, if there is any agreement about combined heat and power with any authority or other industry, he will make sure that the word "sacrosanct" is not used in it? If it is, the other parties will run away laughing, because they do not believe the Government.

Mr. Hunt: I treat that comment with the contempt that it deserves.

Energy Efficiency

15. **Mr. Wallace** asked the Secretary of State for Energy by what criteria he intends to measure improvements in energy efficiency in the United Kingdom in the current year.

Mr. David Hunt: The overall annual improvement in United Kingdom energy efficiency can be estimated by comparing the level of energy consumption with that of the preceding year, after making allowances for changes in the level of economic activity, temperature, structure of the economy and any other known factors affecting energy demand.

Mr. Wallace: It was implicit in the answer by the Secretary of State a few moments ago that no new money was being made available in energy efficiency year. To dispel a rapidly growing impression that this might be a gimmick, using the criteria suggested by the Minister, what targets are being set for energy efficiency year 1986?

Mr. Hunt: My right hon. Friend has made that clear already. We have 14,000 senior executives attending early morning briefings. We have a 50 per cent. increase in the

extended survey schemes. We have greater energy efficiency in commercial and industrial buildings reaching more than 150,000 senior executives. This demonstrates that there is not only great potential but that this Government, through the pioneering and enthusiastic work of my right hon. Friend, are leading the way towards a more energy-efficient nation.

Mr. Hardy: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Does it arise out of Questions?

Mr. Hardy: Yes, Mr. Speaker. You will recall that the Secretary of State for Energy, quite properly and courteously, informed the House that when he answered Question No. 9 he was also answering Questions Nos. 23 and 25, which had been tabled by the hon. Members for Exeter (Mr. Hannam) and for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory). By 10 minutes past three, we had reached Question No. 13, and in the last few minutes of Question Time we dealt with another two Energy questions. It means that the hon. Members for Exeter and for Wells would not otherwise have had their questions answered, even if we had had a reasonable amount of time, and that they were thereby given an opportunity to ask supplementary questions, whereas hon. Members who had tabled Questions Nos. 15 to 22 were prevented from asking them. Will you look into this matter and offer the House a ruling?

Mr. Speaker: It is not a matter for me if Ministers link questions. But I repeat that I, too, link questions in my own mind. I was able to call five hon. Members whose questions dealt with subjects which were broadly linked, if they were not on exactly the same subject. I think that the hon. Member was one of them.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Was not it unprecedented for the Minister to link Question No. 9 with Nos. 23 and 25? Is it not significant that the two questions with which the original Question No. 9 was linked had been tabled by Conservative Members? In defending Back-Bench rights, may we accept what the Minister has done as a precedent whereby, in future, if Opposition Members have questions tabled up to No. 25 which could be linked and they are not called, they, too, should have the right to ask supplementary questions?

Mr. Skinner: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. If you examine this matter — as you undoubtedly will—will you bear in mind that sometimes when questions are linked, if there is a "wet" Minister there may be "wet" planted questions and, if vice versa, they may come from the other element? This is not just a matter of the Opposition versus the Government. A lot depends on which section of the Tory party is doing the planting. It may be in the interests of some Tory Ministers to get questions in advance from some of their friends, as opposed to some of their enemies, on the Tory Benches.

Mr. Speaker: I shall not make any comment on that.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Question No. 37, which asks about the implications of a European Commission decision for energy policy, was previously oral Question No. 4 to the Secretary of State for Energy. I accept that Ministers are entitled to transfer questions when they are clearly addressed to the wrong person, but I cannot see how the Chancellor can be responsible for making a statement about implications for energy policy. I apologise for not giving notice of my intention to raise this, but I came along expecting to ask my Question No. 4 and discovered that it had been transferred, although it is clearly about energy policy. Is there any protection that you, Mr. Speaker, can give?

Mr. Speaker: The transfer of questions is a matter for the Ministers concerned, but as VAT is a matter for the Chancellor, that is no doubt why the hon. Gentleman's question was transferred. On the general matter, it is normal for Ministers to link questions up to No. 25, but I also do my best to ensure that hon. Members with similar questions are called, as happened today. *[Interruption.]* I cannot call everyone.

Postal Services

3.40 pm

Mr. John Ryman (Blyth Valley): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the possible disruption of postal services following the collapse of talks on new working methods and the proposed recruitment of part-time postmen."

I understand that a question may arise in connection with the sub judice rule. I will deal with that aspect straight away as it is relevant and I can deal with it briefly. This morning, a High Court judge granted an injunction to the Post Office banning industrial action without a ballot——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I wish to save the hon. Gentleman time. I do not think that the sub judice question arises, so perhaps he will go on to make his application — bearing in mind that the House has a guillotine motion to discuss.

Mr. Ryman: I entirely agree with you, Mr. Speaker. The sub judice does not apply, so I shall not put that argument.

I fully appreciate the criteria for acceptance of an application of this kind. I understand that I have to persuade you, Mr. Speaker, that the matter is so urgent and important that it should take priority over other business already arranged. That is indeed the situation.

Sir Ronald Dearing, in an arrogant, high-handed and autocratic manner, has made it clear that he intends without consultation to introduce new machinery at Mount Pleasant post office today, well knowing the opposition of the trade union involved. The union has acted very reasonably and has agreed to discuss the matter, but it strongly opposes the principle of recruiting a huge number of part-time postmen with consequent redundancies among existing staff.

Like Mr. MacGregor of the National Coal Board and other chairmen of nationalised and previously nationalised industries acting at the behest of the Prime Minister and the Government, Sir Ronald Dearing has said that he intends to take on the unions and to impose changes whether the workers like it or not. That is the provocative and partisan language used by the chairman of the Post Office. The result will be that within a few hours industrial action may take place at one of the most important post offices in this country, paralysing the postal services. I respectfully submit that that is a matter of great importance and should be discussed by the House very soon indeed as it has far-reaching consequences. As a result of the developments that I have described, there is a strong possibility that all postal services will be paralysed.

This is the first application of this kind that I have made in 10 years as a Member of Parliament and it is not made frivolously, to fly a kite or to make party political points. This is a matter of public importance and I respectfully suggest that the House should discuss it today.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Blyth Valley (Mr. Ryman) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the possible disruption of postal services following the collapse of talks on new working methods and the proposed recruitment of part-time postmen."

As the hon. Gentleman said, the only decision that I have to take is whether the matter should take precedence over the business set down for today or tomorrow. I listened carefully to what he said, but I do not consider that the matter is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 10. Therefore, I cannot submit his application to the House.

Common Market (Accession of Portugal and Spain)

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will know that on Thursday night there were important negotiations in Brussels over the accession of Spain and Portugal to the Common Market. If one believes what one reads in the press — I always do — those negotiations reached agreement on fishing, a subject of supreme importance, not least in the south-west of Cornwall, particularly in my constituency. I was surprised on arriving in the House to find that no arrangements had been made for a statement on the negotiations, apart from one on the summit. I believe that the Prime Minister may wish to make a statement on the latter tommorow. However——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This has to be a point of order for me.

Mr. Harris: My point of order, Mr. Speaker, is how on earth I, as a Back Bencher whose constituency happens to be nearer to Spain than any other constituency, deal intelligently with the questions being put to me, not least by my fishermen who are worried stiff about this matter, when I have no reliable information on which to go? Has there been any application to make a statement to the House on the details of the negotiations and, if not, why not?

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire) *rose*——

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is nothing to do with me whether the Government are to make a statement today, tomorrow or the day after tomorrow. I cannot answer such questions, but I shall hear what the hon. Gentlemen wish to say.

Mr. Forth: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I point out, so that there is no mistaking the matter, that hon. Members with constituencies in the west midlands, where there are extensive motor car interests, are as concerned as is my hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) about fishing. I wish to illustrate the breadth of concern about this important matter.

Mr. Skinner: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I know that the two hon. Members who have spoken are relatively new and I know, too, that they have made a bit of bread and butter out of the Common Market in their time, but perhaps you would suggest to them that there are various ways in which they can bring further embarrassment on their Government. For example, they could have tabled a private notice Question for a Minister to answer. They could have done what my hon. Friend the Member for Blyth Valley (Mr. Ryman) did a few minutes ago and made a Standing Order No. 10 application. The truth is that they want to have their cake and eat it. They do not have the guts to take on their own Government.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is extremely helpful, as he knows much about the procedures of the House.

BILL PRESENTED

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 (AMENDMENT)

Mr. Tony Baldry presented a Bill to amend Part II of Schedule 1 of the Local Government Act 1972 to create the County of Banburyshire: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 19 April and to be printed. [Bill 117.]

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Ordered,

That the draft Education (Assisted Places) Regulations 1985 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Garel-Jones.]*

Transport Bill (Allocation of Time)

3.43 pm

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): I beg to move,

That the following provisions shall apply to the remaining proceedings on the bill:—

Committee

1. The Standing Committee to which the Bill is allocated shall report the Bill to the House on or before 7th May 1985.

Report and Third Reading

2.—(1) The proceedings on Consideration and Third Reading of the Bill shall be completed in two allotted days and shall be brought to a conclusion at Ten o'clock on the second of those days; and for the purposes of Standing Order No. 45 (Business Committee) this Order shall be taken to allot to the proceedings on Consideration such part of those days as the Resolution of the Business Committee may determine.

(2) The Business Committee shall report to the House its Resolutions as to the proceedings on Consideration of the Bill, and as to the allocation of time between those proceedings and proceedings on Third Reading, not later than the fourth day on which the House sits after the day on which the Chairman of the Standing Committee reports the Bill to the House.

(3) The Resolutions in any Report made under Standing Order No. 45 may be varied by a further Report so made, whether or not within the time specified in sub-paragraph (2) above, and whether or not the Resolutions have been agreed to by the House.

(4) The Resolutions of the Business Committee may include alterations in the order in which proceedings on Consideration of the Bill are taken.

Procedure in Standing Committee

3.—(1) At a sitting of the Standing Committee at which any proceedings on the Bill are to be brought to a conclusion under a Resolution of the Business Sub-Committee the Chairman shall not adjourn the Committee under any Order relating to the sittings of the Committee until the proceedings have been brought to a conclusion.

(2) No Motion shall be moved in the Standing Committee relating to the sitting of the Committee except by a member of the Government, and the Chairman shall permit a brief explanatory statement from the Member who moves, and from a Member who opposes, the Motion, and shall then put the Question thereon.

4. No Motion shall be moved to alter the order in which Clauses, Schedules, new Clauses and new Schedules are taken in the Standing Committee but the Resolutions of the Business Sub-Committee may include alterations in that order.

Conclusion of proceedings in Committee

5. On the conclusion of the proceedings in any Committee on the Bill the Chairman shall report the Bill to the House without putting any Question.

Dilatory Motions

6. No dilatory Motion with respect to, or in the course of, proceedings on the Bill shall be moved in the Standing Committee or on an allotted day except by a member of the Government, and the Question on any such Motion shall be put forthwith.

Extra time on first allotted day

7.—(1) On the first allotted day paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 3 (Exempted business) shall apply to the proceedings on the Bill for two hours after Ten o'clock.

(2) Any period during which proceedings on the Bill may be proceeded with after Ten o'clock under paragraph (7) of Standing Order No. 10 (Adjournment on specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration) shall be in addition to the said period of two hours.

(3) If the first allotted day is one to which a Motion for the adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 10 stands over from an earlier day, a period of time equal to the duration of the proceedings upon that Motion shall be added to the said period of two hours.

Private business

8. Any private business which has been set down for consideration at Seven o'clock on an allotted day shall, instead of being considered as provided by Standing Orders, be considered at the conclusion of the proceedings on the Bill on that day, and paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 3 (Exempted business) shall apply to the private business for a period of three hours from the conclusion of the proceedings on the Bill or, if those proceedings are concluded before Ten o'clock, for a period equal to the time elapsing between Seven o'clock and the conclusion of those proceedings.

Conclusion of proceedings

9.—(1) For the purpose of bringing to a conclusion any proceedings which are to be brought to a conclusion at a time appointed by this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee or the Business Sub-Committee and which have not previously been brought to a conclusion, the Chairman or Mr. Speaker shall forthwith put the following Questions (but no others)—

(*a*) any Question already proposed from the Chair;

(*b*) any Question necessary to a bring to a decision a Question so proposed (including, in the case of a new Clause or new Schedule which has been read a second time, the Question that the Clause or Schedule be added to the Bill);

(*c*) the Question on any amendment or Motion standing on the Order Paper in the name of any Member, if that amendment or Motion is moved by a Member of the Government;

(*d*) any other Question necessary for the disposal of the business to be concluded;

and on a Motion so moved for a new Clause or a new Schedule, the Chairman or Mr. Speaker shall put only the Question that the Clause or Schedule be added to the Bill.

(2) Proceedings under sub-paragraph (1) above shall not be interrupted under any Standing Order relating to the sittings of the House.

(3) If an allotted day is one on which a Motion for the adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 10 (Adjournment on specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration) would, apart from this Order, stand over to Seven o'clock—

(*a*) that Motion shall stand over until the conclusion of any proceedings on the Bill which, under this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee, are to be brought to a conclusion at or before that time;

(*b*) the bringing to a conclusion of any proceedings on the Bill which, under this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee, are to be brought to a conclusion after that time shall be postponed for a period equal to the duration of the proceedings on that Motion.

(4) If an allotted day is one to which a Motion for the adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 10 stands over from an earlier day, the bringing to a conclusion of any proceedings on the Bill which, under this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee, are to be brought to a conclusion on that day shall be postponed for a period equal to the duration of the proceedings on that Motion.

Supplemental orders

10.—(1) The proceedings on any Motion moved in the House by a member of the Government for varying or supplementing the provisions of this Order (including anything which might have been the subject of a report of the Business Committee or Business Sub-Committee) shall, if not previously concluded, be brought to a conclusion one hour after they have been commenced, and paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 3 (Exempted business) shall apply to the proceedings.

(2) If on an allotted day on which any proceedings on the Bill are to be brought to a conclusion at a time appointed by this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee the House is adjourned, or the sitting is suspended, before that time no notice shall be required of a Motion moved at the next sitting by a member of the Government for varying or supplementing the provisions of this Order.

Saving

11. Nothing in this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee or Business Sub-Committee shall—

(*a*) prevent any proceedings to which the Order or Resolution applies from being taken or completed earlier than is required by the Order or Resolution, or

(*b*) prevent any business (whether on the Bill or not) from being proceeded with on any day after the completion of all such proceedings on the Bill as are to be taken on that day.

Recommital

12.—(1) References in this Order to proceedings on

[Mr. John Biffen]

Consideration or proceedings on Third Reading include references to proceedings, at those stages respectively, for, on or in consequence of recommittal.

(2) On an allotted day no debate shall be permitted on any Motion to recommit the Bill (whether as a whole or otherwise), and Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith any Question necessary to dispose of the Motion, including the Question on any amendment moved to the Question.

Interpretation

13. In this Order—

"allotted day" means any day (other than a Friday) on which the Bill is put down as first Government Order of the Day provided that a Motion for allotting time to the proceedings on the Bill to be taken on that day either has been agreed on a previous day or is set down for consideration on that day;

"the Bill" means the Transport Bill;

"Resolution of the Business Sub-Committee" means a Resolution of the business Sub-Committee as agreed to by the Standing Committee;

"Resolution of the Business Committee" means a Resolution of the Business Committee as agreed to by the House.

It falls to me on these occasions to introduce and explain the motion under discussion. I propose to do so briefly, thereby allowing as much time as possible for those with an abiding interest in the subject to contribute to the debate. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport will, when winding up, respond to the points made and deal with the provisions of the Bill in greater detail than it would be appropriate for me to essay.

The Bill to which this motion seeks to apply a timetable gives effect to the proposals in the White Paper "Buses" which the Government published as a Command Paper in July last year. That White Paper was the subject of an extensive consultation exercise before the legislation was introduced on 31 January. The Bill received its Second Reading on 12 February.

The Transport Bill represents an attempt to break the cycle of rising costs and falling services which have plagued this sector of the transport market for the past 30 years. During that time the bus and coach share of the market has fallen from 43 per cent. to 8 per cent. Meanwhile, fares and subsidies have risen substantially in real terms.

I think that there will be general agreement that that is not a happy situation and that there is considerable room for improvement. The Government believe that that improvement can be achieved by lifting the burden of regulation and monopoly which weighs upon the industry. Accordingly, the Bill will abolish road service licensing outside London, liberate the taxi and hire car market and provide for the transfer of the National Bus Company's operations to the private sector.

There is clear evidence that that is a prudent approach. The Transport Act 1980 took the first step in that direction by abolishing road service licensing for long distance coach services. The result has been better services, lower fares and more passengers. In this, it is giving effect to the fundamental objective of transport policy, to allow the travelling public to exercise their choice to move about as cheaply and efficiently as possible. The Bill will give an opportunity for those benefits to be extended.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that I have not received a single letter in support of the Bill and yet I have received literally hundreds of letters from people opposed to it? Is he also aware that tomorrow there will be perhaps one of the largest lobbies that Parliament will have seen in opposition to the Bill? Why does he not recognise those points instead of just reading out a ministerial brief? Perhaps he does not believe in this nonsense of a Bill that is going through Parliament at the moment.

Mr. Biffen: What the hon. Gentleman says about his postbag merely gives testimony to the well-orchestrated activities of the vested interests that are challenged by this legislation.

However, the Bill is not merely an exercise in deregulation. It recognises that bus services have a social as well as an economic role. It is worth bearing in mind that the existing system has signally failed to protect that role. Those who rely on rural services will be aware of the extent of their decline in recent years. Accordingly, the Bill provides for the Secretary of State to make grants to the operators of rural services and introduces competitive tendering to ensure the best possible value for money on subsidised routes which are uneconomic but of social importance.

In addition, many of the Bill's 114 clauses are devoted to ensuring the maintenance of high standards of safety and reliability. Thus the Transport Bill represents a comprehensive approach to easing the problems of an important sector of the transport market. It is a long and detailed piece of legislation and it is in the interests of all those involved in the industry that it should be carefully considered.

The Government are anxious to facilitate that consideration. Indeed, at the request of the hon. Member for Tyne Bridge (Mr. Cowans), the then Chairman of the Select Committee on Transport, the Bill's start in Committee was slightly delayed so that the Select Committee would have time to publish its evidence on the subject. However, careful consideration does not mean interminable argument. Some balance must be struck between a fascination with detail and a desire to make progress, and that balance is not being achieved.

The Bill commenced its proceedings in Standing Committee on 21 February when two and a quarter hours were spent discussing the sittings motion. Since then the Committee has sat a further 18 times and has amassed a total of 94 hours of debate.

As always on such occasions I am filled with admiration for the stamina of Committee members, if not for the conciseness of those on the Opposition Benches. Largely due to their efforts, clause 1 was dissected for 30½ hours. After that matters improved somewhat. The next three clauses and two schedules were completed in only 14¾ hours. One can only assume that the Committee was disturbed by the reckless pace at which it had been travelling. Whatever the reason, it then came to a shuddering halt. Clause 5 was discussed for 24 hours.

I remind the House that the Bill has 114 clauses and seven schedules. After 94 hours of debate the Committee has completed its consideration of only 11 clauses and two schedules.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): Too fast.

Mr. Biffen: I shall be glad to have on the record the hon. Gentleman's comment "Too fast". Posterity will be able to judge with what moderation the Government have moved.

At the current rate of progress, we would be well into 1986 before the Committee felt able to report the Bill to the House. Therefore, it is clear that without the

imposition of a timetable there would be no prospect of the Bill reaching the statute book in this Session of Parliament.

The period of uncertainty and the steady decline in the service offered to the travelling public would be needlessly prolonged. That uncertainty would inevitably mean that operators would put off investment decisions, and plans to develop new services would be delayed. Even after the legislation is passed, there will be a significant transitional period before the full benefits are realised. Clearly, therefore, it is in the interests of all concerned that sensible progress should be made.

The timetable imposed by the motion is not ungenerous. The Committee will not be required to report the Bill to the House until 7 May. If it continues to sit as at present, that will permit no fewer than 16 further sittings. Given the Committee's evident enthusiasm, that should be ample time for the Bill's remaining provisions to receive the consideration that their importance deserves. After that, two full days will be made available for Report and Third Reading, on the first of which the 10 o'clock rule will be suspended for two hours.

A much needed reform of an important sector of the transport industry is in danger of being delayed. Those seeking that delay maintain that they have the best interests of the industry and of the travelling public at heart. I do not question the sincerity of their beliefs.

Mr. Robert Hughes: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that his speech is remarkably similar to the one that he read during the debate on the guillotine on a previous Transport Bill in which, we were told, the Government had taken the power to do all the things about transport that the right hon. Gentleman is now referring to? What use did the Government make of the previous Bill?

Mr. Biffen: That is a debate for another occasion. If there is a similarity about debates on timetable motions, it is because they deal with a broadly similar proposition —that the Opposition are using time to frustrate the prospects of the Bill, whereas the Government believe that, by mandate, and by other requirements, they have every reason to secure its ultimate passage, while ensuring the balance of as fair a discussion as possible.

Mr. Laurie Pavitt (Brent, South): In fixing the final day of 7 May, did the right hon. Gentleman take into account the fact that the House will not be sitting during the Easter recess?

Mr. Biffen: Yes, indeed.

I was referring to the sincere beliefs of Opposition Members. I have to say that they are misplaced. The system that they espouse has manifestly failed to maintain an efficient service to the large sections of the community who still rely heavily on buses and coaches to meet their transportation needs. The Bill is calculated to benefit the customer and the motion would facilitate its passage. Accordingly, I commend it to the House.

3.53 pm

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): As the Leader of the House revealingly put it, it fell to him to propose the timetable motion. The right hon. Gentleman followed up that comment by reading at breakneck speed a script which was obviously prepared for him by the Secretary of State for Transport and which lacked all conviction and was a mere propaganda exercise.

I could not make up my mind whether the Leader of the House's principal mood was governed primarily by innocence or boredom. I have a few things to say about the Bill, because it falls to me to reply, but I think that I will say them with more genuine feeling and conviction about the Bill than the right hon. Gentleman managed to mobilise.

These timetable motions appear to recur at all too frequent intervals. Indeed, a very disturbing pattern is now emerging. First, we are presented with highly controversial, complex and ideologically motivated legislation. Secondly, no attempt is made to enlist independent and authoritative opinion on the subject matter. Indeed, consultation and discussion prior to the presentation of the Bill is either avoided or, where that is not possible, wantonly ignored. Thirdly, no concessions are made in Committee prior to the imposition of the guillotine. Fourthly, wherever possible, powers are taken to weaken or destroy local democratic control through local authorities. Finally, most of clauses and schedules have received not even the most perfunctory attention, because they have not been reached. That is the pattern——

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): Whose fault is that?

Mr. Shore: It is very much the fault of the Secretary of State for Transport and his colleagues.

The features that I have just described were also the unacceptable features of the Local Government Bill, which was the last subject of the guillotine on 11 February. As I shall show in a moment, the Transport Bill has the same basically ugly features. First, I do not think that even the Leader of the House or the Secretary of State for Transport will dispute the fact that the measure is ideological, controversial and complex. Its central aims and provisions are designed to achieve two things: first, to deregulate passenger transport by abolishing, at a stroke, all the legislative provisions for road service licensing that have existed since the 1930s; secondly, to privatise bus services not merely by denationalising and breaking up the National Bus Corporation but by compelling the passenger transport executives and the municipal authorities to sell off their bus fleets.

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): The right hon. Gentleman obviously has not studied the Bill. First, it is the National Bus Company and not the National Bus Corporation. Secondly, local authorities are invited to make their bus operations into public limited companies, but there are no powers to compel them to sell the shares of those companies.

Mr. Shore: I am grateful to the Secretary of State for that information. Is he now assuring us that, having compelled the local authorities to turn their municipal bus enterprises into public limited companies, he will not require them to privatise them at the next stage of his transport policy?

Mr. Ridley: I am delighted to respond to that point, as it concerns a matter that will be debated when—if we are ever allowed to — we reach the relevant clauses. Without the guillotine, we shall not get there. However, I can give the right hon. Gentleman the assurance that he wants. There are no plans whatever to force privatisation on local authority owned companies.

Mr. Shore: One thing at least has become clear, and it is welcome as far as it goes.

On Second Reading, the Secretary of State informed the House:

"The Bill is about competition."—[*Official Report*, 12 February 1985; Vol. 73, c. 192.]

His fundamental error is to assume that the increase of competition in passenger transport will lead to an increase in service to the travelling public. It will not do so.

My next charge is that the Bill has no authority, derived from independent and objective opinion. Its main proposals were issued as a White Paper on 12 July 1984. As soon as the House reassembled in the autumn and the Select Committees had been reconvened, the Select Committee on Transport began its examination of the White Paper. Despite the usual Conservative majority on the Select Committee, the Secretary of State rushed ahead with the preparation of his Bill and presented it on 31 January. He arranged its Second Reading on 12 February and began the Committee Stage even before the Select Committee could report.

Mr. Forth: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way on that point?

Mr. Shore: No. We have been over this ground several times and I remember the Second Reading debate and the tiny concession made by the Under-Secretary of State in his concluding speech.

The House will well remember the speech made on Second Reading by the hon. Member for Wellingborough (Mr. Fry), who was a member of the Select Committee and, of course, is a member of the Conservative party. Hon Members will also remember the reasoned amendment that he moved, which said:

"this House declines to give a Second Reading to the Transport Bill until it has had the oportunity of studying the imminent report of the Transport Committee and what is the most fundamental upheaval in the bus industry for over 50 years."—[*Official Report*, 12 February 1985; Vol. 73, c. 207.]

As the Select Committee observed when its report was finally published on 28 February,

"Governments usually present their ideas for major changes in legislation in consultative Green Papers before setting out their proposals in a White Paper. This did not happen in the case of 'Buses'."

The Select Committee quoted the Humberside county council as pointing out:

"There was no consultation on the basic ideas and only the detailed practicalities of implementation are open to comment. This is an unfortunate approach to the most fundamental change to public transport legislation for over half a century."

That is a very British understatement from the Humberside county council.

Mr. Forth: This appears to be a new departure. Will the right hon. Gentleman give an undertaking that any future Labour Government will not legislate until they have gone through all the procedures that he has outlined? For example, will a future Labour Government undertake no legislation until extensive outside consultations have taken place and the appropriate Select Committee has reported?

Mr. Shore: The hon. Gentleman has not studied these matters as carefully as he should have done if he wishes to raise such points. As those who have been Members of the House rather longer than he has may recall, it was a Labour Government who introduced Green Papers in 1965 or 1966. They were very keen to extend the scope of consultation on legislation before Governments invested their pride and prestige in White Papers — in other words, before their follies could be pointed out and they could gracefully withdraw. That is the origin of Green Papers, and they are a very good idea.

Mr. Ridley: I have been a Member of the House rather longer than the right hon. Gentleman. How many consultative documents and Green Papers did the right hon. Gentleman issue before each nationalisation measure by the Labour Government? For example, I do not remember a consultative document on the nationalisation of the aircraft and shipbuilding industries.

Mr. Shore: I do not think that anyone could deny that that Bill was debated in the House far more thoroughly than any Bills have been debated before or since.

As the hon. Member for Wellingborough reminded the House on 12 February, his reasoned amendment had the support not only of hon. Members on both sides of the House, but was supported by no fewer than 11 national organisations, which he recounted. They were the Association of District Councils, the Association of Transport Co-ordinating Officers, the Bus and Coach Council, the Chartered Institute of Transport, Friends of the Earth, the National Association of Local Councils, the Ramblers Association, the Royal Town Planning Institute, Rural Voice, and Transport 2000, all operating under the aegis of Women in the Community — the National Federation of Women's Institutes.

Therefore, the right hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends should plead guilty to the charge of peremptory and arbitrary legislation and the denial of the opportunity to make serious and informed comments not only to consumer bodies and those who operate the bus services, but even to a Select Committee.

Thirdly, no concessions were made during the Committee stage — *[Interruption.]* Perhaps I should correct myself. The Government accepted that the traffic commissioners' maximum age should be reduced from 70 to 65—*[Interruption.]* Do I have that wrong? I do not think I have. That is the only concession. The Government may have inserted a "the" or an "a", but the only substantial concession was on the age of commissioners.

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): A major concession was granted by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the benefit of concessionary fares for the elderly. The hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) may shake her head, but a major concession was granted by my right hon. Friend. He promised to bring forward on Report, a clause dealing with concessionary fares for the elderly. He also promised to bring forward a charter and guidance for the disabled. The right hon. Gentleman should know that full well.

Mr. Shore: I am aware that, owing to the ingenuity of my hon. Friends in Committee, there was some discussion about the important matter of concessionary fares. This was during discussion of the early clauses of the Bill. However, the relevant clauses dealing with concessionary fares arise later in the Bill. The Government have not yet made a statement about them—and nor could they until they are reached. I do not know how the hon. Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes) can claim that major changes and concessions have been made when the relevant clauses have not been reached.

Mr. Ridley: I should hate the right hon. Gentleman to be guilty of misleading concessionary fare travellers. I wish to make it absolutely clear that I undertook to introduce either new clauses or amendments on Report to make it clear that all operators will have to take part in local authority concessionary fare schemes, subject to a special appeal procedure which, I think, is technical. The guarantee is there, and the right hon. Gentleman must not traduce what I have said.

Mr. Shore: The right hon. Gentleman is not saying that he has yet accepted any amendments. All that he has said is that during the debates in Committee—because of the ingenuity of my hon. Friends—the matter was discussed ahead of the relevant clauses. He was driven to make certain statements. I shall comment later in my speech on my worries about concessionary fares. If the right hon. Gentleman will contain himself——

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that Labour Members have repeatedly requested that the same concession be made in the London Regional Transport Bill. On the Second Reading of that Bill, the Secretary of State categorically refused the request of two of his hon. Friends to introduce a clause about concessionary fares. We want old-age pensioners throughout Great Britain to have the same concessions as old-age pensioners in the London area.

Mr. Shore: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who helps to put the matter into its proper perspective.

Whatever minuscule amendments were accepted in Committee, they hardly add up to the basic conclusion of the Select Committee on Transport, which stated,

"Most of those organisations"

—it was referring to responsible local authorities, the operators and consumer organisations—

"believe that the Bill's proposals . . . are defective or totally unworkable. We believe that the Bill will require considerable amendment if it is to prove acceptable to the wide range of the political spectrum which is at present opposed to parts of it."

My fourth challenge is that the Bill makes yet one more attack upon local democracy and upon the powers and duties of elected local councils. The National Bus Company, the enterprises run by the PTEs and those directly provided by local authorities are henceforth to be turned into public limited companies. We know that the first two are to be privatised, and we heard what the Secretary of State said earlier when he assured us that the PLCs formed by local authorities would remain in public ownership. I hope that my hon. Friends will firmly press that point in future discussions.

For more than half a century, and under successive Conservative and Labour Governments, municipal and other local authorities have been entrusted with the operation of passenger transport services. Indeed, the provision of good local bus services has been among the principal activities, and a source of justifiable pride, of local government as a whole. Much of that is now to cease. No attempt is being made even to distinguish the good from the not so good.

This immensely controversial Bill remains substantially undiscussed. Of its 114 clauses, only 11 have been reached. Admittedly clause 1, which abolishes road service licensing, contains one of the two main principles of the Bill, and that was bound to take a long period for discussion, and indeed it did.

Mr. Hayes: Thirty hours.

Mr. Shore: The principle of regulation has lasted for more than 50 years. Clause 1 provides for abolition of the system while the remainder of the Bill is basically about what provisions will be put in its place. Therefore, I am not in the least surprised that discussion of it took that amount of time. Clause 1 is the major clause of the Bill and if that had not been properly debated, the Opposition and Committee would not have done their duty.

Mr. Forth *rose*——

Mr. Shore: No, I will not give way.

The privatisation proposals have not been discussed at all. I am thinking of the privatisation of NCB and of the passenger transport executives. Nor has there been any discussion of subsidies and tenders, matters of great importance. The clauses relating to travel concessions, about which the Secretary of State and I have had exchanges, remain undiscussed; they have not yet been reached, although my hon. Friends tabled amendments on the subject to earlier clauses.

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): My right hon. Friend referred to passenger transport executives. Is he aware that important provisions, as it were, not in the Bill, to safeguard the pension rights of thousands of staff working for the PTEs have not been discussed and that, as matters stand, although their terms and conditions of employment would pass to the new bodies, the protection of pension rights is excluded from those provisions?

Mr. Shore: My hon. Friend raises an important point. Indeed, it is a major omission because it concerns thousands of people who are, and have been, employed in the industry and whose legitimate interests have not been discussed and cannot adequately be discussed under the rigorous limitations of the timetable.

Those are our principal charges against the Bill and the increasingly disturbing pattern of peremptory legislation to which I referred at the outset. We seem to be getting not only Government without consultation but Government by guillotine as well. While this reflects the predominant style of the present Government, no Minister has a poorer track record than the principal architect of the Bill, the Secretary of State for Transport. He cheerfully breaks the law and, when rebuked by Her Majesty's judges, arrogantly refuses to reconsider his conduct but relies on the Whips and the Government's majority to change the law to show that he was right in the first place.

What makes the Bill so unacceptable, and the timetable ill judged, is the extraordinary breadth and depth of opposition to it. After all, the voices of the consumers —the passengers—of bus services should be heeded. Those in rural areas, women who do not have the use of their own motor cars, and pensioners who rely heavily on concessionary fares, are strongly opposed to the measure. They rightly fear that the main effect of the Bill will be to reduce the number of unprofitable services by eliminating the present practice of cross-subsidisation and by the relentless financial squeeze on local authorities, whose ability directly to subsidise unprofitable services is bound to be drastically curtailed.

Highly relevant also are the considered comments of the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders. In its paper of 15 March, which other hon. Members will have received, the society said:

[Mr. Shore]

"the 1985 Transport Bill seriously threatens the continued existence of a competitive bus manufacturing base in the United Kingdom."

It pointed out

"de-regulation and sub-contracting will lead to these authorities concentrating their operations on commercial networks only and other subsidised routes will be put out to tender. This is expected to lead to a reduction in the fleet size by 25 per cent. and, therefore, demand for heavy duty buses will decline."

The number of jobs in the United Kingdom bus industry has already fallen by about 44 per cent. since 1981, reflecting the abolition of new bus grants in 1980 and the massive squeeze on local authority expenditures since that date. The total number of annual registrations of new double deck and single deck buses has fallen from 3,148 in 1980 to 1,470 in 1984. On the SMMT's forecast, the number will be down to 800 in 1986.

The future of the bus industry and of bus services as a whole is much at risk. For all those reasons, I invite the House to reject the motion.

4.15 pm

Mr. Matthew Parris (Derbyshire, West): We make no complaint that we do not see on the Opposition Benches today the hon. Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott). Though a spokesman on transport, we understand that he is away getting married.

Mr. Hayes: He is on his honeymoon.

Mr. Parris: As ever, I am out of date. In the past five weeks or so the hon. Member for Wigan will not have had much time to see his betrothed. I am glad that he was able to finalise arrangements. Those of us who remain unbetrothed have not had much time to pursue similar objectives. We have spent about 90 hours in Committee.

I listented with interest to the remarks of the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) about the report of the Select Committee, of which I was a member, as was the hon. Member for the Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross), who I see in his place. I should remind the House that the major recommendations and conclusions of the Select Committee were argeed only by the casting vote of the Chairman.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): Will the hon. gentleman make it clear that the Conservatives on the Select Committee had a majority and that the Chairman cast his vote, in the custom of all Chairmen of such Committees, for this status quo? Will he please not try to imply that by some means, the Chairman, who is a most respected man, misused his position?

Mr. Parris: I made no such imputation. The Chairman is a man of enormous honour and all members of the Committee respect him greatly. By casting his vote in favour of the status quo, he did no more than the Chairman of any Select Committee would have been expected to do. I was simply pointing out that four members of the Select Committee were for the conclusions, that four members were against and that the whole thing was decided, as is customary in such circumstances, by the casting vote of the Chairman.

Mr. Stephen Ross (Isle of Wight): Would it not be fairer to say that the hon. Gentleman and perhaps one other of his Conservative colleagues on the Select Committee seemed to support most of the provisions of the measure, whereas a number of his Conservative colleagues were opposed to many parts of the Bill? The way in which they voted appears on the record.

Mr. Parris: I agree that some members of the Select Committee had reservations about many parts of the Bill. However, when it came to expressing our overall view, as expressed in the summary and recommendations of the Select Committee's report, the voting was four in favour and four against, so the report was passed on the casting vote of the Chairman.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Will the hon. Gentleman also make it clear that there were 44 voting and that he is talking about three?

Mr. Parris: Yes, about three votes on the summary and recommendations, which represented the most important part of the report.

My Conservative colleagues on the Select Committee, being honourable people, voted as they believed. My hon. Friend the Member for Wellingborough (Mr. Fry), being the parliamentary adviser to the National Bus Company, scrupulously avoided voting on matters affecting the NBC. Nevertheless, it is true to say that many Committee members had interests in relation to the matters that the Select Committee was studying.

My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Mr. Bevan), was the chairman of the west midlands passenger transport authority. Not unsurprisingly, he was disinclined to believe that things could be done better than they were being done by that transport authority.

Mr. Corbett: Perhaps he was right.

Mr. Parris: I am inclined to believe that the west midlands passenger transport authority, even under the chairmanship of my hon. Friend the Member for Yardley, is capable of improvement. For all the reasons that I have given, I do not believe that the report and recommendations of the Select Committee can be taken in too simplistic a way.

The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney said that most of the interests consulted had been opposed to the Bill. That is true. I have been reading the *Official Report* of debates on all stages of the Transport Act 1952. The Minister of Transport, the then Mr. Alan Lennox-Boyd, led for the Government in Committee. That measure deregulated road haulage and denationalised the parts of the industry that were in public hands. There was enormous opposition from every shade of opinion. Safety organisations said that the Bill would make lorries more dangerous as it would enable operators to cut corners. The Association of British Chambers of Commerce was against the move, as was the *The Times*, *The Guardian* and many of the motoring organisations. The Labour party was passionately against the Bill. The stage was reached when a guillotine debate took place. The Bill, which became the subject of a timetable motion, eventually was enacted. As far as I am aware, no one has looked back since then. Indeed, no one has suggested that we should reregulate the road haulage industry or renationalise lorry operations.

Mr. Forth: Does my hon. Friend agree that, with a measure such as this, the vested interest groups, which are inevitably Conservative, are ready to defend the status quo

and that it has been left to a Conservative Government and Conservative Members to represent the greatest interest of all—the travelling public?

Mr. Parris: My hon. Friend is right.

We have heard a great deal of opposition to the Bill, and it has come from two main groups. First, there are the expert bodies, such as the county councils, the district councils and the National Bus Company. Such organisations generally have a vested interest, one way or the other, in the status quo. That is not wrong. It is every group's responsibility to protect the interests of its members, and we are not surprised or disappointed that they have sought to do so on this occasion. Those vested interests should be taken into account.

The second group which has expressed opposition is formed by organisations representing pensioners, the disabled, consumers and women's organisations. Those groups have been frightened by the vested interests into believing that their members will suffer from the measures contained in the Bill. We are beginning to win the argument in Committee and to persuade those groups that they need not be frightened, and certainly not in the way that the vested interests have suggested they should be.

In many ways, the motion comes as more of a relief to Opposition than to Conservative Members. The speeches of Opposition Members have become something of a nightmare. The motion will rescue them from the problem of opposing a Bill to which they are deeply opposed while failing to use the debates in Committee to try to improve it so that the Bill will be more effective when enacted, given that it will reach the statute book in due course. Opposition Members resort to the making of Second Reading speeches on every clause and amendment. We must have had at least seven Second Reading debates on the principles enshrined in the Bill.

I would not begrudge the 90 hours that we have spent in Committee on the first 13 clauses or so if the result had been the minute scrutiny of every part of the machinery that is to be put in place with a view to making it work more effectively. Unfortunately, we have not been considering the working of the proposed legislation in any detail. Instead, we have been hearing repeated Second Reading debates. The sooner that Opposition Members stop rehearsing Second Reading debates and work according to a sensible and generous timetable, which the motion sets out, the better it will be for the Bill and for the future of public transport generally.

4.24 pm

Mr. J. D. Concannon (Mansfield): I do not wish to follow the tracks of the hon. Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. Parris), who was a member of the Select Committee on Transport. It is pleasing that the hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross), who is a member of the Standing Committee, was also a member of the Select Committee.

I have said more than once that I am not in favour of the creation of Select Committees. Before they were established, the attendance in the Chamber during timetable motion debates was always much greater than it is today. This afternoon we are hearing, in the main, only those who are members of the Standing Committee. The Select Committees have done great damage in reducing attendances in the House. However, they exist and it is remiss of the Government if they take no notice of their reports. I am a member of a Select Committee and I am aware of the way in which Members toil prior to and during their meetings. In this instance the Government introduced the Bill before the Select Committee on Transport had produced its report.

It was clear that the Leader of the House was embarrassed in moving the motion. That was plain for us all to see. The right hon. Gentleman kept his head down and read a prepared speech. I suppose that the speech would be about the same whatever Bill was being guillotined. Only the figures would be slightly different.

I am not shouting foul at the introduction of this guillotine motion. I am probably unique in having argued on behalf of my party that the Government should have a guillotine motion. I recognise that guillotine motions have a part to play in our affairs. I volunteered to be a member of the Standing Committee and no man can display greater love for his party than one who gives up a great deal of his life outside this place to sit as a member of a Committee considering a Transport Bill. I participated in the 1968 Transport Bill and the hon. Member for Derbyshire, West should read the three volumes that contain the reports of our debates in that Committee. If he does so, he will learn that Transport Bills are usually extremely controversial whether they are introduced by Labour or Conservative Governments. The Bill currently in Committee contains 114 clauses. It is complex and controversial but, above all, the proposals that it sets out are brand new. We have heard about leaps in the dark and acts of faith. The Bill should have been the first one to be considered in the new Session. It should not have been introduced at such a late stage.

Opposition Members of the Committee have been chided for taking so long on the sittings motion and clause 1 which, in effect, is the Bill. If we had not done so, we would not have been doing our job properly. We had a duty to express our point of view on clause 1. Clause 1 having been agreed to stand part of the Bill, it was then the Opposition's job to consider the nuts and bolts of the proposed machinery with a view to trying to make them rather better. Some clauses are, of course, more important than others. Clause 5, for example, is central to the Bill.

Of course, the Bill is not about buses, better bus services or lower fares. It reflects the Secretary of State's dogma and the grand master plan that emerged from his pen some time ago. This is clear as we consider the Bill and listen to ministerial replies. The Government said when we first met in Committee that they had an open mind and that if the Opposition advanced good arguments their amendments would be accepted. Instead, there has been confusion. My right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) was not quite correct when he suggested that an amendment was accepted that would reduce the retiring age of commissioners from 70 years to 65. The issue was rather more complex than that. In fact, the Government rejected that amendment. We are leaving alone those commissioners who are already in place, but, in future, we might call for them to retire at 65. I think that the hon. Member for Isle of Wight was more surprised than the rest of the Committee when one of his amendments was accepted. The Government's actions left him speechless.

There was great confusion because the Bill was not properly thought through. Differing and confusing responses were given to each clause and amendment. There was a little pantomime when I asked about the traffic commissioner for Nottinghamshire, one hon. Member

[Mr. J. D. Concannon]

saying that he would be in Peterborough and the Secretary of State saying that he would be in Nottingham. Hon. Members conducted a tête-à-tête and it was discovered — lo and behold — that the Secretary of State was wrong. The commissioner will be in Peterborough, rather than in Nottingham.

At the last Committee sitting the Opposition moved an important amendment concerning local government authority. We were told that we should not worry about the amendment, because local councils would make the regulations dealing with taxi services. We accepted that point. Shortly afterwards, during consideration of the motion that the clause stand part of the Bill, there was a sudden change of mind. We discovered that local authorities would be able to put forward only those regulations that the Secretary of State agreed. If the Secretary of State disagreed, he would write to the authorities to put them wise.

Many assumptions have been made. It is said that if only the profitable areas and routes are taken over by bus services subsidies might need to come from local authorities, as though one can assume that the local authorities will pick up the bits and pieces and keep the bus services going. I am not sure that the local authorities will take on that responsiblity or that they will have the necessary finance to do so, once the the Government have done with them.

I object to the motion because the Bill is lengthy, complex and has not been completely thought through. The Bill needs a good going over so that we can sort out these aspects. I believe that Bills of this nature should be considered early in the Session. This Bill has never had a chance; the Committee has never had a chance. It was obvious from the word go that the Bill was not being considered properly. Hon. Members who have sat on Committees know that there is a set way of conducting the business. We have often discussed the fact that there was something rather odd about this Committee. The Bill went into Committee with hon. Members knowing full well that there was not a cat in hell's chance that it would be scrutinised properly for the correct period.

Mr. David Maclean (Penrith and The Border): Leaving aside the right hon. Gentleman's point that there was something rather odd about the Committee, does he accept that it was odd — I have heard Opposition Members saying this in the Corridor—that Conservative Members participated in this Committee more than had been the practice in the past with similar Committees?

Mr. Concannon: That is just one aspect that I am trying to point out. You will know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, from your great experience as Committee Chairman, that the Opposition are supposed to make the running in Committee. They are told to make the running and are allowed to do so. The only time that Conservative Members participated in Committee discussions while they were in opposition was when the guillotine motion had been passed. It did not matter what happened then. They could take their turn and turn about. The Leader of the House would not have been keen to move this motion if it had been pointed out that 45 of the 90 hours were taken by Government Ministers. It is standard procedure in such Committees that the Opposition should make the running.

It is well known that the Bill was introduced late in the Session, that it never stood a chance and that it would be guillotined sooner rather than later. The Bill was considered for two sittings and then we were on to the night shift, simply to get the hours in so that the Leader of the House could legitimately move a timetable motion. The Leader of the House bears some responsibility for this. He should have had words with the people in the right place and, in February or March, when the Bill was not in Committee, he should have said, "It is too late to give the Bill a fair run. Let us leave it until the following Session." In that case, the Bill could have been scrutinised properly. It certainly will not be given the scrutiny it deserves.

We have been told that only 11 clauses have been considered, but clause 1 was, in effect, about the Bill and two other clauses were of great importance. Two days are left for Report and Third Reading. Not only the Opposition but many activists in the Conservative party oppose various parts of the Bill. I am sure that the other place will go over the Bill better than this House has been allowed to do.

Tomorrow, a substantial lobby will meet hon. Members. It might comprise vested interests, but what the heck is wrong with that? If lobbies do not look out for their own interests, we should do so or we would be failing in our duty. I was telephoned at the weekend and asked whether I would receive a petition from Nottingham city. It is not often that Nottingham looks for my help, but I shall receive that petition.

Many people in industry and trade are worried about what will happen to their pensions and pension schemes, and the Minister should make a point of making a statement on this matter today.

If the Government had conducted their business properly and ensured that consideration started early in the Session, we need not have had the guillotine motion. We could have given the Bill the scrutiny that it deserves.

4.39 pm

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): I wish principally to express my thanks to my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House for introducing a timetable motion to put this matter on an appropriate and correct footing. I work on the assumption—as a new Member I say this only tentatively—that the basis of legislation is that we debate the principle of a measure on Second Reading and presume that when we have done that the principle is established, and that the job of the Standing Committee is to scrutinise the legislation clause by clause and to improve it. When I arrived in Committee I still held that view, but I have learnt since then.

By my calculations, the Committee has sat for about 96 hours. That is long enough for us to have had two births and one marriage. I hope that the timetable motion will allow us to avoid the remainder of the trilogy before we go much further. I should like to congratulate both my hon. Friends who have become fathers and the Opposition Member who got married on Saturday. We wish them all extremely well. That gives some idea of the length of the proceedings that we have had to endure.

I want to give the House a few statistics that I have developed while considering the Committee's proceedings to put into context some of the things that have been said, in particular, by the shadow Leader of the House, the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore),

who refused to allow interventions. It took one third of the Committee's deliberations to get beyond clause 1. We were told that that was because clause 1 deals with the principle of the Bill. I thought, as I have said, that the Bill's principle was dealt with on Second Reading. The House said what it wanted to say then and passed the Bill to Committee on the assumption that the principle had been established. Given that, I should have thought that we could have saved ourselves a great deal of time by not repeating the exercise on clause 1, which dealt with the principles of regulation and deregulation. About 30 hours were spent debating clause 1 and the principles all over again.

The Committee reached schedule 2 about halfway through its deliberations. By the time the Committee had completed the 96 hours—it seemed a great deal longer—it had covered only 12 clauses—in other words, about 10 per cent. of the clauses. For that reason the timetable measure has been brought before us.

Matters get worse, because on examining the details some interesting facts emerge. If we run a slide rule over the Committee's proceedings, we find that the Opposition consist of about 40 per cent. of the Committee's membership, but they have occupied 80 per cent. of the Committee's speaking time. That is why when the shadow Leader of the House complained about the time we had taken to get to the present stage, I interrupted him—from, I confess, a sedentary position because he would not accept any interventions—to ask whose fault that was.

The blame for the Committee having taken an excessive amount of time to go the short distance that it has lies at the Opposition's door.

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham) *rose*——

Mr. Forth: Opposition Members have spent about 80 per cent. of the Committee's time despite the fact that they represent only 40 per cent. of the membership. I shall gladly give way to the hon. Gentleman who claimed, I suspect with some pride, to have occupied most of that 80 per cent.

Dr. Marek: I am grateful to the hon. Member for giving way. We made short and succinct speeches. Is not the explanation for the fact that we took up 80 per cent. of the time that we have read the Bill and have the country's interests at heart, whereas every time that I see the hon. Gentleman in Committee he seems to be licking envelopes?

Mr. Forth: The problem is that the Committee is charged with the detail of the Bill. The difficulty is that many Conservative Members have been waiting anxiously to reach some of the provisions in which they have a great and abiding interest. We have been unable to reach that business because some of the speeches in the early stages of the Committee were two or three hours long. That cannot be interpreted as a proper and detailed scrutiny of the Bill's provisions. It can be interpreted only as the classical but wrongheaded approach taken by the Opposition of filibustering and time wasting. That is why the Government are forced to propose a timetable motion. If we agreed with the Opposition's approach, as my right hon. Friend said, we would prevent the measure from getting to the statute book, which is the Opposition's objective. The measure might also be made worse.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): When the hon. Gentleman measured the column inches of speeches, did he take into account the inordinate number of interventions by the hon. Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen)? Furthermore, has the hon. Gentleman taken into account the fact that, when the Government Chief Whip determined the Tory composition of the Committee, he was extremely astute, because although there were an enormous number of constituents of Tory Members and Tory dissidents who were up in arms about the Bill, he decided to have in Committee nothing more than lobby fodder which would keep quiet and say nothing?

Mr. Hayes: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Gentleman said that it was the Government Chief Whip who determined who was on the Committee. It is the Committee of Selection that chooses the members of the Committee. It is completely non-partisan.

Mr. Forth: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, because he has pointed out the mischievous nature of what was said. It gives me the opportunity to reply to something that the hon. Member of Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) said about the composition of the Committee. If you were to look at the composition of the Committee, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you would find that the geographical representation from the Conservative Benches is comprehensive. We have Members from up and down the country—from Scotland, the North, urban areas, the midlands and the south-west. All the travelling public is therefore represented. Unfortunately, that cannot be said of Opposition Members. In a sense, I have to forgive them, because that reflects the completely unrepresentative nature of the Labour party today. It has been able to muster Members from what can only be described by the more impolite amongst us as the Celtic fringes, although I would not be so rude. Vast areas of the United Kingdom are unrepresented by Opposition Members. From that point of view, the selection is odd.

Most Conservative members of the Committee were volunteers. I speak not only for myself but for many others. Conservative Members were queueing at the door of the room of the Chairman of the Committee of Selection asking for the honour to serve on the Committee, and we have been delighted to do so. We have occasionally intervened in the speeches of Opposition Members. We went to the Committee with the presumption that the principle of the Bill was supported and that we need not therefore speak excessively or at length on every clause but could stand quietly behind the Minister when he explained the clauses. If we heard nonsense spoken by the Opposition, we felt it our duty to intervene to correct or question further the verbose nonsense that we were hearing.

Mr. Concannon: If Conservative Members were all volunteers keenly and actively involved in transport matters, why did we so often have to wait because they could not keep a quorum?

Mr. Forth: I had hoped that that sort of mischievous nonsense would not be brought to the House today, because my hon. Friends and I know full well that the proceedings of the Committee have never been interrupted for the lack of a quorum — *[Interruption.]* — unless Opposition Members, having noticed hon. Members going out for calls of nature or other reasons, took the opportunity to disrupt the proceedings by asking whether

[Mr. Forth]

there was a quorum. In yet another way, Opposition Members were obstructive and negative in prolonging and disrupting the proceedings of the Committee.

For all those reasons, I am relieved that the Leader of the House has moved a timetable motion which will have the objective of bringing to an end the negative and destructive tactics which have been pursued by Opposition Members from the outset. It will enable us to proceed with a proper scrutiny of the Bill, with participation from all hon. Members, so that it may come out of Committee in better shape than it went in. It is to the motion that we look for that opportunity, for regrettably the Opposition have not provided it up to now.

4.41 pm

Mr. Stephen Ross (Isle of Wight): April 1 is an appropriate date on which to discuss the Transport Bill, as the debate so far has borne out. The hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) referred to the two births and the marriage which have taken place since the Committee started. That is one example of an immaculate conception, for the proceedings so far have covered only five weeks since 21 February.

I have some respect for the Leader of the House and I am sorry that he is not present in the Chamber. I feel that he cannot be happy about what he is doing with the Transport Bill and the several other Bills that have been guillotined by the Government. It is a daft way to legislate. The sooner we have a timetable for Bills as they go into Committee, the better. That has been said frequently from the Liberal Benches, but no progress has been made in that direction.

So far the Government have made only one and a half concessions and two commitments in Committee. One of them was made to me in regard to the fees charged to people wishing to see the decisions of traffic commissioners. I am glad that the Minister allowed me that concession. In addition, there have been two statements of intent that we have yet to see proven. Apart from that, the Government have conceded nothing.

Clause 1 is the crucial clause. Although some complaint may be made about the time taken to debate it, the total abolition of road service licensing is a big step to take. Many of us feel that it is too big a step and that there should be some regulation of licensing. Ultimately, I think that it will be necessary to return to a system of regulation. I do not think that there is any advantage to be gained by following the example of Chile in that respect.

Clause 5 relates to the registration of local services, and the Government have listened to what we said about that. We spoke on advice given to us by the Government's own supporters in the Association of County Councils and by the chairman of the very committee that was involved in the Hereford experiment. Everything that I have heard in the debate on clause 5 convinces me that registration should remain with the transport authorities and not be passed to the traffic commissioners. I hope that some common sense will prevail in Government circles and that our amendments on this position will be restored.

Mr. Parris: If the county councils had shown a more positive attitude towards the Bill in general and many of them had not shown themselves to be totally hostile to everything that the Bill seeks to achieve, does the hon. Gentleman think that they might have stood a better chance of being selected as the registration authorities?

Mr. Ross: The hon. Gentleman is usually right with his facts, but on this occasion I think that he is wrong. I think that he is quoting the Association of District Councils, which has shown opposition. The ACC made statements in support of the Bill.

Mr. Parris: I do not mean the Association of County Councils. I refer to the many individual county councils which are spending millions of pounds frightening pensioners in their areas in regard to the loss of bus facilities.

Mr. Ross: We have not done that in my constituency. We have just been accused of putting the rates up by 31 per cent. as opposed to the average of Conservative county councils. They happen to be Labour, not Liberal, county councils. On the other hand, I believe that many people living in rural areas have reason for concern. While I agree that it is important to paint the true picture, the fact is that the ACC has supported the Bill. I think that it was far too craven towards the Government and it has not obtained what it would like to have obtained. It was right to ask for the registration role, but it came in far too late with its request. The ACC went on bended knee to the Government. I am delighted that county councils, which do not follow the attitude of the ACC, have formed their own group. I have been a delegate to meetings of the ACC, but I might just as well have been a representative of the CBI, judging by some of its members' comments.

Clauses 9 to 14 deal with taxis and hire cars. The Committee was dealing with them at its last sitting. I think that Conservative Members must accept that what we have been told about taxis is nonsense. I do not believe that the Government can have thought through the clauses properly. I saw a delegation of taxi drivers in my constituency on Saturday morning. They are frightened to death at the prospect of what is to happen to them. We have not had sensible answers to the points that we have put to the Government, and we have been right to pursue them. It is wrong that the Bill should be swept ahead and go into the other place with those clauses remaining as they are. I do not believe that the Government have thought seriously about the effect of those clauses on taxi services.

It is not true, as has been said in the debate, that there have not been innovations following the 1980 and 1981 Acts. There have been experiments and competition throughout the country, not simply in the trial areas, bringing in mini-buses, and so on. Those experiments should have been allowed to continue.

We shall now have very limited time in which to discuss community bus services and the important question of tendering. Does the Secretary of State think that there will be sufficient money for the county councils to be able to subsidise the various groups of services? Some 33 routes in all have been subsidised by Hereford and Worcester. Does he think that an extra £20 million will be enough to cover all the routes? We want to discuss that question and to have some assurances that he will go back to the Treasury and get the necessary money to give the system a chance to work.

We have not discussed safety regulations, suspension of licences, the privatisation of the National Bus Company, under clause 45, and the important question of

pensions, on which I have received representations. We have not discussed fuel duty rebates or bus substitution for withdrawn rail services. I should like to discuss those matters for a considerable time, together with the role of the Development Commission in regard to rural grants. Why not give the grants directly to the county councils? They are the bodies which will have to make the subsidies. Why have another body operating in that area? It does not make much sense. I am a great supporter of the Development Commission—it was an idea that Lloyd-George introduced—but I do not understand why it should be involved in bus grants.

The Bill does not reflect the majority view of the Select Committee on Transport, whatever the hon. Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. Parris) may say. The Select Committee's report is based on the evidence that we took and what we saw for ourselves when we went to Hereford. The majority of the Committee were opposed to total deregulation. We felt that registration and co-ordination should be a matter for the transport authorities—largely the shire counties. We suggested that there should be a much wider inquiry before delicensing taxi services.

One has become used to the speeches of the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire and others for whom planning is now a dirty word. For them, anything to do with local government seems to be totally unacceptable.

The present system of legislating is appalling and it must be changed. Unfortunately, we have to say the same thing every time complicated Bills are guillotined in this House. I am sorry that the Leader of the House—for whom, as I said earlier, I have much regard—is not present. Perhaps he is absent because of his disgust at what we are having to do. Perhaps at long last the public will appreciate exactly how we go about legislating in this place. It is a disgraceful system. Perhaps the public will at last take the necessary action to put an end to it and sweep the perpetrators aside.

4.58 pm

Mr. David Maclean (Penrith and The Border): I welcome the motion moved by the Leader of the House. Like the hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross), I feel that the way that we have been dealing with the Bill is appalling, but the responsibility for the appalling behaviour lies at the door of the Opposition. As my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) said, we have had 96 hours of debate in Committee, of which 80 per cent. has been taken up by Opposition Members, half of it on clause 1. We heard the same old arguments that we heard on Second Reading.

I add my congratulations to the hon. Member who has been married since the Committee began its deliberations, and to my two hon. Friends whose spouses gave birth. Although those colleagues have been productive, I doubt whether, in view of the long hours that we have been sitting, there will have been many conceptions since the Bill started in Committee.

I learned a good deal as a relatively new member of a Standing Committee. When the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Malek) intervened in the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire, he said that the Opposition talked at great length because hon. Members were concerned with the detail of the Bill. That is absolutely true. I would not dream of casting any aspersions on that.

I only regret that the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) is not here. I believe that he has suffered a back injury, and I commiserate with him. I regret that he is not here to enliven our proceedings. Perhaps he could have explained to us why, in the two and a half hours we spent discussing the sittings motion, that self-same Opposition, who are terribly concerned about the detailed workings of the Bill, talked for ages and ages about how one should gather mistletoe in Wales. I am just a country lad, and I learned a lot about how to gather mistletoe in Wales.

The same hon. Member and others in Committee were obsessed with employment—it is quite right that with 3 million unemployed we should be obsessed with employment. However, the Opposition were not obsessed with normal employment and unemployment. The hon. Member for Rhondda accused Conservative Members of being barristers, solicitors, accountants, second-hand car dealers and other tax crooks. Such comments are made all the time. The last time the hon. Gentleman said it to me, I confess that, not being one of those involved, I did not have a clue as to what he was talking about. That betrays the obsession of Opposition Members with the professions of Conservative Members rather than with the detailed workings of the Bill.

You will be pleased to hear, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we did not spend long on this. There was a superb intervention by an Opposition Member who accused one of my hon. Friends of being nothing more than a ladies' underwear salesman. We did not spend too long discussing the merits of whether it was high-class ladies' underwear, and quickly moved on. Perhaps that was the problem when one of the Opposition Members was reading from briefs.

It is possibly some time since you served on a Standing Committee, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but things probably have not changed since your day. The Opposition began in their customary style by doing all the talking and making all the gibes at Conservative Members, calling them mere dummies and Lobby fodder, wheeled into Committee just to sit behind the Minister, say the occasional "Hear, hear" and then vote, and not say anything else. Then things began to go wrong for the Opposition. Conservative Members began to do the unthinkable. When we heard again and again the same old Second Reading argument from Opposition Members and the same old arguments rehearsed ad nauseam, we began to challenge some of the rubbish that we were hearing from the Opposition. Then things went from bad to worse for them. We began to table amendments. Not only did we table amendments but we began to talk to them.

Eventually, horror of horrors, we actually forced a Division. The Opposition were most annoyed about that, and in that Division, what did we find? Some Conservative Members were opposed to the amendment and others voted for it. We had dissension in the ranks. Initially, the Opposition ridiculed us for daring to have dissension in the ranks because they thought that we were all whipped in, in a tight little mass. It began to dawn on them that it was not politically sensible to accuse us of being free spirits and having individual minds, in tabling amendments and forcing them on Ministers. Then it emerged what the real grouse was. Just as the Opposition like to think that they have the exclusive use of clichés such as "compassion over the unemployed", they believe that they have an exclusive right to the new cliché in Committee, which is, "to fashion

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a better Bill in Committee". When we in the Conservative party took up the invitation and began to fashion a better Bill in Committee, the Opposition did not like it.

Mr. Bob Clay (Sunderland, North): The hon. Gentleman referred to amendments actually being tabled by Conservative Members. Other than one abstention by the hon. Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. Parris) and one by the hon. Member for Bristol, East (Mr. Sayeed), did any Conservative Member manage to vote for his amendment?

Mr. Maclean: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman has picked the wrong person to ask. The answer is, "Myself." I tabled an amendment on the age of traffic commissioners— *[Interruption.]* Opposition Members may laugh but, horror of horrors, it was the evil Tories who reduced the retirement age of traffic commissioners from 70 to 65. We did it, horror of horrors, so it is to be rubbished.

Mr. Christopher Chope (Southampton, Itchen): Disgraceful.

Mr. Maclean: It is not only disgraceful; it is outrageous and shocking.

If other Conservative Members tabled amendments and did not support them because the Minister agreed that he would accept the principle and bring forward detailed amendments on Report, it is right for them to withdraw their amendments and not vote on them. If other Conservative Members did not vote on their amendments, it is up to them to justify that. If any of them are in the Chamber, they can explain to Opposition Members. Because Opposition Members have failed to get any of their nonsensical wrecking amendments accepted, which were not designed to fashion a better Bill, but were deliberately designed to frustrate the intention of the Bill, which was given a massive majority on Second Reading, they should not complain because my amendment was accepted.

Mrs. Dunwoody: I am very impressed by the size of the hon. Gentleman's lungs, because he never seems to take breath. How many of his hon. Friends voted against amendments that they themselves tabled? Which of his hon. Friends who was absent from the vote and therefore did not vote against his own amendment then went on regional television and said that he had got the most fantastic concession out of Ministers?

Mr. Maclean: I have no idea who those colleagues are. They can answer for themselves. All that I know is that on my amendment three or four of my hon. Friends did not vote for it or were opposed to it. I accept that. The fact that cannot be denied is that a Conservative Member tabled an amendment to the Bill; we forced the Minister's arm and got a majority, and the amendment was accepted. Opposition Members did not like that particular fact because it destroyed the illusion and shattered the myth. As the right hon. Member for Mansfield (Mr. Concannon), whom I respect greatly, said earlier, the Committee was an odd lot from the start. I do not readily accept that terminology, but if "an odd lot" means that we spoke up and said to the Minister, "We shall fashion a better Bill in Committee on this side as well," and did not accept some of the normal conventions in a Standing Committee that on the Government side one keeps one's mouth shut to get the Bill through and lets the Opposition do all the running——

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): Oh.

Mr. Maclean: The hon. Gentleman says "Oh", but we heard that in the Corridor from his hon. Friends, who were complaining that "this lot" did not keep their mouths shut and were breaking all the normal conventions for Conservative Members in Committee. To use the phrase that will soon become as popular as the word "infrastructure" as seen in the Chamber in 1985, "We were only attempting to fashion a better Bill in Committee."

There were some more interruptions from Opposition Members. For example, some sexist arguments crept in occasionally. Almost every time an hon. Member made a remark such as, "He"—the traffic commissioner—"may wish to intervene", the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) popped up and said, "Does the hon. Gentleman realise that the traffic commissioner may be a woman? How dare the hon. Gentleman refer to the traffic commissioner as 'he'." We took up a few seconds of the Committee's time apologising that when we said "he" we meant "she" as well. When I trained in law, I was told that when the term "he" is used the male will always be held to embrace the female. We should all adopt that approach.

My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire has already said that we had difficulty in maintaining a quorum. There was no difficulty. No time was lost on the Bill because not sufficient Government Members were there. The only time lost——

Mr. Dixon: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Gentleman is deliberately misleading the House if he says that no time was lost——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will rephrase what he said. He must not use unparliamentary language.

Mr. Dixon: The hon. Member for Penrith and The Border (Mr. Maclean) has just said that the Committee was never delayed because there was no quorum because of a lack of hon. Members on the Government side. That is untrue. The record shows that on eight occasions the sitting had to be suspended because the Government could not keep 50 per cent. of their hon. Members in the Committee on this important Bill.

Mr. Maclean: If I have said something that the record proves to be untrue, I unreservedly withdraw it. I hope that I shall always do so while I am a Member of this House.

I attended every sitting of the Standing Committee bar one, and I cannot recall any occasion on which delay was caused because an insufficient number of Conservative Members were present. However, if the record proves otherwise, I shall unreservedly withdraw what I have said.

Mr. Forth: Do not Opposition Members also have a duty, as members of the Committee, to contribute to the deliberations of the Committee? If a quorum was ever momentarily lacking because hon. Members had had to leave for a call of nature or some other reason, is not the responsibilitiy shared by all the members of the Committee?

Mr. Maclean: I could not count on the fingers on both hands the numerous occasions when a little game started.

If 14 hon. Members were present on the Conservative side, and one of them left to answer the call of nature or because he had been given an urgent message, signs would be made to Opposition Members to withdraw and they would all begin to leave through the back door. Then their Whip —or the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich—would ask the Chairman whether there was a quorum. The Chairman would then have to say, "Order. I am the Chairman of this Committee. I can count whether there is a quorum. I will decide whether we are inquorate."

Mr. Hayes: My hon. Friend talks about the little game that was played. He may remember the grin that spread, like that of the Cheshire cat, across the face of the hon. Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon). Perhaps it was the hon. Member for Jarrow who was orchestrating the little game. Perhaps he was telling his hon. Friends to disappear.

Mr. Maclean: I know that the hon. Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) would like to tell many of his hon. Friends to disappear. However, he has not been entirely successful in that regard.

We all understand the charade that takes place on Standing Committee. If, momentarily, the Government side do not constitute a quorum, the Opposition withdraw, in the hope that the whole sitting will degenerate into a shambles.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire has said, both sides of the Committee have a responsibility to maintain the quorum. If the Opposition waste time by withdrawing Members every few minutes in the hope that the quorum will be lost, they are not showing that concern for the detail of the Bill that the hon. Member for Wrexham said that the Opposition wished to display.

The Opposition's arguments — apart from the usual rehashes of Second Reading speeches — were characterised by sheer terror that local politicians, especially local Labour party politicians, would lose control over transport. Labour Members never said that openly. One would not have expected them to. However, there was a series of contradictory assertions. At one moment—or, to be more accurate, for 15 hours—they would say that there would be no buses at all. For the next 15 hours, we would hear that if this awful Bill were passed there would be so many buses that the environment would be damaged. However, we know from my hon. Friend the Member for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd) whether damage has been done in Hereford, whether chaos reigns there and whether pollution and destruction of the environment has resulted from the introduction of nine extra buses in his city.

The Opposition would then spend another few hours telling us about the greedy capitalists and privateers. They would turn from nautical terminology — pirates and privateers—to the terminology of the wild west. They would tell us how the cowboys would be fighting to grab as many passengers as possible, so as to maximise their profits; but the next few hours would be spent in a tirade about how the capitalists would publish no timetables, set up no bus stops, and grant no concessionary fares. The drivers would drive dangerously, behave recklessly and in general behave in a manner calculated to scare away as many passengers as they could.

That is the sort of nonsense that the Standing Committee had to put up with, and that is one good reason why we need a timetable motion.

Mr. Wareing: I hope that the hon. Gentleman intends to tell the House about the headline in the newspaper of a village in the constituency of the Secretary of State for Transport. The village was up in arms about what the Secretary of State had in store for his own constituents in terms of the decimation of the bus service.

Mr. Maclean: I hope that my right hon. Friend will deal with that point in his reply. I do not have the pleasure of reading the newspapers for my right hon. Friend's constituency, which is 250 miles away from my own, but on Second Reading I quoted from views expressed in a newspaper in my own constituency, which realised that the Bill was a good one and could work if not sabotaged by Labour councils. However, I do not intend to rehash my Second Reading speech.

The Committee had to listen to a litany of the disasters that the Opposition believe will follow deregulation. To hear the Opposition one would have imagined that the present bus policy was a raging success. We all know, however, that that policy has failed and needs to be radically changed before there are no buses left for my constituents. The Bill is long overdue. We need the Bill on the statute book soon, not only to give private operators a chance to improve services, but to prevent Labour councillors from inflicting more damage on bus services.

Cumbria has a Labour council with a small majority, which knows full well that it will lose the local elections in May. It is therefore seeking drastic political action, with no regard for the consequences or the damage that may be done to the public. The council had consistently—and, in its mind, for valid reasons — increased the bus subsidy, but one year before the buses were to be privatised and one year before private operators were to be allowed in the council deliberately cut the subsidy in half and agreed drastic route cuts with the NBC. The council then had the effrontery to blame the Government. According to a press release sent to me last week,

> "The County Council regrets that these service reductions and withdrawals have been made necessary following reductions in the Government money available for Council services."

In truth, Cumbria has fared better than many Conservative-controlled councils in the allocation of grants. In 1981-82, it received £88 million. For 1984-85, it can receive £94 million. The council has also acquired extra resources from continually increasing the rates. There is no doubt that it has adequate resources to continue the present funding until the Bill becomes law.

By the same post I also received a press release from the NBC. It blamed the cuts in services on me, for voting for a Bill that will not take effect until next year. In addition, however, it inadvertently revealed the true situation. The Cumberland Motor Services press release states:

> "money from central government towards bus revenue support has been thrown into the general pot of rate support grant. So bus services now have to compete for priority with all the other local government services."

That is the true state of affairs. It is not that, as the council's press release claims, the council does not have the money. As the NBC press release points out, the Socialists on the county council do not give buses a high enough priority in comparison with their other profligate spending desires.

For political reasons, the Socialists on the council dislike deregulation. For political reasons, they hate privatisation. They know that the Bill will become law

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later in the year, and that the public will enjoy the benefits of deregulation next year. When that happens, the council's mismanagement and the inefficiencies of the NBC will be exposed. The electorate will not think well of a Labour party that has conned it and connived at the demise of bus services. The Socialists had to do something desperate. From their own political standpoint, what could be better than to wreck rural services just a month before the elections, and attempt to blame that situation on the Government for bringing in a Bill that will not take effect until next year, or on me for supporting it? That is rank hypocrisy, but it is so transparent that it will fool no one.

The Bill is required urgently. We must get it through its Committee stage as soon as possible. Cumbria county council has committed in this instance an act of commercial sabotage out of political malice. My constituents need bus services, we need private operators, and we need them now.

5.20 pm

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): I shall not take up the arguments advanced by the hon. Member for Penrith and The Border (Mr. Maclean). We have heard the same silly arguments from him many times in Committee.

At the outset of my remarks I should like to return to my earlier point of order and put the record straight. During the Committee's 18th sitting on Thursday 28 March, the Chairman, who is one of the senior members of the Chairmen's Panel, had to suspend the sitting. He had pointed out on numerous occasions that Conservative Members were interrupting the proceedings to raise bogus points of order. On this specific occasion he said:

"This is no point of order. The conduct of the hon. Member for South Hams is intolerable. I suspend the sitting till 11.44 am." — [*Official Report, Standing Committee A*, 28 March 1985; c. 966.]

That arose out of the silly interventions that Tory Members had been making.

On resuming the sitting, the Chairman's attention was called to the fact that 15 hon. Members were not present, so he was again obliged to suspend the proceedings. That was the ninth occasion on which the Government had been unable to maintain a quorum They have 26 hon. Members on the Committee, and they are required to keep only 13 of them to have a quorum. The quorum is 14 hon. Members, plus the Chairman.

Mr. Forth: The hon. Gentleman talks about suspending the sittings. I am sure that he will agree that earlier in the Committee's proceedings the same Chairman suspended the sitting because of misdemeanours by one of his hon. Friends. Is not the blame shared?

Mr. Dixon: That was in the middle of the night when tempers were frayed. However, we are now talking about procedure and the Chairman of the Committee.

It is the Government's duty on a controversial and major Bill to keep a quorum. All that they are required to do is to keep half their members in the Committee. On nine occasions they have failed to do so.

I want to take up a point made earlier by the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth). He said that he was a new Member and that he believed that the House should decide the principle of legislation on Second Reading and then let the Standing Committee consider the details. However, the hon. Gentleman should not be lecturing Opposition Members about that. He should lecture those of his colleagues who are members of the Committee considering the Civil Aviation Bill. The House decided on the principle of that Bill, but the Tory Members of the Standing Committee would not even give the Minister a sittings motion. It is not Opposition Members who require lectures from the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire; it is his own colleagues.

During business questions last week I suggested that one of the reasons why the Government wanted this guillotine motion was that their failure to have half their members present during the Committee stage was an embarrassment to them.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Mansfield (Mr. Concannon) was right when he said that the Bill should have been in Committee before Christmas, but that it was such a mess that the Government had to rush and cobble up the present Bill following numerous objections made by many sections of the transport industry.

Mr. Parris: What is the Opposition's position? Is it that the Bill should have been in Committee before Christmas, or that the Government should have delayed the Committee stage until the Select Committee had reported? They cannot hold both positions at the same time.

Mr. Dixon: My point is that the Bill was in such a mess before Christmas that the Government dared not introduce it and that they have cobbled up the present Bill. That was why the Select Committee inspected the Bill. The hon. Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. Parris) is a member of the Select Committee. He and his colleagues interviewed people from all parts of the transport industry, and I am told that the only person in favour of the Bill was its author. None of the witnesses interviewed by the Select Committee was in favour of the Bill.

Speaking at a bus and coach dinner, the Secretary of State for Transport said that he wished to fashion a better Bill in Committee. He was speaking about the present Bill, which had just received a Second Reading. I am told that his speech went down like a lead balloon. In fact, had it not been such a cold evening and had there not been a fault in the central heating, there would have been no applause for the Secretary of State at the end of his speech.

I see the Secretary of State smiling at that. Obviously he does not want me to tell the story about the person whom he met in the Committee Corridor who asked the right hon. Gentleman whether he recognised him. The Secretary of State replied, "I am sorry, I do not recognise you. Why should I?" The chap said to him, "I was at the bus and coach dinner last week when you spoke." The right hon. Gentleman said, "There were hundreds of people there. Why should I recognise you now?" The chap's answer was, "Well, I was the one who clapped."

If the Secretary of State was genuine about wanting to fashion a better Bill in Committee, he would have accepted some of the amendments tabled by hon. Members on both sides of the Committee. My right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) spoke about amendments dealing with concessionary fares. When concessionary fares were discussed in Committee, the Secretary of State said that if private bus companies did not pick up old-age pensioners who might prevent fare-paying passengers getting on their buses,

perhaps a ghost service should run alongside to pick up the old-age pensioners. That is the kind of nonsense that we have heard from the Minister when we have discussed important issues such as concessionary fares. What is more, when we talked about taxi-drivers' hours last week, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary compared them with the hours worked by Members of Parliament. That is typical of the response that we have had in the Standing Committee.

Mr. Wareing: One of the reasons for the Government's embarrassment and their desire to get shot of the Bill quickly may be that the hon. Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen), who caused the suspension of the Committee's sitting on the occasion to which my hon. Friend referred, said that Conservatives wanted to see the healthy people in the community catered for by bus services and that only when services were commercially viable and profitable would they consider the needs of —*[Interruption.]* Hon. Members protest because they know that I have hit the nail on the head. The hon. Member for South Hams suggested that only then would the Conservative party consider the disadvantaged, the disabled and the old.

Mr. Dixon: My hon. Friend is right. The hon. Member for South Hams also said that he was the only qualified social worker serving on the Committee. He felt that, before bus operators could deal with concessions for the disabled, their services had to be profitable — [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] We asked whether that was the voice of the Tory party—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."] It is on the record. Hon. Members should realise that what they say in the Standing Committee appears on the record and that they cannot deny their remarks when we come to the Floor of the House.

On numerous occasions during the Committee's proceedings, it became fairly obvious that Government supporters intended to procrastinate. That was clear from the start of the Committee stage. The hon. Member for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd), for example, made a long intervention.

Mr. Colin Shepherd (Hereford): That is a most extraordinary accusation. Has not the Hereford trial area been quoted extensively and misquoted and misinterpreted — sometimes deliberately and at other times accidentally? In such circumstances, is not it essential for me as the hon. Member for Hereford to do all that I can, whenever I can, to correct the misunderstandings, deliberate or otherwise, that have been purveyed? To say that the hon. Member for Hereford has procrastinated when he has done no more than correct misunderstandings is almost a parliamentary insult.

Mr. Dixon: The hon. Gentleman has certainly procrastinated. As I have said, he made a speech of an hour or more at the beginning of the Committee. Moreover, his comments about the trial were not borne out by the objective recommendations made by the Select Committee after interviewing a wide range of people.

The Bill will have fundamental repercussions throughout the transport industry. That is why we want plenty of time to discuss it. The guillotine is unnecessary. Each of the 114 clauses is important, but the Government are trying to curtail discussion. Deregulation will mean that in many rural areas there will be no bus services in the evening or at weekends because the one-bus entrepreneurs repairing their buses in motorway laybys will not run such services.

Pensioners are worried about concessionary fares. The Secretary of State could easily have set their minds at rest by writing into the Bill the provision that he was eventually persuaded to put into the London Regional Transport Bill. Conservative Members involved in that legislation had rather more backbone than those in the Committee on this Bill, and they forced the Secretary of State to make that concession.

On this Bill, we have had no satisfaction from the Government despite our many questions about provision for disabled people. The same applies to our questions about staff implications. The Government have given no figures at all. The National Bus Company is to be broken up and privatised. We have asked what size the sections will be, but no information has been forthcoming. Cross-subsidy is to be made illegal, but we have not been told what will happen to rural services as a result.

Mr. Forth: Is it correct, proper or fair for the hon. Gentleman to raise matters relating to clauses in the Bill beyond those that we have reached? Many Conservative Members are anxious to reach those clauses, but the Opposition have delayed and prevented us.

Mr. Dixon: If Conservative Members are so anxious to reach those clauses, they should have the decency to oblige their Whip by turning up so that the Committee has a quorum and can make progress. On nine occasions the 26 Conservative volunteers could not muster 14 to support the Minister.

With regard to Tyne and Wear, the Government have given no satisfactory answers to the points raised many times by my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Clay) and others.

The Government are seeking to curtail debate on a very important Bill with fundamental repercussions for the transport industry throughout the country—not just the people employed in it but the passengers, whom the Conservatives, like us, regard as most important. The Government also need the guillotine to get them out of an embarrassing position, because they cannot even persuade half their volunteer supporters to attend the Committee.

5.34 pm

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): I am one of those who volunteered to serve on the Committee, not because I have fair, curly hair and a beard or because I am numb of mind, but because, like my colleagues, I believe that this is a radical, liberating Bill. It will liberate many old-age pensioners and disabled and housebound people from the imprisonment imposed by their disabilities.

The guillotine will be liberating for the Opposition, because they have run out of arguments. They debated clause 1, the principle of the Bill, for more than 30 hours. I can understand the absence of the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) who leads for the Opposition—heaven help them—in Committee. She has no doubt left her place because the hon. Member who assists her most in Committee, the hon. Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott), has gone off and got married and is now on his honeymoon. I am sure that the whole House wishes the hon. Gentleman and his wife all the very best.

It is all very well for the hon. Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) to say that the Conservatives could not keep a

[Mr. Jerry Hayes]

quorum in the Committee, but it was the hon. Gentleman and the Opposition who orchestrated that little campaign of schoolboy tricks. *[Interruption.]* I should not go so far as to call them public schoolboy tricks, except in the case of the hon. Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Clay). That campaign was orchestrated by the very people who claim to be fighting for the elderly, the disabled and the underprivileged. They have wasted so much time when we might have reached the nitty gritty of this measure and made it a better Bill.

Which side of the Committee has genuinely tried to help the disadvantaged and the disabled? It has been the Conservatives. The hon. Member for Jarrow knows the record better than most. The greatest number of amendments to help the disabled and the elderly were tabled by Conservatives. Indeed, which side of the Committee obtained the major concession from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on concessionary fares? Again, it was the Conservatives. The Opposition, in their cynicism and manipulation of the fears of the elderly and infirm, deliberately forced the matter to a Division.

Mr. Wareing: The hon. Gentleman talks about the concession made by the Secretary of State. Does he even remember what it was?

Mr. Hayes: I can assist the House there. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said that the Government would introduce a new clause on Report to provide for an opting-out system on concessionary fares rather than the opting-in system currently provided for in the Bill. Indeed, my right hon. Friend went further. He said that the Government would introduce a code of conduct to assist private operators to help the disabled. He also said that the Government would bring in new construction and use regulations to assure safety and to prevent bunching, congestion and the kind of catastrophes predicted by the Opposition. That was a major concession, but the opposition had spent such a large amount of ratepayers' money for political reasons, in view of the county council elections to be held in the next few weeks, that they were horrified to find the Conservative party and the Government actually helping the disabled and the infirm.

Mr. Clay: We have heard a great deal from Conservative Members about the so-called concession that they believe they got from the Secretary of State about concessionary travel. Will the hon. Gentleman answer yes or no to this question? Does he believe that when the new clause that will introduce the concession is tabled the concessionay travel schemes will remain as beneficial as they are at the moment?

Mr. Hayes: I am grateful to the hon. Member for asking that question. We public schoolboys have to stick together. I shall be only too happy to listen with care to what my right hon. Friend the Secretay of State has to say on the new clause when he introduces it on Report. My right hon. Friend is bound by what he said in Committee. That is a matter of record, and I do not believe that my right hon. Friend will get away from what he said. The hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich may laugh, as she has done often in Committee, but my right hon. Friend has said that he will stick to the spirit of amendment No. 205, about which I was talking in particular.

The hon. Member for Sunderland, North told us at great length about the wonders of the Tyne and Wear service, but he also told us how much it would cost the ratepayers. It was clear to the Committee that in precepting terms it would cost the ratepayers 54p in the pound to keep the Tyne and Wear transport system in operation. That is an enormous sum of money.

We have heard from Labour Members, and the right hon. Member for Mansfield (Mr. Concannon) in particular, that a delegation will come to lobby us tomorrow about clause 50, which concerns arrangements for pensioners. I shall be only too delighted to speak to those people, and I should love to be able to tell them what we have said in Committee about clause 50. However, I shall not be able to do so.

Mr. Forth: Would my hon. Friend care to extend that offer to any visitors who might come from Mid-Worcestershire, as I shall be in my constituency tomorrow?

Mr. Hayes: Of course I shall. If any of my hon. Friend's constituents come to the House and do not find him here, they will know that he is working hard in the constituency on their behalf, as he always does. However, if any come tomorrow, they will want to know—indeed, they should demand to know—what has been said in Committee about clause 50. The answer is that nothing has been said, because of the procrastination and time-wasting tactics of the Opposition. That is why I commend the guillotine motion to the House.

5.43 pm

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): This motion is absolutely outrageous, because it is an attempt to stifle democratic debate on some of the most potentially destructive legislation ever to have been introduced in this Parliament. Only 11 out of 114 clauses have been subjected to the scrutiny of the Committee, and if the motion is passed the opportunities for my hon. Friends on the Committee to scrutinise the legislation will be further hampered.

Mr. Forth *rose*——

Mr. Canavan: I shall not give way, because the debate lasts for only three hours, as the guillotine motion itself has been guillotined. The hon. Gentleman has had a chance to make his own speech.

The motives behind this legislation and behind the motion are based on sheer doctrinaire hatred of public ownership and public enterprise. Even the Government did not realise how much public antipathy there would be to this Bill. It was mentioned in the Queen's Speech in November, but it was not published and introduced into the House until after the Christmas recess. The complaints from all those concerned about public transport, whether users, owners or the trade unions representing the workers in the industry, are genuine complaints about the lack of pre-legislative consultation. Now, as the legislation is going through the House, the Government should be making every effort to mend their ways and should give hon. Members a fair crack of the whip in putting their views to the Committee. Unfortunately, the motion will deprive them of that opportunity.

Mr. Jonathan Sayeed (Bristol, East): Is the hon. Gentleman aware that on 20 July 1976 the right hon.

Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) laid five guillotine motions before the House in one day? Would the hon. Gentleman care to comment on that?

Mr. Canavan: That has nothing to do with this motion. My right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) never came forward with such a nonsense of a Bill as this, which had inadequate consultation even before it was published. I am unable to find, apart from Conservative Members and a few of their friends who want to take advantage of privatisation and deregulation, anybody in favour of the legislation, whether in the industry, potential passengers or workers. Perhaps the Secretary of State will tell us about that.

The Bill will have a devastating effect on passengers and workers. For passengers, privatisation or deregulation will not mean an improvement in the service. Inevitably, entrepreneurs will be interested only in the most lucrative routes. Therefore, people who live in outlying housing schemes or towns and villages will be put at a distinct disadvantage because their transport system will be reduced to next to nothing. The entrepreneurs will bid only for the lucrative intra-city services within urban areas and inter-city routes.

Fears have been expressed about environmental and safety factors and about some private cowboy operators racing each other in ramshackle vehicles to a decreasing number of bus stops.

Mr. Forth *rose*——

Mr. Canavan: I shall not give way because I want some of my hon. Friends to get in, and I think that the hon. Gentleman is trying to filibuster the debate.

Transport service workers are employed as drivers, maintenance engineers and so on in the bus garages, whether for the National Bus Company or the Scottish bus group north of the Border. There are also those who build the buses. In my constituency there is a firm of coachbuilders called Walter Alexanders. Without boasting, I can say that the workers in that factory are capable of building the best double decker buses in the world and their export achievements support that contention.

However, it is no use thinking simply in terms of exporting buses, whether to Hong Kong or Singapore, if, at the same time, the domestic market is suffering a recession as a direct result of Government economic policies. The recession in the domestic market will be made worse by the Bill. It will mean a decrease in employment opportunities for the workers in that factory, which is one of the biggest manufacturing units left in my constituency, where unemployment is already far too high. To give some idea of the deterioration that has occurred since the Government came to power, there has been a 50 per cent. reduction in the work force. It has dropped from over 1,000 to about 500.

Mr. Forth *rose*——

Mr. Canavan: The management and the workers there speak with one voice on the Bill. They hear Ministers in Committee conjuring up visions of people running around in minibuses, microbuses and taxis. If people cannot afford a taxi, they will have to stay at home or walk. That might be all right for Ministers with their chauffeur-driven cars, which are run at the taxpayers' expense, but what about pensioners and the disabled, who are dependent upon a decent public transport system? What use is a concessionary fare ticket through a local authority if there is no public transport system left worth talking about?

Mention has been made of tomorrow's transport lobby when, possibly, thousands of transport workers, and others who are concerned about the effects of the Bill, will converge on Parliament from all over Britain. It is an insult for the Government to be introducing a guillotine motion on the eve of one of the biggest lobbies of this Parliament. If ever there were a case for listening to the workers whose jobs are involved, this is it. Surely the Government should at least delay introducing a timetable motion until they have listened to the case that will be put by the workers tomorrow.

I am forced to the conclusion that the Government have introduced the timetable motion because they find it impossible to defend their legislation. Most Ministers are incompetent but even the most competent of the Ministers would find it impossible to defend the indefensible.

Mr. Forth *rose*——

Mr. Canavan: No, I shall not give way.

Therefore, because Ministers cannot defend the indefensible it is their intention to try to cut democratic debate to a minimum and to bulldoze the timetable motion through on a three-line whip. They are making a mockery of parliamentary democracy. If is further proof, if proof were needed, that the Government often adopt tactics that have more in common with the jackboot tactics of Fascism than genuine participatory democracy.

5.52 pm

Mr. Colin Shepherd (Hereford): I had not intended to intervene in the debate, but I have been provoked, if that is the right word, into so doing by some of the remarks that have been made.

My overall feeling today is one of disappointment. When we started consideration of the Bill I had hoped that we would be able to get through without having to come to the House with a guillotine motion, but my best hopes were dashed early on in the consideration of the Bill when it became apparent that the Opposition's arguments were thin and would be deployed time and again with no apparent recognition of the proper and correct refutations that were being steadily put forward.

The Opposition in their rhetoric have certainly said that they want to improve the Bill, but I can find nothing in their speeches or amendments that leads me to believe that they want to do anything other than wreck the Bill. Their rhetoric does not match their objectives. It is important that that is understood. The Opposition have not sought to "fashion a better Bill." Instead, the Committee has been led by Conservative Back Benchers who have sought to be of assistance in bringing forward arguments which could lead to a better Bill. I have heard little during most of the sittings that I have attended that has led me to believe that there has been much constructive thought among Opposition Members. Indeed, there has been much destructive thought.

It was apparent after a short time that the Bill could not be dealt with in Committee without a guillotine motion. The fact that the Committee spent 30 hours on clause 1 showed clearly, as my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) said, that the principle of deregulation had been granted by the House. Therefore,

[Mr. Colin Shepherd]

tactically speaking, it was wrong for the Opposition to seek to destroy the Bill and to bring about the circumstances which would drive the Government to introduce a guillotine motion.

Tactically, the Opposition would have done better to accept that the will of the House was to move towards a deregulated transport system and then to seek to achieve all the various points about which there is genuine concern in the country—the real, not the rhetorical, points. The Opposition have now damaged that opportunity. If the Bill does not emerge from Committee as fully discussed as I would like it to be, I can look myself in the eye in the mirror and my colleagues in the face and say that it was not because of the actions of Conservative Members but because of the Opposition's ill-judged tactics. The Opposition have served their interests ill in the way that they have tackled this measure.

The Opposition showed great commitment to the principle of opposing the Bill clause by clause, line by line. Yet, as we have seen, they were content to be manipulated out of the Committee so as to try to destroy the quorum. They were content to be the Lobby fodder or the lackeys of the Opposition Whip in his tactical mismanipulation of the Bill. No one is served well by such an approach.

Mr. Forth: I know that my hon. Friend is by nature a modest and unassuming man, but will he take this opportunity to refute the disgraceful claim by the hon. Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) earlier that he had made a long intervention in Committee? It was the wish and desire of the Committee to hear at first hand of the experience in Hereford from my hon. Friend the Member for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd) in order to lay to rest all the misquotations and distortions that were coming from the Opposition about the experiment. Does my hon. Friend accept that that was the fact?

Mr. Shepherd: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for drawing out that significant and important point.

Today, we heard the same old prophecies of doom from the hon. Members for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) and for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan). They are confident that there will be no buses at all.

I have some further news for the House tonight. The Herefordshire Federation of Women's Institutes has, with the assistance of the local rural community council, conducted an arm's-length survey of all the 123 branches of the women's institutes within Herefordshire. Some interesting figures emerged. The responses were returned on a 9 : 2 ratio between those who are inside and those who are outside the trial area. The figures relate to rural buses, about which the fear of God has been put into so many pensioners and others stuck out in the countryside.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): Quite rightly.

Mr. Shepherd: If the hon. Gentleman knows where the countryside is, he might like to listen.

Of those within the trial area, 35 per cent. felt that the frequency of services was worse, but 41 per cent. thought that it was the same and 23 per cent. thought that it was better. That means a substantial majority in terms of better services.

On punctuality, 5 per cent. thought that services were worse, 61 per cent. thought that they were the same and 32 per cent. thought that they were better. Appropriate timing is an important factor, and in that category 27 per cent. thought that services were worse, 52 per cent. thought that they were the same and 20 per cent. thought that they were better.

Much has been said about reliability. The survey shows that 2 per cent. found that the reliability of services was worse, 73 per cent. said that it was the same and 25 per cent. reported that it was better. The figures show that 4 per cent. found drivers' attitudes worse, 59 per cent. found them the same and 37 per cent. thought that they were better. On bus fares, 35 per cent. found them worse, 40 per cent. said that they were the same and 26 per cent. said that they were better.

Those figures reveal substantial confidence. Let me give just two more sets of statistics. The women's institutes were asked how they would describe the bus services in their areas and responses were sought from those inside the trial areas and from those outside. The figures showed that 40 per cent. of those inside the trial areas, but only 9 per cent. of those outside, found services "reasonably adequate for needs." Another category was

"Not good but all that can be expected."

The survey showed that 32 per cent. of those inside the trial area took that view of their services, compared with 36 per cent. outside. Another category was

"Though basic services are adequate, there are needs not met which cause serious problems."

Within the trial areas, 28 per cent. agreed with that description of their services, but the figure outside the trial area was 45 per cent. In the category "Completely inadequate for needs," the figures were about the same: 10 per cent. inside the area and 9 per cent. outside the area agreed with that description.

All those figures show that the bus services inside the trial area are infinitely better than the services outside. They give the lie to the prophecies of doom that we hear from the Opposition.

Mr. Maclean: Those figures are devastating proof of the success of the Hereford trial area. Those of us from other parts of the country want to share in that success by having deregulation in our areas. Will my hon. Friend circulate those figures to his hon. Friends and bring them up in Committee so that we can have proof of how well the experiment in Hereford has worked?

Mr. Shepherd: I shall circulate the figures. They are hot off the press. The rural community council wanted to make sure that the outside world understood the grass roots views of those who live in Herefordshire and use public transport. I shall bring out the figures in Committee, because they are important.

The figures underline the need for people in the countryside to lobby candidates in the forthcoming county council elections to ensure that they are committed to transport in the rural areas. That is vital. With deregulation it will be easier to reverse the trend of decline in public transport. That will enable those living in rural areas to achieve a better standard of transport than if we allow the present decline to continue, at enormous cost. The message is clear.

I am disappointed that, because of the attitude of Opposition Members, we have not had the opportunity to

discuss some important matters. I shall try to continue to spell out the lessons of the Hereford trial as the Bill proceeds through Committee.

6.4 pm

Mr. Richard Caborn (Sheffield, Central): The reason for the lengthy discussions in Committee is that this is an ill-considered Bill. The hon. Member for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd) has demonstrated the problems that the Government face in justifying the Bill.

The massive opposition to the Bill comes from a wide spectrum. I will deal later with the view of the women's institutes, but the Association of District Councils, chambers of commerce and many other organisations have lobbied members of the Committee to put across their point of view because they thought that the Secretary of State was serious when he said that the Government would try to "fashion a better Bill". It has been clearly shown that that is not the case.

We must also take into account the report of the Select Committee on Transport, which was highly critical of the Bill and said that the timetable laid down in it was too speedy in view of the massive changes that would be necessary.

It is interesting to compare the experiences of Hereford and South Yorkshire. They are opposites in the provision of public transport. The hon. Member for Hereford told the Committee about the Hereford experiment in some detail. I think that the women's institute figures were fairly selective, but the hon. Gentleman said:

"I spent a lot of time talking to people using the buses—the customers. I carried out my survey with a number of chums on a structured basis over a period, using buses early in the morning, at peak times and on Saturdays on all the services in Hereford. We asked people". — [*Official Report, Standing Committee A*, 28 February 1985; c. 93.]

The hon. Gentleman listed a series of questions and answers. His constituents came out positively in favour of the Hereford scheme. However, he did not tell us how that scheme was funded. Later in the Committee proceedings we discovered why the results in Hereford were so significant. Massive cross-subsidy was used to achieve the results. The hon. Member put the argument about Midland Red. He said:

"If Midland Red (West) had not had, in effect, a funnel of resources coming in from the other end of its operations, it would not be able to sustain the level of buses that it is now sustaining in Hereford. The level of bus services that it is now sustaining in Hereford means 10 buses more than it felt were needed to provide a proper and profitable service when the experiment was set up. That reservoir of support from outside would not be available to Midland Red it it had to look in all directions at the same time." — [*Official Report, Standing Committee A*, 19 March 1985; c. 632-3.]

We see that Hereford, which was held up as a classic example of free enterprise and deregulation, was actually an area in which Midland Red used massive cross-subsidies which, I have no doubt, had a major bearing on the figures that the hon. Member for Hereford has just given the House.

Let us contrast the position in Hereford with what happens in South Yorkshire, which has stood up to every scrutiny by every outside body that has examined the system, not over only two and a half years, but over the past 10 or 12 years. South Yorkshire has a population of 1·3 million and 350 million journeys are made every year. *[Interruption.]* The criteria for using national resources should be their effectiveness and not the amount of profit that can be made or the degree of exploitation that can be carried out. But every study that has been made into the use of national resources has supported that mode of transport. Indeed, even the Conservative Members of the European Parliament came to that conclusion after carrying out some investigations. Every experiment in Europe has followed that path. Britain will be the only country in Western Europe to go back to the position that existed 50 or 60 years ago.

The South Yorkshire scheme has stood the test of time. It has genuinely tried to serve the people efficiently and cost-effectively. If this legislation is imposed on counties such as South Yorkshire, they will have to increase their bus fares by something in excess of 300 per cent. in a period of six months just to keep 10 to 15 per cent. of routes within the passenger transport authorities. As a result of legislation pushed through by this Government, the metropolitan counties will be dismantled. In addition, rate capping is being imposed on Sheffield. Even the chamber of commerce has realised the devastation that will take place. It is extremely concerned that, as a result of the legislation, there could be pay increases of £10 a week just to provide the sort of transport system that the Government wish to impose.

The Bill is extremely important. Despite what Conservative Members say, we have not been filibustering. We have been trying to express the concern felt by industry and by our constituents. They want a more co-ordinated transport system that will use the United Kingdom's resources much more effectively and efficiently. However, we have been barred from voicing those concerns. In framing this "better" Bill the Government have merely conceded that the age of traffic commissioners should fall from 70 to 65. That is an insult to the people of the United Kingdom, as will be amply demonstrated tomorrow, when there will be a massive lobby of Parliament. It will consist not only of transport workers but of the many people who are concerned about the United Kingdom's transport system. This Bill seeks to destroy that system.

6.12 pm

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): The system for the control and regulation of buses has been in existence for some 50 years. Many of us have not even lived that long. During the past 10 years subsidies have increased from £10 million to £520 million, a 52-fold increase. During the past 10 years the cost of running buses has increased by 15 to 30 per cent., while fares have increased by about 30 per cent. In the past 30 years the use of buses, as a proportion of transport, has fallen from 42 per cent. to 8 per cent. That is hardly a successful formula and the situation should hardly remain unconsidered or unchanged.

The Bill is vital, and it should have proper discussion. Like all major Bills, it has been considered upstairs in Committee. Of course, no hon. Member ever filibusters, but hon. Members do their damnedest to do so. The sooner we get on with the timetable motion, the sooner we shall —as with previous Bills—have better and more sensible debate.

We are moving from regulation to competition. We are moving from planners and local authorities knowing best to people and consumers being able to decide and choose. We are moving towards a system that will be better for the

[Mr. Tony Marlow]

consumer, the taxpayer and those who work in the industry. The sooner we get on with it, and give it proper consideration, the better.

6.14 pm

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): It is an outrage that the Government should at this stage of such an important Bill demand a guillotine. It is important that the House should understand why. One reason is that there is growing unease in the country about the contents of the Bill. Although we have had one or two prima donna performances today, I must put the reality of the situation on record.

The Bill is not wanted by anyone. It is not demanded by bus passengers. The bus companies have not been lobbying the House for years for this Bill. It is not a Bill that the women's institutes have run to their Conservative Members of Parliament and demanded. This is a Bill about the Secretary of State and his obsessions. The sooner that that is made clear to people, the better they will understand what is happening in Committee.

It is extraordinary that a major Bill can be introduced without any real consultation. We have heard about a White Paper—not a Green Paper—that was presented to the House. It formed the basis of the Bill, but, despite the thousands of objections that the Secretary of State received, there was hardly one amendment to the legislation that he laid before the House.

When we accused Ministers of not having consulted anyone, the Under-Secretary of State did a little run around the country. I say "run around" deliberately, because he barely stopped to meet any elected person and he certainly did not listen to anything said to him. If he had done so, he would have heard exactly what rural dwellers and those who use the buses think about this extraordinary legislation.

In Committee, it became clear that no one had really thought about the Bill. As we have gone on, the Secretary of State has developed a new and somewhat extraordinary game called moving the goalposts. First, he calls Hereford in aid as often as possible, and the hon. Member for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd) supports him with a long, if not pompous, speech. Then, as it becomes clear that the independent operators are going out of business in Hereford and that the difficulties are there for all to see, we are suddenly told that Hereford is only a small experiment. We are told that we do not need to worry about that, and that we should concern ourselves with other areas.

We have witnessed an interesting evolutionary process. The Conservative members of the Committee were picked with great care by the Committee of Selection, but they all have several things in common. Most of them are new Members of Parliament, and only one or two of them know anything about transport. Indeed, it would have been very embarrassing if they had undersood what they were being asked to support. The Conservative Members who were picked, despite being members of the Select Committee, were those who could be relied upon to say exactly what their masters wanted. But the rest of them went through a process of evolution. Originally, they intervened here or there. Then they began to make speeches, and by the end of last week they were actually asking awkward questions.

Perhaps that is why those who intervened most in Committee have not sought to take part in this debate. Where, for example, is our dear friend the hon. Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen), who made an entire career out of interventions? Where is the hon. Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo) or the hon. Member for Bristol, East (Mr. Sayeed), who arrived and then left? They are hiding from the fact that the House would be very dispirited if it knew with what ruthlessness the Bill was being pushed through.

No Conservative Member can seriously suggest that the Bill is about transport. If we were talking about how to improve the bus or taxi industries some of the amendments would have been accepted. But something different happened. Conservative Members tabled an amendment which, they said, concerned concessionary fares. Labour Members actually care about concessionary fares. We think that those who use the buses—the young, those without cars and the elderly—are important, but the Government have left them out right down the line.

Mr. Forth *rose*——

Mrs. Dunwoody: Conservative Members tabled an amendment. They made great play of the fact that they were so concerned about concessionary fares that they wanted to obtain a very strong commitment from the Secretary of State. What happened? The Secretary of State made several vague comments. He did not say that he would accept the amendment, or that it was badly drafted, but that he would table another, equivalent one. He said that he accepted not the content but the spirit of the amendment.

Mr. Forth *rose*——

Mrs. Dunwoody: I shall not give way. The hon. Gentleman made his speech and I have little time available to me.

There was an even more interesting phenomenon. If Conservative Members were serious about protecting concessionary fares, as they were during the passage of the London Regional Transport Bill, why did they not vote for their amendments? Why did so many of them vote against their own amendments? Why did one hon. Member, who obviously could not be trusted to vote against an idea in which he sincerely believed, absent himself from the vote and then appear on regional television telling everyone that they had no need to worry because concessionary fares were to be protected for all time?

This is a very bad Bill. It concerns not only the safety of bus passengers but, in future, the safety of those who travel by taxi. In theory, the Bill opens up all sorts of new areas to the entrepreneur who, we are told, will rush forward with special schemes and provide transport throughout the country. The reality is very different. The first clause on deregulation destroys machinery that has been in operation since the late 1920s. That machinery was brought into place because it was known that the open anarchy and chaos that existed on the roads was not in the interests of passengers or anyone running a bus company. Indeed, in the final analysis it had to be changed, and there was an all-party decision to change the legislation.

All these years later, the Secretary of State says that all he is doing is changing the position to give greater freedom to passengers. In support of that idea, he always quotes costs. Why is he so obsessed? That is the only aspect of

the bus industry that he is prepared to take seriously. He never talks about what will actually happen on concessionary fares for the disabled and the elderly. He never explains that, if timetabling and through-ticketing are wiped out, we will not improve the services but will deprive those most desperately in need of support. That has been the basis of the discussion on this legislation.

It is startling how often, when specific amendments are put forward, the Secretary of State merely says, "The hon. Lady does not understand" or, "The hon. Gentlemen are not aware of the implications of their amendments." What he really means is that we are only too aware. The reason why Conservative Members frequently try to decry the proceedings in Committee is that they cannot afford to have the electorate understand what they have in mind. They need privacy and quietness. They do not want the county or district councils or the women's institutes or any other group to ensure that the electorate know what is happening to their bus services; that might be too inconvenient.

The people of a village in the Secretary of State's constituency are worried about the only bus service in the morning. What will happen when they realise that the right hon. Gentleman's legislation is likely to put that service at risk? What will happen if that is repeated throughout the country? Conservative Members might receive increasing numbers of letters.

Table 3.6 of the White Paper on the Government's expenditure plans shows the real attitude of the Secretary of State to the provision of subsidies for any sort of public transport. Revenue support for public transport will go down from £559 million in 1984-85 to £247 million in 1985-86. That is the basis of this legislation. He is not genuinely concerned whether people in the villages can get their children to school or their grandmothers to the doctor. He is not even faintly concerned whether people can get to work in the towns or whether whole areas in cities will be deprived of their services late at night and on Sundays. He is not concerned with producing a Bill that will be a better Bill after it leaves Committee.

The right hon. Gentleman's reason for imposing a guillotine now is clear—because we have just finished discussing part I. He knows that there are many vital matters still to be discussed. For example, we need to know why, if deregulation is such a brilliant idea, it is not being applied to London. We want to know what will happen to the 55,000 staff who the Secretary of State said with great aplomb would go into the private sector. We want to know what will happen to their pensions and why they have not been underwritten in the Bill. We want to know what will happen to the existing National Bus Company companies. Although the right hon. Gentleman said that he wants them broken up, he has given no sign of how to achieve that. He is not even prepared to discuss their financial viability.

We especially want to know what will happen about the local passenger transport services. Unless we know what will happen to the PTEs, we will not know whether the Secretary of State will pursue his obsession to the extent of wholly wrecking the transport system in this country. Above all, we want to know what will happen about concessionary travel schemes and about rural area grants, about which he has been extraordinarily sanguine and quiet. He has not dared to match the amount of money that he has mentioned with the need in the rural areas that will arise because of this legislation.

It would be pleasant if we were to hear exactly what will happen about the rail replacement bus services. What will happen to British Rail if this Bill becomes law? Many people do not yet realise the extent of the damage that will be caused to their rail services and how many of them will be destroyed by this ill-thought-out, incompetent and absurd piece of machinery.

We want to know whether the Secretary of State has one coherent reason for foisting on the people of this country legislation that in three years will lead to chaos and dismay for many people, especially those who desperately need bus services to get to work and to enjoy a reasonable standard of life.

We want to say just one more thing to the right hon. Gentleman. If he has managed to dispirit and worry so many of the clones on his Back Benches, does it not occur to him that the electorate as a whole will soon cotton on to what this is all about? This is the most outrageous confidence trick and it is a shame that the Secretary of State should dare to come here and try to offload it on to Parliament.

6.28 pm

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): When my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House announced the guillotine motion last Thursday, there was no protest. The Leader of the Opposition said that today was not a convenient day for the motion because of the large bus lobby tomorrow. He did not say that the motion should not be put forward, simply that it was not convenient for discussion on Monday.

Will there be a massive disruption of services tomorrow as a result of bus crews coming to London? Is that the way that they will take out their views on their customers? If there is to be no disruption of services, it is further proof that the industry must be very overmanned if so many people can come to London.

Last Thursday the right hon. Member for Mansfield (Mr. Concannon) said that he did not like the Bill, as did the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore). However, the hon. Members for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) and for Wigan (Mr. Stott) did not say a word. The truth is that the Opposition are so bored with their delaying tactics that they even forgot to make the ritual noises when the guillotine was announced.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. Parris) rightly said, nobody in the House is more keen to see the motion adopted than the Opposition. Labour Members are bored with their Second Reading arguments, which they have rehearsed time and again, and today, as my hon. Friend the Member for Penrith and The Border (Mr. Maclean) said, they totally failed to get down to the detail of the Bill.

The hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich and several of her hon. Friends said that masses of important issues remained to be discussed and that everybody wanted to get on with discussing them. So do I and my hon. Friends, and if we had not wasted 94 hours in Committee we should have discussed them by now. Therefore, let us get on with the Bill.

Any dispassionate analysis of the facts will support the view that the Opposition have not used the time in Committee wisely. They wasted virtually a whole sitting debating the sittings motion. They moved an amendment to that motion seeking to delay the start of the Committee

[Mr. Nicholas Ridley]

stage until 12 March. Had they succeeded in that, the Committee would have had even less time in which to consider the Bill.

Up to the close of play last Thursday, the Committee had dealt with the first 13 pages of the Bill and consumed recklessly more than 94 hours of debate, a rate of more than seven hours of debate per page. There remain a further 128 pages of the Bill, which, at that rate, would mean nearly another 900 hours of debate to complete the Committee stage. That is what the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich now calls driving the Bill through ruthlessly. I have never heard so much rubbish in my life. No Government, Conservative or Labour, faced with those facts would allow a major Bill in their programme to continue to make such slow progress.

The hon. Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) claimed that we had not made more progress because on frequent occasions the Committee was without a quorum. I have had the *Hansard* record checked. That check shows that we wasted two minutes out of over 94 hours through the lack of a quorum.

The hon. Member for Jarrow also referred to the Bus and Coach Council dinner. I agree that the applause at the end of my excellent speech was not rapturous. I was not surprised. I was delighted, however, by an experience that he did not have. As I was leaving, a young Scottish married couple told me, "We thank you from the bottom of our hearts. You have given us the chance to start our own business in the bus industry, something that we have always wanted to do. Get your Bill through as quickly as you can."

The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney spoke about the bus manufacturing industry. There has been an enormous decline in that industry in the past three years, due largely to the fact that the last Labour Government withdrew bus grants, and partly it has been a reflection of the general decline of the bus industry. It is, therefore, a bit hard, when there has been that mammoth decline—we are seeking to put that right by the Bill—to lay the blame at the door of the Bill.

Mrs. Dunwoody *rose*——

Mr. Ridley: I cannot give way because time is short.

The opportunities that the Bill will give to the bus industry are great. It will lead to new orders for new types of buses. Just as the deregulation of the long distance coaching industry led to a surge of orders for modern luxury vehicles for coaching, so the Bill will in due course create its own demand.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd) said, throughout the Committee stage the Opposition tried to wreck rather than improve the Bill. We had the absurd argument—my hon. Friend the Member for Penrith and The Border recalled it—when debating one amendment that there would be no buses left on the roads once the Bill was on the statute book, and we were told when debating another amendment that the congestion would be so serious that our towns and cities would be blocked with competing buses. Opposition Members must make up their minds which it is to be.

The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney was, even for him, unusually badly briefed. He said that there had been no consultation. Was he not aware that seven consultative documents had been put out about the Bill following the publication of the White Paper and that more than 7,000 replies had been received? The Bill was introduced a little late because we were considering those replies.

The right hon. Gentleman went on to say that the Government had not made any concessions in Committee. As we have been allowed to deal with only 11 clauses, it is not surprising that only three concessions have been offered by the Government. The first I do not make much of—the concession on the age of traffic commissioners—but I reiterate the enormous importance of the undertaking that I gave to protect the position of concessionary fares by insisting that all operators will have to opt into the concessionary fares scheme unless, through some appeal mechanism, good reason is given why they should not.

Mr. Shore: Does the right hon. Gentleman deny what was said in the quotation I gave from the Select Committee report about Humberside county council saying that consultation had been about the modalities of the Bill and that at no stage had the council been consulted about the underlying and fundamental principles and philosophy?

Mr. Ridley: That is rich coming from a right hon. Member who pushed through nationalisation and socialisation measures. I do not recall ever being consulted about whether we wanted to nationalise the bus industry in the first place. We do not consult on the main measures in our manifesto, any more than the Labour party ever did.

Next, I offered a major improvement for the elderly and disabled by improving the construction and use regulations—a legal instrument not in the Bill—by which buses can be designed and manufactured to standards more helpful to elderly and disabled people.

Mrs. Dunwoody: When?

Mr. Ridley: If the hon. Lady did not hear those matters being dealt with, she will find them, if she looks for them, in the *Official Report*.

The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney was surprised that vested interests in the industry had come forward so loudly. I do not know why he should have been surprised about that. As my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, West rightly pointed out, in 1952, when the road haulage industry was deregulated and denationalised—in the same way as we are dealing with the buses now—there was almost total opposition. In 1980, when the present Secretary of State for Social Services deregulated long distance coaches, the Opposition behaved in the same way as they have behaved towards this measure. It is no surprise to me that in 1985, when we deal with the next stage—the deregulation of stage buses—they should behave, as before, with the same excited over-exaggeration.

The answer, of course, is that Opposition Members cannot disentangle themselves from the interests of the operators and the trade unions in any industry. They can never see that what really matters is the passenger. They are prepared to ignore and neglect the passengers and pick up the stereotyped briefs that come from the industry to the denial of the truth for the passengers.

Many hon. Members questioned me about the position of the pensions of those in the PTEs. I wish that we had already reached the clauses in the Bill under which that issue could be discussed. As, no doubt, it will be said that

there is nothing on the subject in the Bill, perhaps I should comment on it. We are seeking to facilitate the option of employees in the PTE undertakings and municipal undertakings to remain with the local government superannuation scheme, to which they currently belong. We are discussing with local government representatives how to achieve that.

That will not necessarily involve any additions to the Bill, as there are existing powers under the Superannuation Act 1972. Thus, a successful conclusion to the negotiations would probably not require anything being added to the Bill. If this cannot be achieved, we shall inform the Committee of the position. We hope to produce a satisfactory answer in good time.

Several hon. Members have referred to the Select Committee on Transport and its report. It is a curious thought that the convention is that Governments do not comment upon or make reference to reports of Select Committees until the formal response has been made. As this has been the subject of endless debate by Members on both sides of the House, it is not exactly easy to adhere to that position. Instead of seeking to go deeply into the report in the few minutes that remain available to me, I shall merely say that in a short time we shall bring forward the Government's reply to the Select Committee's report. That will be a particularly quick response. We shall do so in such a way as to ensure that the Committee has the benefit of our reply to the report.

The use that has been made of the Select Committee on Transport by Labour Members—this has not been done by members of the Select Committee — has been designed to defeat the Bill or the policy that lies behind it. That is not the true purpose for which Select Committees were established. The hon. Member for Tyne Bridge (Mr. Cowans) even started to anticipate in the Chamber the results of his inquiries into the bus industry before the Committee had come to its consideration of the report. I had occasion to point that out to him. I hope that the House will not use Select Committees as a means of trying to provide opposition to Government legislation——

Mr. Canavan: Why not?

Mr. Ridley: —as opposed to inquiring into what is right and what is wrong. The Opposition, however, characterise themselves by what my hon. Friend the Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes) described as a cynical manipulation of the fears of the elderly and the disabled. They have sought throughout to stir up groundless fears. Every time I try to put those fears to bed, the Opposition throw doubt upon the veracity of what I have to say.

The Committee has sat for 94 hours and during this period the hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross) has had to announce his retirement at the end of this Parliament. My hon. Friends the Members for Bristol, East and for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth) have both become proud fathers. I congratulate them both. The hon. Member for Wigan has decided to abandon us to pursue the joys of matrimony; we wish him well. It is clear from the facts and from the adventures of the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) into the season when mistletoe buds should be planted that the Committee has had enough of the time wasting and long-winded nonsense to which it has had to listen for 94 hours. It is time to get on with the Bill, to end uncertainty——

It being three hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MR. SPEAKER *proceeded to put the Question necessary to dispose of them, pursuant to Standing Order No. 46 (Allocation of time to Bills).*

Question put accordingly:—

The House divided: Ayes 277, Noes 189.

Division No. 174] **[6.43 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Ancram, Michael
Ashby, David
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Best, Keith
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Body, Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Hon Adam
Carlisle, John *(N Luton)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Crouch, David
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, E. *(B'y St Edm'ds)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, John Selwyn
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(SW N'folk)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayhoe, Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(W Herts)*
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Mrs Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Neil

MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Marlow, Antony
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parris, Matthew
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Prior, Rt Hon James
Proctor, K. Harvey
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rifkind, Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(W Dorset)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(N Hertf'dshire)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, J.
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones and
Mr. Archie Hamilton.

NOES

Abse, Leo
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'rmline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Rt Hon J.
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Concannon, Rt Hon J. D.
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cowans, Harry
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Dubs, Alfred
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Central Fife)*
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr. Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
Mackenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nicholson, J.
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Park, George
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Rt Hon J. E. *(S Down)*
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, M.
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Ross, Wm. *(Londonderry)*
Ryman, John
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'kl'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*

Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*	Williams, Rt Hon A.
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*	Winnick, David
Tinn, James	Woodall, Alec
Torney, Tom	Wrigglesworth, Ian
Wainwright, R.	Young, David *(Bolton SE)*
Walker, Cecil *(Belfast N)*	
Wallace, James	Tellers for the Noes:
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*	Mr. Norman Hogg and
Wareing, Robert	Mr. Don Dixon.
Wigley, Dafydd	

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the following provisions shall apply to the remaining proceedings on the Bill:—

Committee

1. The Standing Committee to which the Bill is allocated shall report the Bill to the House on or before 7th May 1985.

Report and Third Reading

2.—(1) The proceedings on Consideration and Third Reading of the Bill shall be completed in two allotted days and shall be brought to a conclusion at Ten o'clock on the second of those days; and for the purposes of Standing Order No. 45 (Business Committee) this Order shall be taken to allot to the proceedings on Consideration such part of those days as the Resolution of the Business Committee may determine.

(2) The Business Committee shall report to the House its Resolutions as to the proceedings on Consideration of the Bill, and as to the allocation of time between those proceedings and proceedings on Third Reading, not later than the fourth day on which the House sits after the day on which the Chairman of the Standing Committee reports the Bill to the House.

(3) The Resolutions in any Report made under Standing Order No. 45 may be varied by a further Report so made, whether or not within the time specified in sub-paragraph (2) above, and whether or not the Resolutions have been agreed to by the House.

(4) The Resolutions of the Business Committee may include alterations in the order in which proceedings on Consideration of the Bill are taken.

Procedure in Standing Committee

3.—(1) At a sitting of the Standing Committee at which any proceedings on the Bill are to be brought to a conclusion under a Resolution of the Business Sub-Committee the Chairman shall not adjourn the Committee under any Order relating to the sittings of the Committee until the proceedings have been brought to a conclusion.

(2) No Motion shall be moved in the Standing Committee relating to the sitting of the Committee except by a member of the Government, and the Chairman shall permit a brief explanatory statement from the Member who moves, and from a Member who opposes, the Motion, and shall then put the Question thereon.

4. No Motion shall be moved to alter the order in which Clauses, Schedules, new Clauses and new Schedules are taken in the Standing Committee but the Resolutions of the Business Sub-Committee may include alterations in that order.

Conclusion of proceedings in Committee

5. On the conclusion of the proceedings in any Committee on the Bill the Chairman shall report the Bill to the House without putting any Question.

Dilatory Motions

6. No dilatory Motion with respect to, or in the course of, proceedings on the Bill shall be moved in the Standing Committee or on an allotted day except by a member of the Government, and the Question on any such Motion shall be put forthwith.

Extra time on first allotted day

7.—(1) On the first allotted day paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 3 (Exempted business) shall apply to the proceedings on the Bill for two hours after Ten o'clock.

(2) Any period during which proceedings on the Bill may be proceeded with after Ten o'clock under paragraph (7) of Standing Order No. 10 (Adjournment on specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration) shall be in addition to the said period of two hours.

(3) If the first allotted day is one to which a Motion for the adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 10 stands over from an earlier day, a period of time equal to the duration of the proceedings upon that Motion shall be added to the said period of two hours.

Private business

8. Any private business which has been set down for consideration at Seven o'clock on an allotted day shall, instead of being considered as provided by Standing Orders, be considered at the conclusion of the proceedings on the Bill on that day, and paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 3 (Exempted business) shall apply to the private business for a period of three hours from the conclusion of the proceedings on the Bill or, if those proceedings are concluded before Ten o'clock, for a period equal to the time elapsing between Seven o'clock and the conclusion of those proceedings.

Conclusion of proceedings

9.—(1) For the purpose of bringing to a conclusion any proceedings which are to be brought to a conclusion at a time appointed by this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee or the Business Sub-Committee and which have not previously been brought to a conclusion, the Chairman or Mr. Speaker shall forthwith put the following Questions (but no others)—

(*a*) any Question already proposed from the Chair;

(*b*) any Question necessary to a bring to a decision a Question so proposed (including, in the case of a new Clause or new Schedule which has been read a second time, the Question that the Clause or Schedule be added to the Bill);

(*c*) the Question on any amendment or Motion standing on the Order Paper in the name of any Member, if that amendment or Motion is moved by a Member of the Government;

(*d*) any other Question necessary for the disposal of the business to be concluded;

and on a Motion so moved for a new Clause or a new Schedule, the Chairman or Mr. Speaker shall put only the Question that the Clause or Schedule be added to the Bill.

(2) Proceedings under sub-paragraph (1) above shall not be interrupted under any Standing Order relating to the sittings of the House.

(3) If an allotted day is one on which a Motion for the adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10 (Adjournment on specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration) would, apart from this Order, stand over to Seven o'clock—

(*a*) that Motion shall stand over until the conclusion of any proceedings on the Bill which, under this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee, are to be brought to a conclusion at or before that time;

(*b*) the bringing to a conclusion of any proceedings on the Bill which, under this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee, are to be brought to a conclusion after that time shall be postponed for a period equal to the duration of the proceedings on that Motion.

(4) If an allotted day is one to which a Motion for the adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 10 stands over from an earlier day, the bringing to a conclusion of any proceedings on the Bill which, under this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee, are to be brought to a conclusion on that day shall be postponed for a period equal to the duration of the proceedings on that Motion.

Supplemental orders

10.—(1) The proceedings on any Motion moved in the House by a member of the Government for varying or supplementing the provisions of this Order (including anything which might have been the subject of a report of the Business Committee or Business Sub-Committee) shall, if not previously concluded, be brought to a conclusion one hour after they have been commenced, and paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 3 (Exempted business) shall apply to the proceedings.

(2) If on an allotted day on which any proceedings on the Bill are to be brought to a conclusion at a time appointed by this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee the House is adjourned, or the sitting is suspended, before that time no notice shall be required of a Motion moved at the next sitting by a member of the Government for varying or supplementing the provisions of this Order.

Saving

11. Nothing in this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee or Business Sub-Committee shall—

(*a*) prevent any proceedings to which the Order or Resolution applies from being taken or completed earlier than is required by the Order or Resolution, or

(*b*) prevent any business (whether on the Bill or not) from being proceeded with on any day after the completion of all such proceedings on the Bill as are to be taken on that day.

Recommittal

12. — (1) References in this Order to proceedings on Consideration or proceedings on Third Reading include references to proceedings, at those stages respectively, for, on or in consequence of recommittal.

(2) On an allotted day no debate shall be permitted on any Motion to recommit the Bill (whether as a whole or otherwise), and Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith any Question necessary to dispose of the Motion, including the Question on any amendment moved to the Question.

Interpretation

13. In this Order—

"allotted day" means any day (other than a Friday) on which the Bill is put down as first Government Order of the Day provided that a Motion for allotting time to the proceedings on the Bill to be taken on that day either has been agreed on a previous day or is set down for consideration on that day;

"the Bill" means the Transport Bill;

"Resolution of the Business Sub-Committee" means a Resolution of the business Sub-Committee as agreed to by the Standing Committee;

"Resolution of the Business Committee" means a Resolution of the Business Committee as agreed to by the House.

Birmingham City Council Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Speaker: Before I call the hon. Member for Birmingham, Hall Green (Sir R. Eyre) to move the Second Reading of the Bill, I should inform the House that I have selected instruction 7—

That it be an Instruction to the Committee on the Bill to amend Clause 15 so as to prohibit the Council demanding payment from occupiers or owners of dwellings which display advertisements.—

and instruction 9:

That it be an Instruction to the Committee on the Bill to amend Clause 11 to provide a scheme of preferential treatment for Birmingham ratepayers.

It may be for the convenience of the House to debate those instructions with the Bill.

7.1 pm

Sir Reginald Eyre (Birmingham, Hall Green): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

I am grateful to you, Mr. Speaker, for what you have just said about the instructions.

It is well known that the great increase in oil prices, the world trade recession and the new industrial revolution have had a severe effect upon the economy of Birmingham and the west midlands. The decline of metal-based manufacturing compels us energetically to seek to strengthen the base of our continuing industries and, at the same time, to diversify our local economy and create new job opportunities by developing new activities and attractions. The Bill provides us with an opportunity to serve both purposes.

The Bill has two main aims. The first is to create a major annual international tourist attraction for Birmingham and the west midlands with a race through the streets on one day of the year—a bank holiday Monday —with preparation and practice runs on the previous day. The events would feature formula cars and historical racing cars. The races, which will have a saloon car focus, will take place through city streets, which, due to a unique post-war road development, provide a natural urban road-race circuit.

The second aim is to promote Birmingham as a motor city, which it most certainly is, and to give the motor industry of Birmingham and the west midlands, including its component manufacturies and the many thousands employed in different ways in connection with the industry, a feeling of encouragement and support which we believe enthusiastic public support for the event would ensure.

I shall emphasise the importance of several factors relevant to the proposals for the Birmingham motor race. Under clause 3 the one authorised day in each year will be the last Monday in August, now a bank holiday, or any other bank holiday Monday the city may by resolution appoint other than 26 and 27 December or 1 and 2 January. The first road race to be held under the Bill will be in August 1986, allowing plenty of time for preparation.

The race project enjoys overwhelming all-party support on the city council. On 16 November 1984, 90 members voted for it and 13 against, with five abstentions. It also achieved 93 per cent. support in a referendum conducted among the residents of the area in which the event will take place. The project has the support of influential organisations such as the Heart of England tourist board, Birmingham international airport and the national

exhibition centre. In addition, it is supported by major companies such as Austin Rover, Shell UK Oil, Cadbury Schweppes, IMI, GKN and Davenports.

The proposed circuit is to be formed from lengths of a public highway near to the city centre. It will be almost 2·5 miles long. There are many areas of open space bordering the track and the stands for the spectators would be located there. Along this unique road formation there are adequate spaces for pits, and the wholesale market complex, which adjoins the circuit, will house all the competitors' support teams as the market complex is closed on bank holiday weekends.

Television film of the circuit will provide attractive views of a modern city, its buildings, open spaces and trees. In the careful choice of route and arrangements, great consideration has been given to environmental factors so as to minimise the potential effect on residential areas, any conflict with major traffic routes or interference with public transport. With regard to instruction 3, all trees will be safeguarded.

In all the planning for the projects, the greatest possible emphasis has been placed on safety considerations. Circuit safety precautions are designed to meet the highest international standards and to contain any potential accident and the resultant debris within the circuit perimeter from which all spectators are excluded. To safeguard competitors, all bends and corners will have run-off areas, tyre walls and impact absorbing protection incorporated in the construction. Every care will be taken to minimise the risk of accident during the proposed event.

A feasibility study, carried out by the Royal Automobile Club motor sport, the circuit licensing authority, has said that the proposed circuit can be adapted to comply with all current international safety regulations and requirements. The city was grateful to the RAC officials for their detailed work in that respect for more than two years. The city wishes to co-operate fully with the RAC motor sport authority in all arrangements for future events.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith (Wealden): Was any idea of the cost given in that feasibility study?

Sir Reginald Eyre: Yes. I shall be coming to the cost in a few moments. I assure my hon. Friend that it was as a result of the feasibility study that accurate costing items could be calculated, and that was helpful to the city in the presentation of its case.

In some areas the highway will need to be slightly widened to meet the minimum width requirements. When carried out, they will improve existing traffic conditions in the streets affected. Before any racing can take place, streets must have safety barriers and debris fences erected. Both fences are to ensure safety and are made of steel motorway-type barriers and reinforced steel mesh on steel stanchions. It is intended that those structures would be erected from previously prepared foundations located within the highway and sealed with protective covers when not in use. That system is used in other countries where streets are used for motor racing and works entirely satisfactorily.

In the event of an emergency, whether connected with the racing event or not, the circuit design incorporates access points for the use of the emergency services and statutory undertakers. Those points have been chosen after consultation with all interested parties. Within seconds of the circuit control being made aware of any potential emergency, racing can be terminated by the flag marshals, situated round the circuit, and emergency vehicles can enter the circuit to deal with the problem.

Mrs. Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): All the details given by my hon. Friend suggest a considerable amount of work for the police. Can my hon. Friend say what the police have said about the matter?

Sir Reginald Eyre: I am glad to be able to tell my hon. Friend that the police authority has, of course, been consulted throughout the preparatory negotiations, and the police have approved the safety aspects of all the measures that I have mentioned. I think my hon. Friend will be very pleased to hear that.

The arrangements are being formalised in an agreed code of practice covering the emergency services for the event. The route chosen also allows safe spectator access to be maintained to all areas, even during racing. Obviously certain traffic routes have to be diverted during the event. Again, adequate diversion routes exist and have been used satisfactorily during a dress rehearsal for the event, which was the motor cavalcade held on 14 October 1984. It was a great success and attracted 100,000 to 200,000 spectators for events.

Special arrangements and facilities are to be made to assist disabled persons wishing to attend the event, as happened in the previous motor cavalcade event, and I hope that that assurance will be satisfactory to the hon. Members who are supporting instruction 6, in the name of the hon. Member for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook).

Within a short distance of the proposed circuit there are car parking facilities to accommodate the estimated number of visitors—about 250,000 for the two days—who would attend the events. The city centre is well served with bus, rail and air services to cope with visitors travelling from further afield and from overseas. It is intended, in conjunction with the operators, that bus, rail and coach services would be increased over the race period to provide travel facilities for visitors.

All spectators would be accommodated in temporary grandstands, seated or in stand areas where the natural ground contours allow a good view of the event. Care would be taken, in siting spectator accommodation, to avoid interference with frontagers' normal rights and, as I have said, verges, trees and shrubbed areas would be protected.

In dealing with a further point raised by the RAC, I want to make it clear that Birmingham will take all steps to reduce disruption of traffic to the minimum. Clause 5 states that Birmingham shall not close any street to pedestrian or vehicular traffic except between 9 o'clock in the morning and 6 o'clock in the afternoon on the authorised day and the day immediately preceding that day. That deals with the two days of the event.

Under clause 2, the

"'relevant period', means the period commencing 10 days before and ending five days after the authorised day."

The traffic management arrangements to keep the traffic flow as normal as possible during that period will be as follows. The road works connected with widening, which I mentioned earlier, and which are required to achieve minimum track widths, will be carried out as a phased programme and are intended to be carried out in the months preceding the proposed event. The estimated commencing day for that work would be in April 1986.

[Sir Reginald Eyre]

Those works are minor alterations to the carriageway and will necessitate only lane closures to carry out the work, and only for a limited period.

Fences, guard rails and the like are to be erected in pre-set foundations. The foundations will be constructed as a once-and-for-all exercise.

Mr. J. F. Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): Clearly the precautions being taken by the city are praiseworthy, and will be extremely expensive. What is the likely turnover from the event? Is it likely that any new jobs will be forthcoming as a result of it?

Sir Reginald Eyre: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising those points because I propose, in a few moments, to come to the city council's estimates in those respects. I think that I shall be able to show that a valuable flow of business and of job opportunities will be created by this endeavour.

The foundations will be constructed as a once-and-for-all exercise. Where possible, they will be constructed during road widening, which has been referred to before. Many of the remainder will be located in verges or footpaths. Again, only slight narrowing of the carriageway will be required to achieve working space for that construction.

Where foundation places are required in the carriageway, lane closures will be operated, and — I emphasise a point of practical importance—a restriction of working hours will be made to prevent any interference with peak traffic flows.

When the sockets and foundations have been constructed, the annual setting up and taking down of barriers will be carried out either by using lane closures or by working within footpaths, verges or central reservations. It is emphasised that working patterns will be tailored to minimise interference with traffic, and peak hour working will be prohibited on main roads.

Spectator stands will be brought into place and unloaded using routes which avoid lorries and cranes working from main roads, and stands will not be erected on the carriageway.

I can sum up the operation by saying that no works which are required for the preparation of the roads for motor racing will require any road to be completely closed during the erection or dismantling process. The powers are being sought to permit partial closure of a highway—that is, one lane of a carriageway—to permit works to be carried out. There are no powers to do that under existing legislation for purposes other than road widening. Special enabling powers have to be sought for works on a highway in connection with the proposed motor racing. The police authority, as I have said, has approved those arrangements from the point of view of safety.

I now refer to points raised with regard to capital and revenue expenditure by the city council in that connection, beginning with capital expenditure.

Since total local authority spending on land, buildings, roads and so on is controlled by the Government—and has been controlled by successive Governments — by capital spending allocations and restrictions on the use of capital receipts, the initial road alterations and setting-up costs would count against the city spending limits and would utilise resources which otherwise could be spent on other city services.

However, the capital expenditure envisaged, £1·5 million, in setting up the business is relatively small in relation to the city's total capital expenditure, and could in any case be spread over two financial years. It can be regarded as good value for money, in the sense that it would generate income from the motor race, which would improve the city's revenue position and thereby free resources to be spent on other services. In the long run, housing, education and other services could benefit significantly from the motor race, for which a relatively minor initial sacrifice in capital expenditure terms could be considered worth while.

Mr. Peter Fry (Wellingborough): My hon. Friend is outlining the advantages to Birmingham ratepayers of having such a race. Is there not a danger that other cities will want to emulate Birmingham, and before we know it we shall have many applications from cities that are not in the same state as Birmingham, in the sense that their road systems might not be so suitable?

Sir Reginald Eyre: I welcome the way in which my hon. Friend put that question. Natives of the city of Birmingham undoubtedly feel that other cities seek to emulate it. Birmingham has a unique road formation. It has been carefully chosen and avoids interruption with the main city centre traffic and difficulty with the bus services. It is just away from the city centre, and therefore has the least possible disadvantage. I believe that because of the fortunate chance of great investment in the road network in Birmingham and the fortunate fact that this part of the network can be taken out and treated specially, with all its safeguards, it is unique in the United Kingdom. I do not believe that any other local authority would be able to match it.

The city has not made provision in its capital budget for motor race expenditure and has therefore not pre-empted resources from other services.

I refer to revenue expenditure. Since the city envisages the motor race at worst breaking even in revenue or year-to-year operating terms, and probably generating significant income, there is no question of revenue resources being diverted from other spending areas. That is where a reference to leaking roofs may be made as one-off housing repairs are met from revenue resources. As I have said, such areas of city spending may well benefit from the motor race proceeding, and there is no conflict of priorities. As revenue spending is repeated annually, it would not take long for annual benefits to cancel out the initial capital contribution, so that should be seen as a major financial factor in the debate.

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): I am not sure whether something that the hon. Gentleman has just said is accurate. Does he not know that Birmingham city council capitalises its housing repairs? They are not done from revenue.

Sir Reginald Eyre: I am told that there is a technical distinction between certain forms of housing repair expenditure which is revenue and certain forms of housing expenditure which is treated on a capital basis. I realise that the hon. Gentleman specialises in the subject, and may have more particular knowledge of where the line is drawn between those two forms of expenditure on housing provision than I have. If so, I shall be interested to listen to him, although the argument that I am developing is that

this relatively small expenditure based on municipal self-help will in due course be of great advantage to the city in creating extra resources.

It is the hope of the city council, based on careful study of all the factors involved, that besides promoting the city and encouraging tourism, the motor racing will generate income and so extra resources for the city. Even in the short term there are immediate benefits from spending by visitors to the event itself—tourists, sponsors, press and television crews, manufacturers' team support, tyre, fuel and oil companies, circuit and grandstand builders and celebrities. It is thought that on average at least £40 per day per visitor will be spent on hotels, food and drink, taxis, shopping, bus fares and entertainment. Direct income will come from gate receipts, sponsorship, television rights and franchise rights for wearing apparel, posters, brochures, market stalls, trade displays and food vendors.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): Is my hon. Friend aware that the premier grand prix race around the streets of Monaco—obviously Birmingham will have considered that race — brings in about £8 million, according to current exchange rates? Is he further aware that the city of Monte Carlo, or Monaco itself, expects to lose money against that income each year?

Sir Reginald Eyre: I appreciate my hon. Friend's point, but the figure of about £8 million that he quotes would be enormously attractive to the city of Birmingham on the revenue side. I assure my hon. Friend that we provide services at a much better figure than Monaco.

Only five petitions have been deposited in respect of the Bill, and in none of them is any objection raised in principle to the Bill. Negotiations with the parties concerned are taking place. The points of detail involved require consideration in Committee.

I have referred to instructions 3 and 6, and I should like to deal with the remaining instructions. Following the reference to financial matters, it is appropriate to refer to instruction 4 in the name of the hon. Members for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett), for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) and for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis), in which they ask that detailed accounts be published. The answer is, "Yes, most certainly." All those details will be supplied by the city council on an annual basis. I agree entirely that that should be a proper provision by the city council.

Instruction 5, in the name of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) as well as the other three Birmingham Members I have mentioned, concerns the supply of equipment and materials. I assure those hon. Members and the House that the city council will wish to comply, subject to the EEC regulations, in that respect.

Instructions 1 and 2 relate to South Africa and cigarette advertising respectively and are in the names of the hon. Members for Erdington, for Perry Barr and for Hodge Hill, with the addition of the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) to the former. With regard to South Africa, I emphasise that the city council will of course honour and fully comply with the terms of the Gleneagles agreement, which applies in these circumstances. Tobacco sponsorship of sport in the United Kingdom has been restricted since 1977 by voluntary agreement. Again, Birmingham city council will strictly comply with the terms of any such agreement applying in the United Kingdom.

Instruction 7 relates to clause 15. I appreciate that Mr. Speaker referred specifically to that instruction. The Bill does not contain any provision that prevents people from putting advertisements on their own property, or requires such advertisements to be taken down, unless a fee is paid to the city council. However, in view of the concern that has been expressed, the city is considering rewording the clause in Committee to make the position absolutely clear and to show that no charge is payable by owner-occupiers in those circumstances. I hope that that will be entirely satisfactory.

Mr. Rooker: Will the hon. Gentleman clarify that point? He referred to owner-occupiers. The instruction refers to "occupiers or owners", which implies tenants too.

Sir Reginald Eyre: I accept that point. The amendment would refer to "occupiers or owners".

In connection with instruction 8, all the vantage points around the proposed circuit are municipally owned properties. The council will let the tenants invite such guests as they wish, but full regard must be paid to the structural suitability and stability of the dwellings—for example, potential overloading of balconies—and the implications for other residents in the block. Access to the blocks will be arranged by means of a pass system involving the caretakers in each block. Similar arrangements were successful for the recent on-the-streets event, which also provided an attractive spectacle.

The answer on instruction 9 is also favourable in that as part of the council's existing "Passport to Leisure" scheme, used by 17,000 people, there will be some free and subsidised tickets—perhaps in the form of lottery prizes—for the folk of Birmingham. There is a desire to make specially attractive terms available to the citizens in general.

Mr. Rooker: The vague letter that I received some time ago from the council left me unclear on that point. The letter referred to the existing scheme, which is used by 17,000 people. Instruction 9 refers to the generality of Birmingham ratepayers. It does not refer just to those in receipt of means-tested benefit, whose numbers have trebled since the Government came to power. Instruction 9 does not refer to the scheme operated at present. Is the proposed scheme one in which the generality of ratepayers will be able to participate?

Sir Reginald Eyre: That is a fair point. My view is that the "Passport to Leisure" scheme provides a framework and an administrative arrangement that demonstrates that it is possible to operate schemes of such kind. There has been definite reference to making some benefits available to all citizens, including the ratepayers. I assume that the hon. Gentleman is referring to the families of ratepayers, too. They would be included in the lottery, which would be provided for the benefit of Birmingham people in general. I hope that the hon. Gentleman feels that such a proposal would deserve his support.

Mr. Rooker: I am sorry to intervene again; this is the last time that I shall do so. The hon. Gentleman has told us nothing about the proposed price of tickets. I believe that 35,000 people will be expected to pay more than £17 a ticket. One cannot compare that with the price of attending an ordinary event or going to the local park. The other 100,000 people will be expected to pay at least £5 at 1984 prices. The hon. Gentleman has not given those

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prices, which would enable us to consider the instruction in the context of the prices that people would be expected to pay to see the race.

Sir Reginald Eyre: The hon. Gentleman mentions prices at the upper end of the likely spectrum — the possible prices for seats in glossy and convenient situations in the stands. There is a range of estimates of the revenue that might be gained through the sale of tickets for a whole day's substantial and attractive entertainment, including items of entertainment suitable for families. However, the hon. Gentleman is quite right to say that ultimately there will be a proper charge for tickets. The lottery will give the people of Birmingham in general a chance of a concessionary ticket.

I wish to quote from a leading article in *Motor Sport* of March 1985. The article states:

"The novelty of road racing would bring a great deal of news media coverage and also attract thousands, possibly tens of thousands, of new spectators who have never before witnessed racing. Mere parades of cars around Birmingham have attracted bigger crowds than the British Grand Prix. If the meeting was a good one then it would surely attract new spectators to regular motor racing. A Birmingham street meeting would be good for the sport.

The arguments for a street race meeting are simple and can be answered in personal terms. Would you stop going to your regular circuit because of a street race in Birmingham? Of course not. Would you like to see road racing in Britain? Of course you would. Would you welcome newcomers to the sport? Of course you would, for we would benefit by increased interest in motor racing. The case for a single annual street race in Birmingham is self-evident and overwhelming."

There was also a leading article in *The Times* on 29 January 1985, which stated:

"Objecting to the bill will spin out proceedings, waste scarce parliamentary time and conceivably doom a measure which merits the support of those on the left who favour municipal self-help and, on the right, advocates of competition and private business regeneration . . . What matters is that Birmingham, true to tradition, is realizing that prosperity requires the local economy to adapt".

In addition to Miami, Monaco, Detroit, Dallas, Hamilton in Ontario, and several other cities, Wellington in New Zealand has now held its first street car event. Adelaide in Australia is to follow in October, and Rome may well follow next year. British drivers take part in those events, but they have no opportunity to practise or to show their paces at home. I ask the House to give Birmingham a chance to provide the United Kingdom with a spectacle of international appeal.

7.38 pm

Mr. Reg Prentice (Daventry): I wish to speak briefly in opposition to the Second Reading of the Bill. I shall do so along the lines advanced by the Royal Automobile Association in its memorandum to all hon. Members. There were two main points in the RAC memorandum. The first dealt with the general effect of such events upon traffic in big cities. However, in order to be brief, I shall concentrate upon the second point, which concerns the role of the RAC Motor Sports Association.

I declare a constituency interest. My constituency includes the Silverstone circuit. The points put to me by the Silverstone circuit represent the views of people from the purpose-built motor racing circuits in this country. This development will not stop with one race a year in Birmingham. The race may well be a flop. There is a fairly widespread view among motor racing experts that the estimates of the Birmingham city corporation are hopelessly optimistic. It is one thing to have people turn up to watch a free motorcade. It is another for them to pay the prices suggested by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker).

If it is a flop, that may be the end of the matter. If it succeeds, two developments will follow. The first is that Birmingham will want to promote such races more often. The second is that other cities and possibly rural areas will want to follow suit. Therefore, I suggest that the real debate is whether we want to depart from our traditional position whereby motor racing in Britain has been confined to purpose-built circuits.

Mrs. Jill Knight: I do not think it follows automatically that, just because one race is a success, there will be applications for more. It is not my understanding that, for instance, Monaco asks to run such races two or three times a year, even though the Monaco grand prix has been an established success for a long time.

Mr. Prentice: Yes, but——

Mr. George Park (Coventry, North-East) *rose*——

Mr. Prentice: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman before dealing with the intervention by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Mrs. Knight).

Mr. Park: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman. He has just referred to the traditional way. Is he not aware that motor racing here, as elsewhere, started on street circuits and not on purpose-built circuits such as Silverstone?

Mr. Prentice: I accept that correction, but the development of the sport over many years — and certainly over the years since the second world war— and the success of Britain in the international racing world have been based upon the use of purpose-built tracks.

I accept what my hon. Friend the Member for Edgbaston said about Monaco. Monaco is in a special position. There, we are talking about a grand prix, and Birmingham is not. The grand prix started in Monaco a long time ago for historical reasons. It arose in a small state which had no other room outside its streets on which to build a circuit. There are special circumstances there.

The list of other cities quoted by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Hall Green (Sir R. Eyre), again, should be looked at with a degree of scepticism. I understand that Rome is not going ahead with its plans. Some of the American cities have had to modify their plans and in other cases have encountered commercial failure. That is what I am told by the RAC.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak) *rose*——

Mr. Prentice: I shall not give way to my hon. Friend. A number of hon. Members want to take part in the debate. There are several points of view on the Bill, and I want to detain the House for only a few moments.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Silverstone is afraid of competition.

Mr. Prentice: I shall come to the argument about competition, but I beg my hon. Friend to listen, just as I shall listen to him if he catches your eye, Mr. Speaker, which is more likely if the rest of us make short speeches.

The Silverstone case was summarised in a statement issued on behalf of Silverstone Circuits Limited in January. It describes the way in which the permanent circuits have been built up by private investors, both individuals and organisations:

"Over many years they have ploughed their resources into purpose built circuits to cater for all the needs of the sport from club race level to Grand Prix. Additionally, the country's permanent circuits actively encourage all aspects of motor racing, helping the beginners, subsidising the enthusiasts events and providing training grounds for drivers, officials and marshals plus facilities for testing racing vehicles which would not be provided by temporary street circuits. The permanent circuits are able to provide the best, safest facilities for competitors and spectators alike. With two circuits in this country licensed to run Grands Prix and others catering for a wide cross section of events, we do not see the need for the law to be changed to permit street racing."

In support of that, I should like to advance a number of arguments, but I confine myself to three of them.

The first and most important argument in this discussion is the one about safety. In their statement circulated to hon. Members, the promoters of the Bill say that there would be safety barriers and a catch fence. I should hope so. Of course, there will be these precautions; it would not be permitted otherwise.

I say in parentheses that I do not argue this case on the ground of constituency chauvinism. I am proud and entitled to be proud that my constituency includes a great national asset such as the Silverstone circuit. But the arguments that I am advancing apply to all the other purpose-built circuits in the country and are designed to benefit the sport.

Looking at the Silverstone circuit vis-a-vis what is proposed in Birmingham, the first difference that one sees is that the track was designed with safety in mind for this kind of racing and not safety for ordinary traffic. The second difference is that the surface of the circuit is composed of a special material, Delugrip, which is designed for safety purposes, and that is not true of the roads of Birmingham. The third difference is that the track at Silverstone is 50 ft. wide. It is that width for general racing purposes, including the safety factor and the room that it provides for manoeuvre.

I remind the House that safety is not a static concept. It is not simply a matter of saying that here are some minimum requirements, such as putting up a fence. Every accident on any of the circuits becomes the subject of an inquiry both at the circuit and by the RAC sub-committee, and every possible lesson is taken into account: should there be a change in the angle of a corner; should this chicane be altered in some way; should there be some extra barrier at a vulnerable point? This is a constructive process going on over the years in which the toll of death and injury in this inevitably dangerous sport has been reduced. I suggest that that is a contribution that cannot be made on street curcuits.

Mr. Denis Howell (Birmingham, Small Heath) *rose——*

Mr. Prentice: For old times' sake, I shall give way to the right hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Howell: Does the right hon. Gentleman realise that Mr. Robert Langford, the circuit inspector of the RAC who was asked to co-operate by Birmingham and made this feasibility study, concluded by saying:

"As a result of this inspection I see no insuperable problem regarding the actual track and feel that it would be possible for an event for the type of machinery discussed at the meeting to take place, provided always that the work is completed in a satisfactory manner."

In other words, the RAC's chief inspector was satisfied about the safety aspects of this proposed race.

Mr. Prentice: I accept that, and I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will accept in turn that the final verdict of the RAC Motor Sports Association is against the project for the reasons that it has put to the House, including the safety factor. In other words, it recognises, as I know from my own conversations, the intangible element by which concepts of safety are growing continually and in which the safety of each of the circuits is revised constantly in the light of experience.

I want also to emphasis the argument about training. Silverstone is the site of the Jim Russell international driving school. A terrific amount of training is done there, not only initial training but more advanced training and the testing of the ability of young drivers to take part in less demanding races and then gradually to work their way into more difficult races such as formula 1 racing. There is a range of events there with enormous scope for training and for the development of the individual driver.

Because of what my hon. Friend the Member for Hall Green said about the relationship of this idea to industry in Birmingham, I must emphasise an important third aspect. I respect what my hon. Friend said, but there is nothing unique about it. At Silverstone, there is an industrial estate where at the moment 36 firms are working. Most of them are fairly small, but all of them work on aspects of motor racing, with a permanent track on which they can conduct testing. There is also a great deal of sophisticated machinery there which helps with the testing of their products. There is already this working link between Silverstone and other circuits and the relevant industries.

My hon. Friend the Member for Selly Oak made a sedentary remark about competition, and I take his point. Most of the time the majority of us would not argue against competition and would say that in most circumstances, whether we were discussing Silverstone or anywhere else, new forms of competition must be accepted.

There are, however, certain provisos. First, the competition should be fair. The road itself and many other facilities for the Birmingham project are paid for by the ratepayers. That is not necessarily fair competition in relation to circuits built by private individuals and organisations.

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Prentice: I am very softhearted.

Mr. Snape: And I am very grateful, although I am sure that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will no more approve of what I have to say than the right hon. Gentleman will. If that is what he really believes, I look forward to his support in campaigning for better railways, which have to provide their own infrastructure while the road haulage industry takes advantage of facilities provided by other people.

Mr. Prentice: I think that that is straying some way from the subject under debate.

I have considered carefully whether, as a matter of principle, competition should be defended regardless of type. As I have said, in this case the competition is not

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equal. Moreover, the permanent circuits plough back into motor sport all the advantages that I have mentioned—training, testing, safety and the rest.

Thirdly, and most important, even if the safety provisions for street racing meet certain minimum standards laid down by an inspector they will never be so stringent and constructive as they are for purpose-built circuits.

In conclusion, if the events in Birmingham are a success they will be copied in other areas, creating a totally new situation. We must ask ourselves whether we want to open the door to that and we should listen carefully to the views of the motor sport industry. I believe that the balance of argument, as summarised in the RAC memorandum, is against giving a Second Reading to the Bill.

7.52 pm

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): This is not a party issue. It is a matter of what is best for Birmingham. Nevertheless, I was amazed at the speech of my right hon. Friend the Member for Daventry (Mr. Prentice). By jove, we do change, do we not, depending on what the issue is and whence the wind bloweth? My right hon. Friend wants competition to fail in this instance, but he is afraid that it may succeed. That is a most unusual view for a Conservative, albeit a convert, to take. If the Birmingham project fails, Silverstone and the RAC will be able to say, "We told you so." Throughout its history Birmingham has always tried—and sometimes, though rarely, failed—to put its money, its power and its people behind new ideas. Why should it not be allowed to do this? My right hon. Friend the Member for Daventry has put the case given to him by Silverstone and by the RAC, with its usual lack of enterprise and its wish to be God over the whole of the motor trade. I thank God that the AA exists for those who do not like the RAC's head-in-the-sand attitude.

Conservatives should believe in competition. Birmingham is not asking for a grand prix. In the past few years Birmingham has suffered cruelly from the depression and the problems associated with it. To get over this by ourselves, we built a great national exhibition centre, with some help from the taxpayer and a great deal of help from the ratepayers. If we had taken the attitude of those who oppose this modest investment today, we should never have invested £40 million of ratepayers' money in the exhibition centre. Some say that that money should have been spent on council house repairs. As chairman of finance, I signed the contract on behalf of the city, and that investment by Birmingham ratepayers has brought in hundreds of millions of pounds in prosperity not just for Birmingham but for Solihull, Coventry, Warwick and all the surrounding areas. That is the kind of enterprise that Birmingham is prepared to undertake.

Another £40 million went into the airport. That, too, has brought in hundreds of millions of pounds for the whole area. The amount involved in the project now under discussion is a piffling sum for a great city, but the enterprise, publicity and uplifting of the spirit that it will bring to the city will mean that it will cost the ratepayers nothing. It will show MG, Metro, Jaguar and Talbot, all of which operate in the west midlands, that a further shop window is available through which all can prosper. If people fear competition from Birmingham, that is good. Birmingham has faced competition throughout the ages and it will have to face it again.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Daventry seemed to think that if the project were a success races would be held in Birmingham every Saturday, but the Bill clearly limits the number of events to one per year held over two days. Will one bank holiday event per year in Birmingham be such a disaster for Silverstone? Is Monaco trembling in its boots? The project will be good for Birmingham and the west midlands. It will show that Birmingham is not a run-down, down-at-heel city.

The publicity for what Birmingham has done and is doing and for the spirit of enterprise of its up-and-going people will be a very good thing. Yet mealy-mouthed conditions are proposed by people who should know better. The hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) is not here, and I am not surprised. He probably does not even know where Birmingham is—he is too busy with his coal mines, those that are left—but he wants the Bill to founder. He suggests that there should be a clause prohibiting any citizen of South Africa from participating. That proposal bears the names of a number or other hon. Members, but I will not mention them. I do not wish to offend them. I want to get them into the Lobby with us.

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: For the hon. Lady, I am willing to do almost anything.

Ms. Short: I do not know about that, but I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. Is he just going over the top, or is he seriously suggesting that it is dishonourable for a Member of Parliament to suggest that South African sportsmen and sportswomen should not participate in sporting events in Britain?

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: If people are good enough for Silverstone or any other course, they should be good enough for Birmingham. It is unnecessary to lay down special provisions for Birmingham as though it were some kind of laager on its own. What is accepted by the nation should be good enough for Birmingham. It is wrong to put in special clauses.

There is then the advertising of cigarettes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. I have allowed the hon. Gentleman to make his point. However, those instructions have not been selected and there is nothing in the Bill about cigarettes or South Africa. We should not be discussing those matters. Only instructions 7 and 9 have been selected by Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: I am obliged to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for your advice. That is what I would have said had those instructions been chosen.

We recognise that there are those who can talk out this Bill, and that there are some Birmingham Members who wish to do so. I hope that they will let the Bill go through to Committee, as they should do, so that, once again, Birmingham can be given a fair chance. I hope that they recognise that those of us who are in favour of the Bill are concerned not to make a smart move over everybody else, but to help our city forward, to give it a good image and to support the motor industry and the people. I suggest that 93 per cent. of the people cannot be wrong. I should have thought that we could all support the Bill. I hope that this

evening we shall find that, not on the road to Damascus, but on the road to New street, hon. Members who have said that they will vote against the Bill will change their minds and vote in favour of this excellent measure.

8 pm

Mr. Terry Davis (Birmingham, Hodge Hill): I shall oppose this Bill. I want to make it clear that I am not speaking on behalf of any organisation that has petitioned against the Bill, of any business that has secretly lobbied against it, or of the RAC, Brands Hatch or Silverstone.

The idea of a motor race on the streets of the city of Birmingham is an exciting one, and well worth consideration. When I was first approached about this idea, in a letter from an organisation opposed to it, I replied that I would not be willing to commit myself to oppose something that I had not examined. I was then approached by the city council and replied in similar terms, saying that I wished to have more information before I made up my mind about how I would vote on the Bill.

We have now had a considerable amount of information, and I pay tribute to the patience, care and diligence displayed by councillor Marjorie Brown, who has replied on behalf of the city council to a number of questions that I, and some of my hon. Friends, have put to her. Nevertheless, I am not satisfied that the Bill should receive a Second Reading, and I shall opposite it on three grounds.

First, I am concerned about the financial implications. The hon. Member for Birmingham, Hall Green (Sir R. Eyre) said that the city council wishes to spend £1·5 million, based on an estimate described by the right hon. Member for Daventry (Mr. Prentice) as optimistic. I am not making that point; I am prepared to accept the figures laid out by the city treasurer. If the race is held, and the results show that the estimate was optimistic, that will be the time to criticise the figures. In the meantime, I am prepared to accept the figures supplied by the city council.

As the hon. Member for Hall Green pointed out, the city council believes that if it spends £1·5 million it will make a profit of £1 million. A 40 per cent. net profit is a pretty good business operation. Therefore, I am impressed by that argument. I am also impressed that the hon. Member for Hall Green is a convert to municipal enterprise. I am delighted, and I look forward to his support on many other issues in future, when I and my hon. Friends will argue for the city council doing things to make a profit that will benefit the citizens of Birmingham.

Mr. Denis Howell: Why not support the Bill, then?

Mr. Davis: I shall tell my right hon. Friend why. As the hon. Member for Hall Green fairly pointed out, it is not only a question of spending £1·5 million from the revenue account of the city council. The total amount of money to be spent by the city council is £3 million, and the other £1·5 million will be capital expenditure. It is to that I object.

The hon. Member for Hall Green pointed out, again properly and fairly, that capital expenditure by local authorities has been controlled by successive Governments. He could have added, even more fairly, that it has been not only controlled but cut by this Government, and that is the point. The hon. Member for Hall Green says that £1·5 million is a relatively small sum, which will generate income that will free resources for other services. That is true, but it is equally true that the use of £1·5 million of capital for his project means that £1·5 million cannot be spent in this or any other year on other capital projects needed by the citizens of Birmingham. That is my objection, and it is insurmountable because it has been confirmed by the city treasurer.

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): The hon. Gentleman will recall that my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Hall Green (Sir R. Eyre) spoke about that £1·5 million being spent over two years, so we are talking about £750,000 a year, and not £1·5 million in one year.

Mr. Davis: That may be so, but the city council is so pessimistic about the Bill that it has not budgeted anything to be spent in the year 1985-86. It will have to cut from other programmes if the Bill is passed. The hon. Gentleman's point is valid, but whether the money is spread over one or two years, it will still come out of a capital allocation that has been reduced by the Government and that is tightly controlled. The council will not be able to take the profit and use it for capital expenditure, and I did not see any Tory Members joining me and my hon. Friends in the Lobby when we were protesting about the restriction on the use of capital receipts by the city council of Birmingham.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: We spent over £42 million on the national exhibition centre, so why were people like your good self not against that? We have just spent £35 million on the airport, so why were you not against that? Presumably it is because those projects were going to be, and have been, successful. Why are you against Birmingham making a success——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is not intending to involve me.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: I beg your pardon, Sir.

Why is the hon. Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis) against us making another successful investment which will help all the people in Birmingham, particularly the unemployed?

Mr. Davis: I take the hon. Gentleman's point, but neither he nor I were here at the time of the debates about the national exhibition centre. We might have agreed about that. I am not opposed to all capital works by the city council. I do not know whether we would have agreed or disagreed on the matter, but it is all in the past. It was at a time before this Government were elected and cut the capital allocation for the city of Birmingham. That is the point. We must now choose our priorities more carefully, and priorities are the language of Socialism, as I was taught to believe.

The hon. Member for Hall Green said that using the money this way would not affect housing repairs, but he withdrew that a little after an intervention by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker). The hon. Gentleman was wise to do so, because this is a grey area. The city council move the line from year to year. One cannot say what the line between capital and revenue expenditure is, because for housing repairs the mix is changed every year. If the repair is small, it is financed by revenue expenditure. Replacing two slates on a roof is paid for from revenue, but a whole roof comes from capital expenditure. If this plan makes a profit, and

[Mr. Davis]

money is available for more council house repairs, it will be available for the small repairs, and the people with the biggest need—those who need whole roofs replaced—will suffer as a result of this choice of priorities. This will not only affect tenants.

The improvement grants for owner-occupiers are also financed from capital expenditure. The hon. Member for Hall Green and several other hon. Members were present at a meeting which I attended, at city council house, a few months ago. The city council representatives complained to us about the inadequate amount of money being made available for improvement grants for owner-occupiers in Birmingham. That was capital expenditure.

There is also the problem of urban renewal, enveloping schemes and the block schemes, matters that we have also discussed with representatives of the city council. These schemes are all financed by capital expenditure. This is the aspect of the city's finances that causes most concern.

Other things also come from capital expenditure. In January, we all had a letter from councillor Knowles, leader of the city council, drawing our attention to the effects of Government cuts in capital expenditure. He complained about the reduction of more than £40 million in one year by the Government in the budget for the city council's capital expenditure. He drew our attention to the programmes that would suffer as a result. This is not my list. It has been prepared by the leader of the city council, with the advice of the city treasurer.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: The leader of the council belongs to the Labour party.

Mr. Davis: In fact, the list came with a covering letter from the leader of the city council, but the list itself was prepared by the city treasurer, who, to the best of my knowledge, is not a member of the Labour party. I am sure that the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) will be the first to withdraw any allegation that the city treasurer is playing party politics.

Mr. John Mark Taylor (Solihull) *rose*——

Mr. Davis: I do not see how the hon. Member for Solihull (Mr. Taylor) can take part. He is not from Birmingham. I shall give way later.

I want to read the list of things that the city treasurer told us were at risk. I know that Conservative Members do not like it, but, as a result of the Government's cuts in Birmingham city council's capital expenditure, the city treasurer said that next year, for the first time ever, the council would be unable to build any council housing, even for the elderly and disabled. The cuts would mean the decimation — the city treasurer's own word — of the city's essential major housing repair programme. It would wipe out planned preventive maintenance work, putting up to 500 jobs at risk. It would prevent structural repairs to dangerous high-rise blocks, which are fenced off to prevent injury from falling concrete. There will be no funds for improvement grants, including priority grants for the chronically sick and disabled. There will be no money for the replacement of inadequate outside school toilets. That will all be shelved for another year. Essential repair and fire precaution work to homes for the elderly will be dropped. A replacement home for the elderly will not now commence. The programme for the removal of asbestos from day nurseries is at risk. All those worthwhile and essential projects are at risk as a result of a reduction in the city council's capital expenditure budget. I object to using £1·5 million for a motor race.

Mr. John Mark Taylor: Will the hon. Gentleman accept that a Member of Parliament for Solihull is as entitled to participate in this debate as an hon. Member for Wolverhampton, West Bromwich or Coventry? The hon. Gentleman has quoted a letter from the Labour leader of the city council, councillor Dick Knowles. Can he say whether he is in favour of this road race?

Mr. Davis: Yes, he is in favour of the road race. I apologise if I implied that the hon. Gentleman should not take part. I am happy to hear his views. It is true that councillor Dick Knowles is strongly in favour of the race and he is entitled to his opinion. I am entitled to point out that in January councillor Dick Knowles sent a letter to every Birmingham Member of Parliament — the hon. Gentleman will not have received that—together with a memorandum.

Mr. John Mark Taylor: I did.

Mr. Davis: That is even more interesting. My hon. Friends from Birmingham and I may have something to say to councillor Knowles when we see him. He is sending out letters to Tory Members who are not from the city of Birmingham. That is incredible. If the hon. Gentleman catches your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, perhaps he will tell the House what he did about it. What I do not think he did was to support Birmingham Members of Parliament in the Division Lobby when we voted against those capital restrictions.

However, three Conservative Members of Parliament for Birmingham share a common problem with me. The hon. Members for Birmingham, Hall Green, for Birmingham, Yardley (Mr. Bevan) and for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) all share with me the appalling problem of the Smith houses. We know that the city council has not got the capital allocation to deal with the problem of Smith houses. I will not go to the Brandwood Home Owners Association and tell it that I support the expenditure of £1·5 million on a motor race by a city council that cannot find any money to deal with the problems of owner-occupiers who have been conned into buying defective council houses.

Mr. David Gilroy Bevan (Birmingham, Yardley): What does the hon. Gentleman feel about the purported £30 million of receipts from sales which will be available for his party to spend locally on Smith houses and other repairs as well as on the Perry Barr centre for recreational purposes?

Mr. Davis: I am not clear what the hon. Gentleman is referring to but I should be delighted to listen if he makes the point later.

I shall be pleased if the city council can find ways round the restrictions supported by the hon. Gentleman. I want it to spend more capital in Birmingham. My point is that when I go to the Department of the Environment with all-party delegations I do not want the Minister to say that the ground has been cut from under my feet as a representative of Birmingham because the council must have enough money so that it can operate a motor race.

The hon. Member for Hall Green referred to the effect of this project on jobs. He said that the expenditure of £1·5

million would provide jobs. Indeed, the council estimates that it will provide up to 20 jobs. I am told that those jobs would arise for employees of the city council, and I am delighted that the hon. Gentleman is impressed by that argument. I hope that in future he will support Labour party pleas for more public expenditure because it will create jobs. But jobs would be created, however that money were spent on capital projects. Jobs would be created if the money were used for urban renewal, day nurseries, old people's homes, improvement grants or any of the other items that are at risk according to the city treasurer.

The second reason for my objection to the Bill is the system of apartheid in South Africa. Unlike the hon. Member for Selly Oak, I make no apology for that. I am prepared to do everything that I can within the law to oppose apartheid and to protest against it and the policies of the South African Government on every possible occasion.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not stray into instructions which have not been selected for debate.

Mr. Davis: I have no intention of referring to instructions that have not been selected. I was about to reassure you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on that point. The hon. Member for Hall Green referred to South Africa. Therefore, I wish to emphasise that that is one reason for my opposition to the Bill. Birmingham is a multiracial city and the proposed route of the motor race runs through a multiracial part of the city. I have made my position clear.

But there is another argument. I understand that the city council wishes to apply for the Olympics to be held in Birmingham in 1992. I wish it well. I shall support that project. I hope that the Government will support that project and I hope that the hon. Member for Selly Oak will come with me to ask the Government to put up the money for it. I am worried about the possibility that that project will be put at risk by South African racing drivers taking part in this proposed motor race.

I look forward to hearing my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell) on that point. He has tremendous expertise and I shall bow to his opinions. If he tells me that there will be no risk to the Olympics from a South African racing driver taking part in the race or a racing driver from any other country taking part—that is a racing driver who has been put on the United Nations register of drivers who have taken part in sport in South Africa and who should therefore not be included in events elsewhere — I shall accept his assurance.

However, for the city council the position is confused. I raised the point with the city council, and it said in a long letter that it was unlikely that South African drivers will enter. Another letter to Members of Parliament for Birmingham explained that the Gleneagles agreement did not apply to professional motor racing drivers. A third letter arrived today from the chairman of the general purposes committee explaining that there was a mistake in a previous letter and that the Gleneagles agreement does apply to motor racing. I do not know where the city council stands on the issue, but I do know where I stand. The Gleneagles agreement says that any Government subscribing to it should

"combat the evil of apartheid by withholding any form of support for, and by taking every practical step to discourage contact or competition by their nationals with sporting organisations, teams or sportsmen from South Africa".

I discussed that with the anti-apartheid movement which told me that it hopes that Birmingham city council will ensure that no South African racing drivers take part in the race. It drew my attention to a much stronger declaration on southern Africa which has been adopted by several other local councils. It includes the provision that the council will:

"Seek to enforce the United Nations sporting and cultural boycott by withholding use of leisure facilities from any event involving participants coming from South Africa and Namibia, and from others who appear on the United Nations sporting and cultural registers."

If the city council had given me an assurance that it would apply that policy on organising the motor race, I should have accepted it. I am not asking the council to amend the Bill. We are not discussing the instruction this evening. If the leader of Birmingham city council will give me his assurance that no South African racing driver will take part in the race, I shall accept his word. I am disappointed that we have not had such an assurance.

I have strong feelings about apartheid and racial discrimination and I shall fight that discrimination at every opportunity. So will my hon. Friends, including my right hon. Friend the Member for Small Heath.

Mr. Denis Howell: I am obliged to my hon. Friend for his kindness in acknowledging my involvement in this problem over many years; I refused permission for a South African cricket team to come here.

The Labour Government were not opposed to South Africans as people; nor are the present Government. We are opposed to apartheid, and that has been the basis of our legislation and of the Gleneagles agreement. I agree that the council got that agreement wrong in the first instance and I am glad that it has been put right. Under the Gleneagles agreement it would be inconceivable that any official representative of South Africa should come here and I am sure that I can say on behalf of the city council that it would uphold the Gleneagles agreement as created by the Labour Government and sustained by the present Government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am finding it a little difficult to relate these remarks to the Bill. I remind the House that this is a short debate. I hope that we can stick to the Bill.

Mr. Davis: I am prepared to leave the subject. I accept what my right hon. Friend the Member for Small Heath says. He is convinced that the city council will ensure that the Gleneagles agreement is honoured. I have never suspected otherwise, but I want it to go much further. I wish to ensure that no South African racing driver takes part in the motor race. Unless I get an assurance that that is the policy of the city council, I shall vote against the Bill.

My third objection concerns the advertising of cigarettes. The health authorities in Birmingham and the west midlands have a good record in campaigning against——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Gentleman, but he seems to be coming to another instruction that has not been selected for debate. I am sure that he will be able to relate his remarks to arguments for or against the Bill.

Mr. Davis: I must point out to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I had no intention of using the word instruction or of debating an instruction that you had not selected. However, the hon. Member for Hall Green mentioned tobacco advertising. I wish to reply to him, but if you feel that I should not do so, I shall leave it there. I do not wish to argue with the Chair.

I am not satisfied by what I have been told by the city council or by what I have heard from the hon. Member for Hall Green. Therefore, I shall oppose the Bill on those grounds.

8.22 pm

The Minister of State, Department of Transport (Mrs. Lynda Chalker): It may be helpful if I intervene now to give a brief indication of the Government's view of the Bill.

We are considering an unusual private Bill. It proposes, for the first time, a city centre motor race. Naturally, we are inclined to regard that with enthusiasm, because it is an exciting idea, and with caution, because it is new and safety is involved.

As the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Small Heath, (Mr. Howell) will verify, the Government are traditionally neutral in these matters, because no major matter of principle is involved. Today will be no exception. This is primarily a local matter and we do not oppose the principle of the Bill.

However, I should tell the House that last week I met the chairman of the RAC, the chairman of the general purposes committee of Birmingham city council and her Conservative opposite number to check out their views. I see the council's proposal as an enthusiastic, fun proposal — some might call it brash — and it is certainly ambitious. That is just like the average Brummie.

Against that background, I have to conclude whether the concept of a city centre motor race constitutes a precedent which would have adverse effects on national sporting interests. My Department, the Department of the Environment and the Home Office have all been involved in discussions with Birmingham city council since the proposal came forward. We have sought assurances from the promoters of the Bill about the construction of the circuit, the limited number of days per year on which racing would be permitted and the type of racing allowed.

The Bill's provisions are restrictive. As my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Hall Green (Sir R. Eyre) said, racing will take place on only one day a year—a bank holiday—with the previous day as a practice day. The circuit is essentially city streets — modified marginally — and there will be no grand prix type racing. I have seen the circuit from tall buildings in Birmingham and the ground on which stands would be erected.

The other duty of the Government is to oversee general matters of national concern. I include the effects of strategic traffic flows, pedestrian safety, access to property for people and vehicles, noise and pollution and planning and environmental matters, including advertising. The Bill includes clauses relevant to all those matters, and officials of my Department, of the Department of the Environment and of the Home Office have discussed the details with the promoters and several amendments have been incorporated in the Bill by the promoters to meet our requirements. We are grateful to the promoters for their positive attitude in achieving amendments which are in the general interest.

We are satisfied that strategic traffic flows will not be impeded by the proposals. The road network in the area allows good alternative routes to be provided, and motorists should not be substantially inconvenienced by the event. I understand that the local highway authority, the West Midlands county council, is also content.

However, I stress, as I have stressed to the chairman of Birmingham's general purposes committee, Mrs. Marjorie Brown, the importance, both before and after the event, of sound traffic management to minimise the disruption to traffic. I know that the promoters are well aware of the need for that, and on Friday I received from the chairman of the general purposes committee an assurance that if amendments were necessary she would be happy to discuss them with my hon. Friend the Member for Hall Green so that he could put them to the House if the Bill is given a Second Reading. Birmingham city council is obviously prepared to consider amendments.

We have been particularly keen to ensure that public safety is fully considered by those planning the motor race and that all reasonable measures appropriate to the Bill are included. We are satisfied that the type of barriers proposed for the circuit are suitable for the protection of spectators and that arrangements for the opening and closing of streets to be used for racing will not adversely affect the safety of pedestrians.

The promoters of the Bill have gone to some lengths to satisfy Government Departments about access for residents and visitors to properties alongside the circuit. It is inevitable that such an event will cause some inconvenience, but basic rights of access must be protected. Access for emergency vehicles is also vital and must be maintained. I hope that Birmingham city council will keep access and safety in mind in all the arrangements, if it is permitted to go ahead with the race.

The Bill provides a framework, but much will depend on the spirit of the enterprise and how the measures are carried through.

Ms. Clare Short: I should be interested to hear the Minister's comments on the point made by the right hon. Member for Daventry (Mr. Prentice), who said that the surface of a motor racing track is different from the surface of a city street and that it would be more dangerous to race on a street.

Mrs. Chalker: There is a difference between the sort of racing that takes place at Silverstone and that envisaged for Birmingham city centre. Delugrip is used on a number of road surfaces, and not exclusively on motor racing circuits. I would have to take advice on the matter, because I do not know the exact sort of surfacing material that is used on that sector in Birmingham. From what Birmingham city council has said, I know that if my officials from the Transport and Road Research Laboratory were not satisfied or if the council was concerned, measures would have to be taken until they were satisfied about the skid resistance of the surface. However, the surface may not need to be the same as that used on the professional circuits, such as at Brands Hatch, because there will not be any formula 1 racing.

The city council has other important duties to perform towards the environment. It must protect its residents from

noise and pollution, as well as protecting the physical environment. We have received assurances from the city's representatives that noise and disturbance will be minimised, and the contracts let for the erection of barriers will specifically contain a clause to that effect.

I understand that the city has canvassed the opinion of local residents on the race and maintains that the very great majority are in favour. That weighs very heavily. We have also, however, sought assurances that provision will be made for those who do not wish to be in close proximity to a noisy motor race on a bank holiday, such as the frail and the elderly, to leave the area for the day at the expense of the race promoters.

Mr. Fry: My hon. Friend has made a very pertinent point. If the Bill is enacted and we have to rely purely on assurances, the House will not have an opportunity to build in the guarantees that some of us might like to have. Should not the Bill's promoters accept that, before any racing takes place, specific approval should first be obtained from the Department of Transport, and perhaps the local authority, the police and even the RAC, as the licensing authority for motor racing? We would then have more faith in assurances. If the Bill is enacted in its present form, we shall have to rely entirely on Birmingham city council.

Mrs. Chalker: It is not for me to answer for the promoters of the Bill. However, I distinctly heard my hon. Friend the Member for Hall Green say that arrangements would be made for all safety measures in a code of practice. From the information that has been given to me, I know that if it were desirable to make such amendments to the Bill, the promoters would ask for them to be made. If the Bill is given a Second Reading tonight, my hon. Friend the Member for Wellingborough (Mr. Fry) can consult my hon. Friend the Member for Hall Green and put forward any ideas so that they can be considered further.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: My hon. Friend has made an important point — *[Interruption.]* — which I should like to pursue, as some of us may not have an opportunity to speak in the debate. Is my hon. Friend asking us to give the Bill a Second Reading on the promise of a code of practice? Is she saying that that would satisfy the Government? What would be the Government's view if the RAC, which is the equivalent of the Jockey Club and is appointed by the Government to see that the rules are observed, decided that the rules and assurances were insufficient? Would the Government then stand by?

Mrs. Chalker: As I have said, it is for the promoters, not the Government, to ask hon. Members to support the Bill. From all the information given to us, I understand that Birmingham city council is prepared—I shall come to this point later—to meet the requirements of the RAC, whose chairman I met last week, in every way that it would seem to desire on certain points. Therefore, Birmingham city council and the RAC are now coming together, although that might not have been evident a week or so ago when some hon. Members were briefed by the respective parties.

Mr. Denis Howell: I should like to point out, in reply to the interventions that have been made, that Birmingham does not renege on its undertakings. It never has done so. Birmingham is a great city. The hon. Member for Birmingham, Hall Green (Sir R. Eyre) and I were present at the meeting when the RAC was invited to run and supervise the race and to ensure that all the safety requirements were met. I am sure that I can now repeat that assurance on behalf of Birmingham.

Mrs. Chalker: I am delighted to hear that, as it clears the air.

I understand that officials from the Department of the Environment have been in discussion with Birmingham city council about the display of advertisements and that a suitable revision of the provisions in clause 15 will be suggested if the Bill receives a Second Reading. I understand that it would remove, as far as practicable, the possibility of duplicate control with the general advertisement control regime under the town and country planning Acts. There is no apparent reason why this difficulty should not sensibly be resolved by the discussions.

It would not be reasonable for the net expense, if any, of this local project to fall on the public purse. We have therefore sought details from Birmingham city council on the expected expenditure and income associated with the race. We have stated that we expect the project to be self-financing, and we accept that the estimates provided by the city council demonstrated that that is feasible. Within those estimates, we were anxious to see that adequate provision was made for compensation for those who could be adversely affected on occasion by the race — for example, through any damage to property. I understand that that has been covered.

In response to interventions, I have already mentioned the comments of the chairman of the RAC. I know that the RAC has been writing to hon. Members making observations for the debate. There is absolutely no doubt in my mind that Birmingham city council not only wants to work with the RAC but is fully prepared to do so. It will also undertake those safety measures considered necessary, whether by the RAC or by the Department, should we have any difference of opinion, which I believe is not the case at present.

The Government wish to encourage initiative and competition. Since we have received assurances several times, and the RAC has not petitioned against the Bill, I believe that the concern to ensure that the road race is a safe and good venture for Birmingham city council can be satisfied. I understand that the RAC, which looks after the 14 circuits in this country, may be a little concerned about competition. But one road race one day a year in Birmingham and the sort of event that I would gladly visit the constituency of my right hon. Friend the Member for Daventry (Mr. Prentice) to see are two very different things.

That should be kept in the forefront of our minds. All the matters that have been raised in relation to the Bill are important. The Government have taken steps to ensure that they have been fully considered and that the best possible arrangements are made. We are content that the promoters of the Bill have their responsibilities fully in mind, and that, with good will, there need be no serious impediment to its implementation. We would, of course, wish to reserve our position about reporting to Parliament should any points of detail remain unresolved between the promoters and Government Departments.

Birmingham is often described as the home of the motor car. Last night I was in a neighbouring home of the motor car, Coventry. It seems appropriate that Birmingham

[Mrs. Chalker]

should promote its name through a motor race in the city streets. Birmingham may not have the palm trees of Monaco——

Mr. Pawsey: Why not?

Mrs. Chalker: I have not examined the trees of Monaco or the soil of Birmingham. But Birmingham is a city with many qualities. The council and all parties on it have worked in a vigorous and innovative way. We may not always agree with everything that they do, but they choose to market their very strong attributes through this Bill.

I know that the city council sees the proposals for motor racing in the city as one ingredient in its positive programme for creating an attractive environment in which regeneration and expansion of Birmingham's commercial base can take place. The Bill is an exciting local initiative, and it is certainly not one that I would wish to frustrate. I therefore hope that the House will feel able to give it a Second Reading and allow it to proceed in the usual way to Committee, where all its provisions and all the reservations expressed in the House tonight can be considered in greater detail.

8.41 pm

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): Like the Minister, the Opposition have no wish to put forward an official view about the Bill. Each hon. Member must make his own decision. Given the passions that the Bill has already aroused, it would be foolhardy of me, as an exile from Cheshire representing a black country constituency, to spend too much time in this very hot bath water.

Having made some fairly unwise, and I thought private, remarks some weeks ago about the centre of Birmingham which I have no intention of repeating tonight, I must say that I have found the debate fascinating. I was impressed, as I always am, by the cool, calm and comprehensive way in which the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Hall Green (Sir R. Eyre) presented the Bill. I was a little surprised to hear him refer to the Bill as a glittering example of municipal enterprise with such apparent approval. When the last Labour Government tried to allow some municipal enterprise in the direct works department in Birmingham, the right hon. Gentleman was among the most vociferous critics. It appears that on the subject of motor racing he is pleased to see some municipal enterprise.

Mr. Rooker: There are more examples than that quoted by my hon. Friend. The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Hall Green (Sir R. Eyre) and other Conservative Members voted against this proposal when it was previously before the House. Surely it was a municipal enterprise then. They appear to have changed their tune.

Mr. Snape: No doubt the reasons for changing their tune will become apparent as the debate continues. When it comes to tune changing, there can be no better pianist than the right hon. Member for Daventry (Mr. Prentice).

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West) *rose*——

Mr. Snape: I shall not give way because the hon. Gentleman joined the debate only five minutes ago. If he wants to play the piano, he should be here for the full orchestral concert and not come in halfway through.

The right hon. Member for Daventry gave us a fascinating exposition of modern-day Toryism on the subject of competition. Once again, it appears that competition is a very good thing—but, O Lord, not in my constituency. The right hon. Gentleman has the Silverstone course in his constituency and defended the vested interest very well. That should be regarded as a compliment on the fulfilment of his constituency duties. But how strange for a Conservative—albeit a new found one—to say that if the project succeeds Birmingham will want to repeat it more frequently. That is a fine example of the Tory policy on competition, is it not? Presumably the right hon. Gentleman's version of competition is that it must be not too often and unsuccessful. I must confess that under the Government of whom he is now a supporter private enterprise has not done particularly well, whether in Birmingham or elsewhere. But it is still a surprising view to espouse as publicly as he has done tonight.

Mr. Prentice: The case that I was trying to advance —to which neither the hon. Gentleman nor my hon. Friend the Minister have addressed themselves—is that British motor sport has attained very high standards in the international world. The foundation of that is all the work, investment and training in special purpose circuits. If we interfere with that and open the floodgates to a different sort of competition, we may dilute that quality and do great damage to the sport.

Mr. Snape: The Minister dealt in some detail with the question of safety. The more detailed points that she and other hon. Members have mentioned show that these matters can be dealt with more adequately in Committee than in the House. I realise that the right hon. Gentleman is a great admirer of the Royal Automobile Club. I do not accuse him of delivering a brief from that organisation, but it had certainly been in contact with him before he expressed his views tonight. It is surprising, if not positively poignant, to think that just over a decade or so ago I used to listen to the right hon. Gentleman in this House and outside advocating more fullblooded Socialism. That was in the early 1970s. I know that the right hon. Gentleman is not anxious to be reminded of that. Tonight he is espousing the views of those pillars of Socialism, the stewards of the RAC—people like Sir Carl Aarvold and the Duke of Richmond and Gordon. Ten years is a very short time in politics, to misquote someone else, but to find the right hon. Gentleman firmly in the camp of that organisation comes as something of a surprise.

One hon. Member mentioned the similarity between the RAC and the Jockey Club. A third organisation could be included—the Politburo. None of them is elected on a democratic basis. The right hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends have seen fit to defend what I regard as the brief from the RAC, and I find that as pretentious and misleading as most of the propaganda that emanates from that organisation. If anything was guaranteed to get Members from the Opposition Benches into the Lobby to support the Bill, it is that appalling and arrogant letter from the RAC.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: The hon. Gentleman can have his fun, but whether or not he likes the RAC it stands as the authority that controls motor racing in this country——

Mrs. Chalker: Long may it continue.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: I agree with my hon. Friend. It has discharged that function with national and international distinction. Our record on safety and standards is second to none. Therefore, it has the same standing as the Jockey Club. Whether or not their members are elected is beside the point. Both the Jockey Club and the RAC have a duty that we do not want to usurp, which is to ensure that the standard of racing in their respective spheres is as high as it can be, and they deserve our approbation.

Mr. Snape: I am sure that the House and the RAC will be grateful for that impassioned defence. I dismiss the Jockey Club, but say in passing that we all know that the self-styled sport of kings is corruption free and that every nag that canters round a course does so in perfect fairness —and the Jockey Club never ceases to assure us that that is so.

On the question of the RAC, I can only suggest that the hon. Gentleman reads yesterday's *Sunday People*. The RAC has a committee that is responsible for speedway. I would not have thought that the Duke of Richmond and Gordon, the right hon. Lord Shawcross, Squadron Leader John Crampton or Sir Carl Aarvold were members of that committee, but according to the *Sunday People* they saw fit to dismiss some very detailed bribery allegations. Perhaps those self-perpetuating, if not self-appointing, organisations should be the subject of an inquiry by this House.

My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis) gave three reasons why the Bill should be opposed. Two of them were mentioned by the hon. Member for Hall Green. Like my hon. Friend, I represent a multi-racial constituency, and my abhorrence of apartheid is as great as his. Indeed, an abhorrence of apartheid unites all on these Benches, and I hope that the same can be said of many Conservative Members. My hon. Friend spoke of cigarette advertising. As a reformed smoker, perhaps I had better not say much on that subject. I know how easy it is to lapse after one has enjoyed such a sin.

The main point with which my hon. Friend the Member for Hodge Hill was concerned was the financial implications of the expenditure under the Bill, and he said that £3 million, rather than £1·5 million, would appear to be involved on the project. As he put it, that money could be spent on other projects.

Understandably, he dealt passionately with the £40 million cuts in public expenditure that the Conservatives had undertaken since coming to power and he detailed other areas of priority where he would rather see public money spent than on a motor race. I appreciate my hon. Friend's view, but he did not say whether, if the project did not go ahead, all those other desirable priorities would benefit.

About £1·5 million would not go a great way to solving the problems, for example, of urban renewal, old people's housing and housing repairs generally in a city the size of Birmingham. My hon. Friend's point in that respect was not particularly valid, therefore, on that aspect of the Bill.

Mr. Terry Davis: I am sure that my hon. Friend does not wish to misrepresent me. He may not have understood me when I said that the £3 million was the total cost, of which £1·5 million was revenue expenditure and £1·5 million capital expenditure. I was referring specifically to the capital expenditure, which could not be replaced.

When he refers to Government cuts in public expenditure of £40 million, that is a £40 million cut in capital expenditure this year, not since the Conservatives were elected. I was not suggesting that £1·5 million would cure all the problems and pay for all the projects listed by the city treasurer. It would, however, make a contribution.

Mr. Snape: I apologise to my hon. Friend for my getting the figure wrong. He said earlier that Socialism was the language of priorities, and I agree. Surely the priorities are better decided by those elected to make the decisions, the members of the city council.

Mr. Rooker: It is for us to decide tonight.

Mr. Snape: My hon. Friend says that it is up to us tonight. For the last four months—though it has seemed much longer—I have been involved in the Committee stage of the Local Government Bill. From the Labour Benches we have argued day after day for greater autonomy for local government and have attacked the Conservatives for interfering with the expenditure priorities of local authorities. Is it not incongruous to argue the reverse tonight and say that we are better qualified to decide how £1·5 million should be spent?

Ms. Clare Short: What are we doing here?

Mr. Snape: We are here to give approval or otherwise to the Bill. The detailed arguments, however, should be conducted in Committee.

Ms. Short: What is our function tonight?

Mr. Snape: I will gladly give way to my hon. Friend, if she wishes to intervene. If, however, she keeps shouting into my right ear, I shall have difficulty trying to speak to the subject and trying to hear what she is saying.

Ms. Short: First a minor point: I was shouting into my hon. Friend's left ear. Given that Birmingham must seek approval from the House for the Bill, it is our duty seriously to consider the measure to see whether it would benefit the people of Birmingham. We believe in local government. That is why it is our task to consider whether it will benefit the people of Birmingham.

Mr. Snape: I accept my hon. Friend's geographical correction in that she was shouting into my left ear. It is not just a question of deciding priorities on behalf of the city of Birmingham. I appreciate that my hon. Friend represents a Birmingham constituency whereas I do not, but I must remind her that the city council voted 90 to 13 in favour of the Bill. That was a substantial majority, and a vote of that magnitude means that the great majority of members of the Labour party there voted for the measure.

It is consistent for us to argue—as hon. Members who have served for any time in local government do argue —that there is too much interference from this House and from Whitehall as a whole in the decisions of local government——

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: Hear, hear.

Mr. Snape: I am grateful for that comment of assent from the hon. Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson

[Mr. Snape]

Smith). I hope that I can rely on his support in the Lobby when the Conservatives decide to abolish democracy locally.

The fact that the decision was made by such a majority on Birmingham city council shows the depth of feeling in the city in favour of the scheme. While I accept, therefore, that my hon. Friend the Member for Hodge Hill adduced his argument with his customary sincerity and diligence, I suggest that those points can be more fully debated in Committee. I would not dream of making any recommendations on the issue.

Ms. Clare Short: My hon. Friend is doing precisely that.

Mr. Snape: I have expressed my own view, which is all that it is proper for me to do on a Bill such as this. I shall be voting for the measure tonight because I believe that Dick Knowles and his colleagues on the city council know what is best for Birmingham. Members of the Labour party who believe in local government democracy should support locally elected councillors when they reach a decision in the way that Birmingham has reached this decision.

8.57 pm

Mr. David Gilroy Bevan (Birmingham, Yardley): I listened carefully to the arguments that have been deployed tonight on both sides. In particular, I was persuaded by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Hall Green (Sir R. Eyre).

I listened with reassurance to the Minister of State when she said that note had been taken of the views of Birmingham, that discussions had been held, that dilligent consideration had been given to the question of safety, that the Bill would contain provisions in relation to safety and that undertakings on the subject would be given.

A spokesman for the Royal Automobile Club was reported today to have said that if the Bill was given a Second Reading, as I trust it will, the RAC would change its view and discuss the matter. That, in my view, would be an appropriate course for the RAC to take. The members of Birmingham city council did not take a sudden decision. I was a member of the council about 12 years ago and I met some today who were also members of the council at that time or who were in the gallery of the chamber when the issue was debated and the proposal was narrowly defeated. The hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) was right to emphasise the vote in Birmingham's council chamber. It should be stressed that 90 were in favour of the Bill and 13 opposed it, with only five abstentions. Let us all remember, whether we represent Yardley, Erdington, Perry Barr or Hodge Hill, that 93 per cent. of the Brummies living in these constituencies have expressed themselves in favour of the Bill.

Ms. Clare Short: That is not right.

Mr. Bevan: When their opinion has been tested, 93 per cent. have expressed themselves in favour of the proposition.

Many misconceptions have been expressed this evening. One of them came from my right hon. Friend the Member for Daventry (Mr. Prentice). It is obvious that he has not seen the routes that will be used. I have walked along them all my life and I know that they are different now from when I walked along them as a boy. They are broad, redeveloped roads. I hazard a guess that those that will provide about eight tenths or nine tenths of the circuit are at least 150 ft wide, about three times the width of the track which forms the Silverstone circuit.

The route of the race has been discussed for 12 years. Various routes have been disregarded and now the favoured course has been adopted. I have driven over it, and I was driven over it on the day of the rehearsal of the race. I do not recall seeing any of my right hon. and hon. Friends on that occasion, nor did I see any Labour Members, although I concede that they may have been there. However, I recall that there were about 250,000 citizens of Birmingham around the natural amphitheatre which slopes down to Bristol road and Belgrave road, or Middleway as it is now called, into Sherlock street. I recall that the occasion provided entertainment and an attraction for people of all ages. It was heralded by contributions from people of all ethnic origins. The race stimulated great support and was an undoubted success. It would be wrong if we failed to support the proposal in the way that we should.

Ms. Short *rose*——

Mr. Bevan: The race is wanted by the Brummies. It has been fought for over a long period. The police invigilated when the race was run and there was not one complaint from them, and there has not been one petition against the Bill.

Ms. Short: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman does not wish to mislead the House. It is right to remind the House that the race to which he refers was a free event for those who wanted to watch it. The hon. Gentleman should recognise that about 30 per cent. of those living in the inner area of Birmingham are registered as unemployed. The number who would be able to buy expensive tickets for a road race would be rather different.

Mr. Bevan: Of course, any unemployment is regrettable. However, 90 per cent. or more of those who live around the area of the circuit, unemployed or not, have expressed themselves in favour of the race.

Ms. Short: That is a different point.

Mr. Rooker: Things have moved on since then.

Mr. Bevan: We have moved on over 12 years.

The race will contribute to the quality of life and to the take-up of employment in Birmingham by producing over 600 part-time jobs and 20 or more full-time jobs. It will generate a profit for Birmingham.

Ms. Short: Maybe.

Mr. Bevan: Despite the remarks that are being made by hon. Members from sedentary positions, we are debating a car race in Birmingham. We are not talking about housing or racism. The race has been asked for by the public. I was gratified when I heard my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Department of Transport say that it should be supported by us all whatever the RAC's attitude, which I think will change quickly after we in the House rally to the support of the race.

My tie has on it the call sign of Birmingham international airport. I hope that the call sign to support another race will be supported by all hon. Members and that a chance will be given to the city that produced

Herbert Austin, who started to make motor cars in the back streets of Birmingham and subsequently became an honoured Member of the House. I hope that note will be taken of Birmingham's association with the car trade and that Birmingham will become the first city to have its own on-the-street car race.

9.5 pm

Mr. Denis Howell (Birmingham, Small Heath): The Bill will give Birmingham city council the right to provide a road race for as long as the legislation is operational. My hon. Friends have said that, because some terrible difficulties arise from the Government's policies — I agree — the decision should be rejected on principle. That is a most unattractive argument. We should vote on the principle of road racing. The immediate capital restrictions applying to Birmingham are a matter for proper debate by Birmingham city council. I should have hoped that the arguments in this Chamber would be more elevated than those that we have heard from some quarters.

Birmingham is a large and imaginative city, and this proposal must be seen in that context. Do we want Birmingham to be known, promoted and advertised around the world as an international city? I believe that we do. No one can gainsay the fact that if Birmingham is the only city in Britain to have a motor race, the advertising and promotion that Birmingham will get will be out of all proportion to this puny investment that seems to have bogged everyone down. There is no way that Birmingham could buy for £3 million the amount of international coverage that this race would give to it. My hon. Friends should think about that important aspect. How can we attract jobs and investment to the city unless we show that we are a 20th century city moving into the 21st century, capable of fulfilling our heritage and acting in accordance with the other great decisions that Birmingham has taken over many years?

Hon. Members have referred to the Birmingham international exhibition centre. I have to tell my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis) that I was very much involved in that decision. I went to see the then Prime Minister, who is now Lord Wilson, to urge him to ensure that the centre would come to Birmingham and to argue that everything should not be in London. Birmingham got the international exhibition centre.

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): The national exhibition centre.

Mr. Howell: It is really an international centre. It has proved to be an outstanding success.

This race must be seen in that context. The developments at Birmingham international airport are in the same league of international thinking as this proposal. The proposal to set up an international convention centre has all-party support from people who are big enough to think big on behalf of Birmingham. Most of us expect that proposal to go forward, and we hope to receive EC funds for it. It will include a new concert hall for the internationally renowned city of Birmingham symphony orchestra, one of the most important orchestras in the country at the moment. This is what Birmingham is doing now. It is not sitting down accepting the fate that some people have mapped out for it. We should be singing Birmingham's praises loud and clear and saying that that is Birmingham's international significance.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) is aware, another decision was taken in Birmingham this week, in which I have been involved. All parties decided that the city would put into my hon. Friend's constituency the one and only international indoor stadium in this country. If the argument that we must not spend a penny on anything except housing is to be sustained, my hon. Friend will not be supporting that project, but I support it. *[Interruption.]* My hon. Friend does not want to intervene, but he is arguing that the number one priority must be housing—unless he wants to discriminate against one sport and another. The logic of his argument is that if Birmingham wants international sporting facilities it should have them, but that all resources should go into desperately needed housing. There is no dispute about that. He must, therefore, ipso facto, be against the indoor athletic stadium as well as the motor circuit. That is the logic of the case, and I do not want to stand logic on its head.

Ms. Clare Short: If my right hon. Friend takes his logic too far we shall spend all Birmingham's money on sport and nothing on housing.

Mr. Howell: Given the present depression in Birmingham, that might not be a bad thing. However, I am not going that far with my argument.

I should hate my hon. Friend the Member for Hodge Hill to be left out of this great assembly. I think he knows that the leisure resources committee which is talking about the motor race and the indoor athletic stadium is thinking of putting a major international swimming pool at the junction of his constituency and mine.

Mr. Terry Davis: It has not told me.

Mr. Howell: If the committee has not told him, perhaps I can, and he will be the first to welcome it.

Mr. Corbett: And the last to know.

Mr. Howell: Yes, but we are dealing with principles.

Mr. Terry Davis: What I do know, and my right hon. Friend knows perfectly well, is that the council is considering whether it can find money for urban renewal in his constituency and mine.

Mr. Howell: I do not know whether the leisure resources committee is finding money for urban renewal.

Mr. Terry Davis: The general purposes committee is.

Mr. Howell: I was talking about the leisure resources committee.

The second argument in favour of the Bill is the financial one. Unlike my hon. Friend the Member for Perry Barr I do not think that it is a scandal to spend money on this proposal. Although I fully accept what he says about the need to spend money on housing and the priority that it should have — I fully endorse his condemnation of the Government in that respect — I completely reject the argument that until we have cured all the social ills in our society we should do no social good. That is a misconceived argument, and we have to be careful where it takes us. In essence, it is a philistine argument, because it takes us to the proposition that we should stop spending any money on the arts, on sport or on the heritage of our city.

[Mr. Howell]

There has been some reference to Socialism as being the language of priorities. As we know, that came from Aneurin Bevan. *[Interruption.]* Yes, I was brought up on that, but I was also brought up on the passionate belief that Socialism is not really about economic circumstances; it is about warmth, colour and excitement in the lives of ordinary citizens. That is what the early Socialists believed, and that is what I believe. That is why I passionately believe that the quality of life in a city such as Birmingham is a matter of great importance. I do not believe that we enhance the quality of life of our citizens by using economic arguments against having any excitement, colour or warmth in their lives. I hope that my hon. Friends will understand that.

There is also what has come to be known as the municipal enterprise argument. I embrace that terminology for the purpose of the debate, although I prefer the term municipal Socialism. From the early Socialists — and from the Chamberlains — we had the concept of municipal activity. The gas, water and electricity services, and the municipal banks, were all examples of municipal Socialism. My hon. Friends, had they been alive in those days, would have embraced them. Therefore, I cannot see what is the argument against a municipal enterprise such as a road race.

I also embrace the argument about local democracy. Last week, we attacked the Government for saying that Whitehall knows best. When the Government proposed to abolish the metropolitan counties and the GLC and to set up joint boards, the Opposition said that it was wrong in principle to say that Whitehall knows best. Having said that, we cannot reverse the argument tonight and say that Parliament knows what is best for Birmingham. Even if I did not agree with the proposed motor circuit—even if I were passionately opposed to it — I would hold strongly that the Birmingham city council and the Birmingham people have the right to decide the matter for themselves. Therefore, I do not think that there are any merits in the objections to the Bill.

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Mr. Bevan) got his figures wrong. I do not think that 90 per cent. of the people approved the proposal. But there was a referendum, carried out by the Birmingham city council of all the residents living in the vicinity of the proposed road race. There were 4,520 ballot papers issued through the post office, because Birmingham city council was determined to get the views of the people. In view of the turnout at local elections and the usual participation in referendums, it was staggering that 36 per cent. of the people who were polled returned their ballot papers. They produced a majority of 4½ to 1 in favour — 1,290 in favour and 283 against.

Mr. Ashby: Can the right hon. Gentleman tell us what percentage of the people living in the area were represented in that poll?

Mr. Howell: All of them. I made it clear that that ballot was conducted at the residences of all the people — every person living in that vicinity was polled — *[Interruption.]* I do not know what the hon. Gentleman's point is. I made it clear that Birmingham city council polled every resident in that area. I have given the figures —there was a 36 per cent. response and a majority of 4½ to 1 was in favour.

Therefore, on the grounds of the constitutional principle, practicality and the fact that the race, if it makes a profit, can provide money to be invested in the very things that my hon. Friends and I want, Birmingham should succeed.

That leaves us with one other objection, which comes from the RAC. Some of my hon. Friends and I are much concerned about the behaviour of the RAC in this matter. I would be less than frank if I did not say this to the House. The RAC co-operated with Birmingham. Its specialists were sent to Birmingham to co-operate with the city, and they advised the city that the road race was practicable, that the safety provisions would be adequate and that it should be approved. I do not know whether the RAC is an example of double standards, but, to our amazement, suddenly in January this year the RAC produced a new safety regulation after Birmingham had deposited the Bill with the House. That is not the standard of conduct that one comes to expect from such an organisation, which is not democratic in its make-up, but we all understand the difficulties in that area.

Mr. Corbett: Does my right hon. Friend agree with me in saying that the best response of RAC members in Birmingham and the west midlands would be to tear up their membership cards and join the Automobile Association, which is in favour of the race?

Mr. Howell: I would be precluded from giving that advice because all the staff of the AA belong to the Association of Professional, Executive, Clerical and Computer Staff, with which I have been associated for a long time.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: I am glad that the right hon. Gentleman has come to this point because there has been some confusion about what the position of the RAC has been. What is the regulation that has been changed?

Mr. Howell: It is regulation D2.2.5 of January this year, which did not exist before. The object of the regulation is that there should be no racing on temporary circuits.

I shall not go through the lengthy dissertation that we received from the RAC except to deal with item 4, which states that the RAC

"cannot accept that the decision of Parliament should be influenced solely by the views of the Birmingham City Council".

That puts the point crudely, but I should like to make the reverse point. When we met representatives of the RAC, we said that if the House of Commons approves the Bill in principle, which gives permission to close roads for two days a year, it is a decision of principle that is for Parliament but not for the RAC. We had to make that point strongly because the RAC itself was saying that it would wear both its hats. This is the difficulty that it has got itself into. On the one hand, the RAC is a motoring organisation and on the other hand it is the governing body of motor sport. The RAC as a motoring organisation can properly object to the Bill, but if Parliament passes the measure we object to the RAC putting on its other hat and saying that it will use other powers in another guise to frustrate the motor race.

That would be most improper. I warn the RAC against persisting with that line. I note that Birmingham's response is that that would be a restraint on trade, and that an action would be brought in the courts at once. Furthermore, if the RAC sought to do that, it would be

placing itself in a monopolist position which would require investigation by the Office of Fair Trading. That is not the first time that that point has been made. The hon. Gentleman and I both made it when we visited the headquarters of the RAC. I am sorry that the RAC has not responded to that point.

However hard pressed the citizens of Birmingham may be, they wish their city council to give a lead, to put the city on the international map, to create excitement and to give us something to be proud of. Civic pride is important to Birmingham. Many Birmingham citizens will gain a lot of pleasure from the motor race. Thousands of them will see it for nothing. One cannot black out miles of road. People will enjoy the spectacle from the windows of their flats. It will be a festive occasion, and a good investment for Birmingham in terms of jobs and the promotion of the city. I commend the Bill to the House.

9.27 pm

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): So far we have heard some very long speeches from hon. Members who favour the Bill and some very short ones from those who oppose it. I hope that that point will be borne in mind when those who have not had an opportunity to speak seek to ensure that extra time is made available.

One of the points made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell) is specific to my constituency. He chastises me about the proposed indoor stadium in Perry park which is to be part of the complex in the park. There is a fine outdoor stadium — it is a premier stadium — and an all-weather pitch. The indoor stadium will provide facilities not only for my constituents but for those of my right hon. Friend, enabling adults and children to participate in sport. No one would oppose that.

My constituents who live round the park do not want a stadium at the proposed site, but I have said publicly to the city council and to my constituents that if the stadium is to be built anywhere, it should be built in the park. My duty is to get the best possible facilities that I can for north Birmingham. Capital spending on facilities for people to use is a different bag of chips from capital spending on digging up lamp posts and laying down safety barriers for one day a year. The stadium would be of great benefit to thousands of people in north Birmingham, even though my constituents who live nearby do not want it at the bottom of their gardens. I have put their case—it is my duty to do so—but I am not duty-bound to support them. I am a representative, not the delegate of a small clique.

My right hon. Friend has lectured us about democracy and our role as hon. Members. I recall a private Bill before the House that was supported by the city council and the county council, the Labour groups on both those councils, and the Labour candidate at the general election, but my right hon. Friend opposed it. I refer to the Shrewsbury and Atcham Borough Council Bill. My right hon. Friend took a different view on that occasion. In that case, he was able as a Member of Parliament to judge the situation on its merits, and he arrived at the correct decision. He did his duty as an hon. Member.

Mr. Denis Howell: I do not disagree with that. No one says that my hon. Friends should not vote against the Bill if they so wish. The Shrewsbury and Atcham Borough Council Bill was designed to destroy the Shrewsbury Town football club. It was an entirely different matter. The present Bill is not designed to destroy anything. It is designed to give powers to Birmingham city council, if it wants those powers. It is a totally different kettle of fish.

Mr. Rooker: Either we are in favour of local democracy or we are not. The argument is not one that my right hon. Friend can sustain.

In an intervention, I reminded the hon. Member for Birmingham, Hall Green (Sir R. Eyre) that in the past he had voted against this proposal in the House of Commons, as did the hon. Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Mrs. Knight) and the Minister of State, Department of Transport. They did not argue in favour of giving a fair wind to the Bill then under consideration and allowing the case to be argued in Committee. On 11 February 1976, they trooped into the Division Lobby, on what was the first recorded incident of a Conservative Whip on a private Bill, to vote down the West Midlands County Council Bill, part III of which was the mini-Bill to provide a grand prix road racing circuit in the centre of Birmingham.

Sir Reginald Eyre: I know that the hon. Gentleman does not want to be unfair. It is true that that Bill included a provision for motor racing. However, that formed no part of the Second Reading debate. The major parts of the Bill were concerned with what the hon. Gentleman described as the advancement of municipal trading. What is more, it was to promote municipal trading at the expense of ratepaying private traders. That was the principle on which the Bill was rightly defeated.

Mr. Rooker: Yes, but it was not granted the privilege of a Committee stage so that the details could be considered — an exactly contrary argument to that advanced in respect of this Bill. What is more, it is not true that the Second Reading debate was concerned solely with municipal trading. It was not. The hon. Member for Edgbaston concentrated her remarks — as I did — exclusively on the proposed road race. On that occasion she spoke against it, as I did. There was an instruction to leave out part III, but as the Bill did not get a Second Reading the issue was never raised. I might add that I voted in favour of the Bill because I wanted it to have a Committee stage. Tonight, nine years later, we are going round the same circuit, but I see nothing to change my mind about the road race. The Bill concentrates on one issue, and I shall do what I would have done that night if the instruction had been selected and vote to leave out part III. I make no bones about that.

The argument centres on money. Other arguments are outlined in the instructions, some of which, Mr. Speaker, you have been good enough to select and others of which have been referred to. I shall not go into detail on any of them. If the Bill has a Committee stage and comes back here on Report, there will be an opportunity for hon. Members to table specific amendments to turn those instructions into reality.

The main issue relates to capital expenditure. There is no special Government grant for this project — or is there? There have been special Government grants for other projects that have been mentioned in the debate. The national exhibition centre, for example, would not have gone ahead unless central Government funds had been injected into the financial arrangements. But there is nothing for this proposal and, as far as I know, there is nothing on offer.

[Mr. Rooker]

Birmingham city has suffered massive cuts since 1979. At the moment, the city Labour party is organising a citywide petition to Parliament trying to get back £125 million lost in rate support grant since 1979. The effect is £358 lost in rate support grant for each household since 1979.

Last week, the city council—not the Labour party—began to distribute a glossy leaflet outlining to the citizens of Birmingham the cuts that the Government have imposed. The message from councillor Knowles describes in stark terms the effects on citizens. It is being pushed through every door in the city. A city council cannot put out that kind of propaganda asking people to sign a massive petition to Parliament, and then say that there is £1·5 million spare that has been found and does not have to be used, so it might be an idea to promote a grand prix road race.

Mr. Snape *rose*——

Mr. Rooker: I shall not give way, in the hope that there will be time for at least two more Birmingham Members to participate.

On 5 February a report was put before the Birmingham city council by the housing officer, not about council houses but about housing generally—public and private. It was a real horror story. One dwelling in six in Birmingham is unfit, compared with one in 16 nationally. That is the scale of the tragedy. Curtailment of funds had not produced a situation of that kind when we last discussed this project. Moreover, on that occasion the House was not asked for specific consent to this project.

I have photos of a house in Willmore road in my constituency. There is only one tap on the sink because there is no hot water system. The toilet is outside. There is no photograph of the bathroom because there is no bath. The widow and three children who live there cannot even get the mandatory grants because of Government cuts. How can I advance that constituent's case with the city council and the Minister for Housing if I vote for £1·5 million capital expenditure on this project? The retort would be, "Where are your priorities as a constituency Member?"

I make it quite clear that my priorities are not the same as those of Tory Members who represent quite different areas of Birmingham. Things may look rosier in the constituency of the hon. Member for Hall Green where only 3·8 per cent. of dwellings lack exclusive use of an indoor toilet or bath, compared with 9 per cent. in my constituency and 9·1 per cent. in that of my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley). That is a damned good reason for voting against this proposal. The constituency of my right hon. Friend the Member for Small Heath has 6·9 per cent. unfit dwellings. The figure for Hall Green may be low, but in Billesley ward it is 6·5 per cent. Moreover, there is nothing in the city's capital expenditure programme up to 1987-88 to deal with that problem. Councillor Fred Rose has pointed out that Hall Green is not all leafy suburbs. The problem may not be so great, but there is rotten housing there just as there is in the majority of Labour constituencies.

We are told that this project will not be a burden on the ratepayers and that it is guaranteed to make money, but I have not seen any guarantee. If someone can guarantee in writing that there will be no loss to the ratepayers and that all profits will go to the city, I will march into the Lobby to vote for the Bill and assist its passage as best I can, but no one can give that guarantee. When the city council's public relations advisers first got going on this, they put the following sentence into one of the documents:

"We will not be taking decisions on whether to repair leaking roofs or to support the race."

But that is simply not true, as they have since confirmed. No one now denies that the money will have to come out of the budgets of other city council departments.

Moreover, the project will not succeed unless the number of supporters is high. We are told that more than 200,000 people went to the free parades—not races—through the city. Many people have told me that they were happy to take the kids on a free day out to see the cars going past at 30 miles per hour, but that they would not take them to a race because they do not believe that it can be organised safely. That decision will be even firmer when they see the estimated ticket prices. The numbers vary.

The city council tells us that the top estimate for the two days is 145,000 people on race days and 65,000 on practice days, and the pessimistic view is 180,000 people for both days. However, we are now told by the parliamentary agents, in one of the worst parliamentary briefs that I have ever seen on a private Bill, that the council expects 250,000, and no qualification is given. I do not know where the extra numbers have come from, and we have been given no information.

It is estimated that 35,000 people will pay £17·50 or more at 1984 prices for a ticket. But it is estimated that the other 110,000 people will pay only a fiver each—not per family. Those prices will not commend themselves to the many unemployed people in our city.

We need some clarification on another point. I looked at some of the files relating to the Bill when it was first introduced in 1976. We are now told that Birmingham is not asking for a grand prix. However, we know that Birmingham cannot have a grand prix. Before it can have a grand prix it has to have two or three other races in previous years so that it can have a certificate to apply for a grand prix. The promoters' document says "No grand prix." However, other documents refer to no grand prix "at present." That point has not been clarified, and it should be. The absence of that clarification, despite all the time that we have had, is another reason for not allowing the Bill to proceed.

There is then the referendum. In documents published by the city council and in leaflets sent to hon. Members last week, although notably not to some Labour Members, it was said that 93 per cent. of the people who live in the area chosen for the race voted in favour of it. That is a lie. The city council people who wrote it know that it is a lie, as are all those propaganda leaflets making that claim. Everybody who looks at the figures will know that that is the case.

Only 4,520 ballot papers were printed and only 1,553 were returned, of which 1,270 were for and 383 were against. I make that 81 per cent. of those who voted were in favour, and, of those asked to vote, 2·8 per cent. were in favour. That is a somewhat different figure from 93 per cent. of all those living in the area being in favour. I do not go round saying that the vast majority of the people voted for the Government. As a percentage, fewer people voted in favour of this Government in 1983 than in 1979,

or when the Conservatives lost power in 1964. Let us not lose the argument on the hype of a PR exercise. I have given the facts. Of those living in the area, only 1,270 voted in favour, and that is 28 per cent.

I shall not refer to the cigarette advertising, because I should be out of order to do so and there is not enough time.

How will this race be organised? Success is not guaranteed, and it has to be before I shall vote for the Bill, given the financial restraints on the city. The city council tells us that it will have no problem organising the race, because it has taken

"the advice of experienced road race organisers at all stages of development of the project."

The consultants are International Festival Services (UK) Ltd., Birmingham, whose managing director is Martin Hone.

I have only ever had a two-minute conversation with Mr. Hone, although we did correspond in 1976. I then referred to him as a night club owner in the city — a former racing driver pushing a line. He is not a night club owner now, and I remember that there was some embarrassment to the city council when I read out part of a letter that he had sent to me about all the occasions on which his advice had been sought by city council departments. I do not know whether he is qualified or not.

What I have to say next was said in front of witnesses. The leadership of the city council — the most senior councillors concerned in organising this matter — told me, in a room upstairs, with some of my hon. Friends present, that they wished that they did not have to deal with Mr. Martin Hone, as he did not have their confidence. It is no good arguing. Four or five witnesses were present at what was a calm and cool discussion. It is not scurrilous at all. The whole thing hangs on entrepreneurial skill and confidence in organising road races to make a profit. The city council may say that it has total confidence in everyone concerned, but that is not what it says in private. That must be said here because Birmingham ratepayers' money is involved. *[Interruption.]* I have made no accusations against anyone. I have only said that the most senior city councillors concerned with the road race have said that they wished that they did not have to deal with Mr. Hone and they do not have total confidence in him. It is as simple as that. He is said to have run races all over the world. That may be great, but I am concerned with what Birmingham city council tells me after three months of asking for private discussions on a partisan basis because we were not prepared to sit down on an all-party basis until certain points were clarified.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: What international road races has that gentleman run in Britain, Europe and the United States?

Mr. Rooker: I can only give the hon. Gentleman part of the brochure which went to all hon. Members and which lists certain events—for example, the Dubai grand prix, and he is mentioned as a consultant on the 50th anniversary of the Swiss grand prix. They may have been fantastic financial successes, but we must have a guarantee that the city council has confidence in the people that it employs.

Money is the key issue, and there is some doubt whether it can be recouped. There is no guarantee of a profit. Money will come out of other city council budgets. Therefore, I do not see how hon. Members can come to the House and truly represent their constituents in Birmingham and vote for the Bill.

9.46 pm

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): We have just heard a speech of the utmost pessimism. The debate and the Bill are not necessarily about the creation of a motor race but about the future of our cities and what we are to do with them. The development of cities today has been ever outwards, into new hypermarkets and supermarkets on the edges, away from the city centres. Through the Bill, Birmingham is doing something to recreate some of the life and dynamics that we need within our city centres.

The subject happens to be a motor race. No doubt if there were a great park in the city centre we would be discussing a Grand National-type horse race. The object of this motor race is not necessarily to beat the drum for the sport of motor racing, although that would be useful, but to concentrate attention on the city centre and on what Birmingham has to offer.

Hon. Members on both sides have already mentioned the national exhibition centre and the proposed convention centre. The object of a motor race is to focus the world's attention on Birmingham as a city. If one decided to advertise the city through the medium of commercial television, one advertisement and a few peak time slots would cost about £250,000. The city of Birmingham frequently advertises itself as the heart of the United Kingdom. Indeed, so successful has it been that it was given an award only last Thursday for the best campaign to attract people and tourists to the city centre. It is obviously part and parcel of the city's programme to concentrate on arousing people's interest in the kind of spectacle that we hope to stage with the motor race.

It is true that there are obviously a number of ways in which a given sum of money can be spent. As expenditure in Birmingham goes, £1·5 million is a small sum. I have the same share of houses in poor condition in my constituency as other hon. Members and I would very much like that £1·5 million to spend on housing in my constituency. However, we have to consider priorities. We want to create not only a place to live, but a place to work. There is no point spending money on an endless number of leisure centres and recreation grounds, useful as they are to the citizens of Birmingham, when a small proportion of that sum could create a focal point to bring people to the city and to attract attention in this country, Europe and overseas to our bold venture.

We have not had road racing in this country for many years and we have a number of purpose-built circuits, such as Silverstone, where I had my first experience of motor racing in my youth. I can vouch for the supreme safety standards offered by those circuits, but no one has yet mentioned the desire of the competitor. Hon. Members have spoken about the circuit owners, the RAC, the need for safety standards and so on, but the competitors make motor sport and 99 per cent. of them would welcome the chance to try their hand at road racing in Birmingham.

The proposed circuit in Birmingham is an interesting one. It has been tried out in a cavalcade of cars and been found wanting in some ways. The modest expenditure proposed will have to put many of the problems right. If the Bill goes through, the city of Birmingham will have to ask the RAC for permission to stage a motor race. The

[Mr. Roger King]

vast majority of potential competitors are members of the RAC or holders of its licence to race and they cannot take part in races that are not staged under RAC rules. The fact that the race will be run under RAC rules is an important safeguard for the city of Birmingham.

Mr. Fry: Is my hon. Friend saying that he expects the RAC to have to give its approval before the race takes place?

Mr. King: If the Bill goes through, the city of Birmingham will ask the RAC for permission to hold a race under its rules. We hope that, in the light of what the House will have agreed, and of representations made by the city council, the RAC will grant a permit for at least one race to see how it works out. The city wants only the opportunity to run a race under RAC rules. Any other form of race is not on the cards. For a start, we would not have many competitors.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: People could be imported from the United States, could they not?

Mr. King: One could get round the problem, but we want to work with the legislative body of the sport and not against it. Without the RAC's approval, the race would not be part of the racing scene. The opportunity that the Bill offers is not merely to competitors and the city of Birmingham, but to motor racing generally.

9.53 pm

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): For the reasons outlined by my hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape), I was reluctant to speak and vote against the Bill. The proposal has been put forward by Birmingham city council, which voted for it by a large majority, and, as my party controls that council, I had to think deeply before opposing the Bill.

The race will go through my constituency. I have talked to many of my constituents about it. I am aware, as everyone is—because it has been repeated ad nauseam —that there has been a so—called referendum, and that 28 per cent. of those consulted voted in favour of the road race. I have not met a single individual in Ladywood who is in favour of the race. I have not had a massive post bag. Most of those who live alongside the route are not aware that the road race is to take place. But the local Labour party, all of whose members live in the local area, oppose it and I have received several letters to that effect.

The RAC's comments are quite important and have been wrongly criticised. The RAC does not threaten to withhold approval for the road race. It says that, if the Bill is enacted, it will look at it again. But it says that it is its serious view that motor racing should take place on purpose-built circuits. I have been to only one motor race. I have heard all this talk about the glories of Socialism, and how motor racing will bring such great pleasure to the people of Birmingham. But my recollection is of standing at the side of the track with a few cars going past very fast. The only exciting thing to happen is perhaps that there is a great big crash. Ambulances come along and the spectator feels deeply upset and goes home.

That is what happened on the one occasion that I went to a circuit race. If those in the area who think racing might be fun turned up and witnessed such an accident—and they are inevitable—they might decide that it was no fun at all. Their children would not find it fun either. If we are talking about Socialism, and giving fun and pleasure to the people, all of us can no doubt think of something better than spending £3 million on that. We could spend the money on something in which all the people of Birmingham, including Ladywood, could participate.

Mr. Snape *rose*——

Ms. Short: I am sorry, but I do not have time to give way.

The tower blocks close to the circuits are deteriorating into slums. The lifts are usually full of urine. The ground around them is littered with rubbish. There are no caretakers, because when they leave others are not appointed. I have received complaint after complaint from those involved. Hon. Members may laugh at that, but it is a serious matter concerning my constituents' quality of life. It is more important to spend £3 million on improving the quality of their life all day and every day than to provide for one gimmicky little race.

In the brief time available to me, I should point out that I also oppose the road race because I do not like the way that the city council is approaching Birmingham's problems. Birmingham has massive unemployment as a result of the Government's policies. The Government have deliberately created unemployment and destroyed Britain's manufacturing industry. Consequently, the whole of the centre of Birmingham has a registered unemployment rate of 30 per cent. and it affects 300,000 people.

What is the answer for the proud and fine people of Birmingham? The answer is apparently a convention centre that will bring in some rich people from abroad. Our people may be able to pick up some of the crumbs from a road race. Wealthy people from other cities might spend a bit of money on beer and ice cream, so our constituents might be able to pick up a few crumbs there, too. I do not believe in that strategy. I believe much more powerfully——

Sir Reginald Eyre *rose in his place and claimed to move*, That the Question be now put.

Question put, That the Question be now put:—

The House divided: Ayes 188, Noes 73.

Division No. 175] **[9.58 pm**

AYES

Alton, David	Couchman, James
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*	Crouch, David
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*	Crowther, Stan
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony	Dorrell, Stephen
Bermingham, Gerald	Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Bevan, David Gilroy	Dover, Den
Biggs-Davison, Sir John	Durant, Tony
Body, Richard	Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Boscawen, Hon Robert	Emery, Sir Peter
Bruce, Malcolm	Eyre, Sir Reginald
Budgen, Nick	Favell, Anthony
Butcher, John	Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Butler, Hon Adam	Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*	Fookes, Miss Janet
Cartwright, John	Forrester, John
Chalker, Mrs Lynda	Forth, Eric
Chapman, Sydney	Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Cockeram, Eric	Fox, Marcus
Concannon, Rt Hon J. D.	Franks, Cecil
Coombs, Simon	Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Cope, John	Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Corbett, Robin	Freeman, Roger
Corrie, John	Gale, Roger

Garrett, W. E.
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Central Fife)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(SW N'folk)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayhoe, Barney
Hayward, Robert
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Hirst, Michael
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Peter
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(W Herts)*
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kennedy, Charles
Key, Robert
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Gregory *(Derby N)*
Knight, Mrs Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
O'Brien, William
Osborn, Sir John
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Pawsey, James
Pendry, Tom
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Proctor, K. Harvey
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Rifkind, Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Snape, Peter
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(N Hertf'dshire)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, J.
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Tracey, Richard
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, David
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Roger King and
Mr. George Park.

NOES

Anderson, Donald
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Benn, Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cohen, Harry
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Flannery, Martin
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Fry, Peter
George, Bruce
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoyle, Douglas
Janner, Hon Greville
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Edward
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Martin, Michael
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Nellist, David
Parry, Robert
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, M.
Richardson, Ms Jo
Rooker, J. W.
Sheerman, Barry
Skinner, Dennis
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Walker, Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Ms. Clare Short and
Mr. David Ashby.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Question put accordingly, That the Bill be now read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 202, Noes 68.

Division No. 176] **[10.11 pm**

AYES

Alton, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bermingham, Gerald
Bevan, David Gilroy
Bidwell, Sydney
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Body, Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bright, Graham
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Budgen, Nick
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Hon Adam
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Cartwright, John
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Cockeram, Eric
Concannon, Rt Hon J. D.
Conlan, Bernard
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Corbett, Robin
Corrie, John
Crouch, David
Crowther, Stan
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forrester, John
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Gregory, Conal
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Central Fife)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hardy, Peter
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(SW N'folk)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayhoe, Barney
Hayward, Robert
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Hirst, Michael

Holt, Richard
Home Robertson, John
Hordern, Peter
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hunter, Andrew
Janner, Hon Greville
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(W Herts)*
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kennedy, Charles
Key, Robert
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Gregory *(Derby N)*
Knight, Mrs Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Newton, Tony
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Pawsey, James
Pendry, Tom
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Proctor, K. Harvey
Randall, Stuart
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Rifkind, Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Snape, Peter
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Squire, Robin
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(N Hertf'dshire)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, J.
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, David
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Wallace, James
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Roger King and
Mr. George Park.

NOES

Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Benn, Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cohen, Harry
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Fry, Peter
Gould, Bryan
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Hoyle, Douglas
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Edward
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Martin, Michael
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Nellist, David
Parry, Robert
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Redmond, M.
Richardson, Ms Jo
Rooker, J. W.
Sheerman, Barry
Skinner, Dennis
Spearing, Nigel
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Ms. Clare Short and
Mr. David Ashby.

Question accordingly agreed to.
Bill read a Second time and committed.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting the consideration of Lords Amendments to the National Heritage (Scotland) Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour. — *[Mr. Boscawen.]*

Housing

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Housing Benefits Amendment Regulations 1985 (S.I., 1985, No. 368), dated 11th March 1985, a copy of which was laid before this House on 11th March, be annulled. — *[Mr. Meacher.]*

Mr. Speaker: It will be convenient to discuss at the same time the second Prayer:

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Housing Benefits (Subsidy) Order 1985 (S.I., 1985, No. 440), dated 19th March 1985, a copy of which was laid before this House on 20th March, be annulled.

10.21 pm

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): It is right, first, to observe that we are dealing with regulations with which the Department has dealt with its customary efficiency and dispatch. Local authorities have had a clear two weeks to digest the regulations before they come into effect on 1 April. That is contrary to the assurance given by the Department's permanent secretary to the Public Accounts Committee some few months ago, that no further changes in housing benefit would be introduced without plenty of time for the local authorities to digest them, but it is in line with the current practice within the Department.

We are dealing with the end of a rather distasteful process of cuts in housing benefit which followed hard on the heels of the general election, at which the Prime Minister, the Chancellor and all the members of the Government assured us that the country was on the upturn and that economic recovery was around the corner. It was a full month before cuts in housing benefit were announced, on the ground that the country could no longer sustain public expenditure at that level.

We are dealing with the tail end of cuts of £200 million proposed by the Department and by the Government. The first question we must ask the Minister is why we are dealing with the cuts tonight. We are aware that they are the end of the process which has dragged on for over a year. During that year there have been occasions on which Ministers in the Department, in a variety of contexts but usually when they were asked to improve housing benefit, have argued that it was not the right time to make changes as a substantial review was being undertaken which would cover the whole of housing benefit.

Why are the Government bringing in these changes literally on the eve, as we understand it, of the publication of the review? I recognise that the changes have been deferred for up to a year, which is what the Government's Social Security Advisory Committee recommended. Even so, it would surely have made very little difference to defer them for a few more weeks, or perhaps a couple of months, especially as in practice the local authorities have had so little notice of the changes.

It is particularly hard to understand why the Department does not defer the changes if — as the Minister's colleague told us in a parliamentary answer in October — the results of the changes will involve about £6 million in public expenditure. The Department has wasted far more than that in the administrative cock-up of introducing housing benefit. I should have thought that it could save that sort of sum by administrative changes today, instead of taking the money, as is usually the case, from claimants and those on other benefits.

The time span of the changes involved, of which this is the latter end, is from April 1983 to the present day. All through that period Ministers, the Department, and members of the Government generally have talked up the costs of the housing benefit scheme, as no doubt the Minister will seek to do tonight. They have said how expensive it is and how difficult it is for the country to sustain this burden of expenditure. Yet over that whole period there has been a reduction in overall housing support. Against a background of continuing inflation, the value of housing support overall — housing subsidy, housing benefit, and so on—has certainly fallen. The reason why the value has fallen bears directly on the reason for the changes. The Government have deliberately chosen to switch public expenditure away from subsidy of housing costs and to allow rents to rise. Then they have used rises in rents and consequent rises in housing benefit to justify further cuts. It is a neat device but more than a little dishonest.

The income levels at which members of the public lose all entitlement to housing benefit have fallen by almost £20 in cash terms since 1983. For example, a single pensioner receives £20 less than would have been the case in 1983, and receives no housing benefit whatever. Yet over that period, when the level of entitlement to housing benefit has fallen, inflation and incomes generally in the community have risen. The convenient cry for the Government is that housing benefit is paid too far up the income scale. Their own answers have revealed that it is impossible to receive housing benefit on average wages if one is paying an average rent. It is only if one is paying substantially above average rent that one can receive housing benefit on average wages.

I understand from the reply that the Minister gave to me last month that the level at which one now loses all entitlement to housing benefit is £136·40 for a two-child family with one earner. As the Minister will recognise, that is substantially below the level of average wages. Therefore, I hope he will not bother to repeat tonight, as his predecessors have so frequently done, the canard that housing benefits are paid too far up the income scale. Many people who have been entitled to housing benefit have lost their entitlement in the past two years. Since April 1983, nearly 1 million people have lost all entitlement to a single penny in housing benefit, and over 200,000 of those have been pensioner households.

One of the questions that we want to ask the Minister is: how many people will lose by that change? We recognise that the Minister may be in some difficulty—judging by his parliamentary answers — in giving a reply. It is sad that as time goes on and as the Department cuts more and more from housing and other benefits, it becomes less and less able to tell us how many people are affected and how much they will lose.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): Ignorance is strength.

Mrs. Beckett: Certainly persistence is strength.

In practice, the instruments that we are discussing tonight allow councils which have above average rents in their area to apply to the Department to have that fact recognised. They can then be allowed to pay above

[Mrs. Beckett]

average housing benefit. We are aware that in the past the level of entitlement was set at 150 per cent., which is higher than the level in the order tonight, although the level in the order tonight is higher than the previous level which it supersedes.

However, that was in what one might, with hindsight, call the good old days, when councils set their own rents, made their own decisions about rates and did not find themselves losing literally thousands of millions of pounds in Government subsidy and being instructed, not advised, to raise their rents. What was acceptable at 150 per cent. in the past cannot be acceptable today when rents have been forced up so much against average wages or, indeed, any wages.

There are several problems, of which I hope the Minister is well aware. The first is that the authority has to apply for authorisation. If one is unfortunate enough, as many individuals are—perhaps some are represented by hon. Members here tonight—to live in an area where the council is not sufficiently concerned about its constituents to apply for authorisation, even if one is entitled to authorisation under the restricted scheme that the Government are introducing, one will not get it. That is a disadvantage of the scheme. I hope that the Minister will explain to us why it is necessary for councils to apply for authorisation rather than to have a national scheme that applies right across the country as is normally the case. Secondly, if one is unfortunate enough to be paying an excessive rent, which is out of the ordinary for the area, again, one will receive no entitlement to above average housing benefit. That, too, is a major disadvantage of the scheme as it now stands.

The scheme has two different thresholds for local authority or private rents. Why? I know of no justification that has been offered for that difference. Perhaps the Minister will be able to give us such justification. Even in areas which, under the order, will lose their authorisation to pay higher housing benefit rebate against their higher rents, those who retain that higher rebate will still get less money after the order becomes law than they did last week or, indeed, today.

I return to the question that I asked the Minister a few moments ago: how many people will lose by the order? We know that the number of people who will lose has risen even since the order was prepared. In October the Minister of State told one of my colleagues that 90,000 people would lose by the implementation of the order. Earlier this month, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State told me that 120,000 people would lose by the changes. He could not tell me how much they would lose. The Department does not know. It knows that the average council tenant will lose about 42p a week but cannot tell us what the average loss will be for areas where the entitlement is lost.

Last year the Social Security Advisory Committee suggested that under such proposals an individual on a £35 rent in an area where the authorisation is lost and where no extra housing benefit can be paid will lose £5·74 a week in housing benefit. Those were the figures of a year ago. Perhaps the Minister can tell us whether they are the same today or whether, as one suspects, they are worse.

The Shelter Housing Aid Centre has calculated that, on average, tenants in those areas, apart from those at the high end who lose almost £6 a week, will lose £2 a week from their housing benefit. Those are the people who can least afford to lose.

The Minister has given us a list of the authorities that will lose their authorisation. Perhaps he can also tell us tonight, or, if he prefers, by way of a written answer in the *Official Report*, how many authorities that would be entitled to authorisation today will not be under the new regulations. I ask that because I am seeking to inquire which of those authorities, too ill-informed or too uncaring of the electorates to bother to apply for the authorisation, the Minister is relieving of their embarrassment. As most of them seem to be Conservative authorities, he may find it worth his while.

I should like to ask the Minister some questions about the subsidy order. I presume from the way in which it is cast that its intention is to deal with the various questions raised by the councils that have sought—forced by the Department of the Environment—to raise their rents and to deal with the area of entitlement where many of their tenants would get assistance under supplementary benefit regulations, therefore placing the burden of their rent increases in that direction rather than on the tenants as a whole. I realise that the Minister and his colleagues feel strongly about that. Most of the changes in the subsidy order seem to be directed towards that end.

I am not sure whether a change is intended to regulation 22. When I first read the reference, I thought that the Minister was deleting regulation 22. I then came to the conclusion that he was merely confirming that authorities are able to assist tenants in special circumstances under regulation 22 but that they will not receive subsidy to do so. I hope that the Minister will be able to say tonight whether or not that is so, not just because when I first read the reference I was not sure about its effect, but because I understand that after a precisely similar regulation was tabled last year advice bureaux and perhaps even the Department, were inundated by queries from local councils which, like me, were under the initial impression that regulation 22 was being removed from the statute book altogether. Has the Department considered making the change in a different way? If not, why not? Like so much else in housing benefit, it has caused confusion.

Once again, the regulations are designed to remove money from people who are already poor. Most of them are comparatively poor. They are certainly not well-off, whatever the Minister an his colleagues may have sought misleadingly to imply. The regulations are designed to remove from such people yet further entitlement to housing benefit. When the whole package was first proposed, well over a year ago, the Social Security Advisory Committee said that the entire package should be withdrawn. It was not. Nevertheless, this one remaining element of the package should be withdrawn.

One can summarise the package, and much else that the Government have done relative to housing benefit, very simply and accurately. The higher the rent that people pay, the greater their need, and the greater the loss that they will suffer under the order and the regulations. That sentence should be etched on the tombstone of the instruments and of the Government.

10.37 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State (Mr. Ray Whitney): The hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) seems to be following the example of her hon.

Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher). She is indulging in the polemics that we have come to expect from him. I should like to set the record straight about what the Government have done. We have increased spending on the social security programme by about 28 per cent. in real terms since we came to office. Most of that spending has been devoted to maintaining—and indeed increasing above the rate of inflation—all the major benefit rates. We have also paid for increases in the pensions of some 800,000 new pensioners. With our level of housing support, that is a record of which we are justifiably proud.

The hon. Lady claimed that local authorities have not had time to understand and acknowledge the changes that are being introduced, but a circular was issued to local authorities on 3 September 1984, describing the changes. I shall deal with the points made by the hon. Lady, but rather than follow her any further down the highways and byways of polemical temptation, I would prefer to return to the detail of the regulations.

The Housing Benefit Amendment Regulations put into effect the changes to the housing benefits high rent scheme which originally formed part of the package of changes that followed on from the 1983 autumn statement. So much for our giving short notice of them.

These regulations increase the level of average local rents at which a local authority can apply to operate more generous rebates. They increase the thresholds from 120 per cent. of local authority rents to 130 per cent., and from 115 per cent. of private rents again to 130 per cent.

This change in the high rent threshold was one of the measures announced by the Government to control public expenditure. As the House is well aware, the Government lay great emphasis on the control of public spending, despite their achievements in social security spending, because they understand, as the Labour party has always failed to do, the vital importance to us all of reducing inflation. It is one of the Government's greatest achievements that inflation is now down to levels not experienced since the 1960s.

It is important to recognise that about one third of all our public spending goes on the social security budget, so it cannot be ignored that our economic strategy must be based on keeping that spending under control. High inflation is a disaster for us all, especially for those on fixed incomes and pensions for whom the Opposition pretend sympathy. They must understand what runaway inflation caused by their policies in the past means for people in those circumstances.

Mrs. Beckett: The Minister has just uttered some impressive words about inflation. Perhaps he will comment on the increase in rents between April 1979 and April 1984 of 123·8 per cent., compared with the increase of 63·3 per cent. in the retail price index—in other words, compared with inflation. It is getting on for twice as much as inflation. I say nothing of the increase in rates of 99·8 per cent. compared with an increase of 63·3 per cent. All have been forced up by the activities of his Government.

Mr. Whitney: The hon. Lady should compare those figures with the protection that we have afforded to the poor. She will be aware that housing benefit now helps more than 7 million households—about one in three throughout the country. Currently, it costs the taxpayer about £4·2 billion a year. By any standard, that is a very large sum of money on a scheme which covers an extremely wide sector.

With this in mind we felt that it was better to seek economies in housing benefits than in the safety net benefits to which I referred earlier. The Social Security Advisory Committee accepts that there are some aspects of the housing benefit scheme which extend financial help further up the income ladder than anywhere else in the social security system and that, if cuts in social security spending are essential, it is reasonable to reduce housing benefits rather than the means-tested safety net benefits.

The basic rationale of the present high rent scheme is that in areas of very high rents tenants have to pay more for comparable accommodation than elsewhere and thus merit more generous assistance. To expect individual local authorities to meet this cost themselves would put a considerable burden on some authorities that was not asked of others. The problem about the high rent schemes is that the qualifying level, at present 115 per cent of private rentals and 120 per cent of local authority rented property, makes no sense of a definition of an area where rents are exceptionally high. Therefore, the change is long overdue. The original thresholds were about 150 per cent. of average rents, but these thresholds have been gradually eroded over the years. The new thresholds are far more realistic, but, at 130 per cent., they are still far short of the original position.

When the change was originally proposed, we estimated that the savings would be about £6 million. Since then, the number of authorities applying to run a high rent scheme has increased and we now estimate that the change will save about £7 million. Nationally, some 120,000 claimants will be affected by the proposed changes to the high rent scheme. Those claimants who live in an area where the authority still retains high rent authorisation will lose an average of only 42p per week. The effect on those claimants who live in an area covered by an authority which loses its high rent authorisation will depend upon the level of rent actually paid.

The changes in the high rent scheme have already been deferred twice. The original intention was to introduce them, with other changes, in April 1984. However, we agreed to defer them until November 1984 in response to comments made by the Social Security Advisory Committee and others. We agreed a further deferment, until April 1985, to ease the position of those claimants who might experience reductions in benefits from other changes introduced in November.

We have always made it clear that we intended to proceed with this change. In a written answer last November we confirmed that we would be going ahead with the high rent scheme changes in April 1985 as already announced. Out intention to make these changes has therefore been widely known for some time both within the local authorities and in the House.

The Housing Benefits (Subsidy) Order 1985 relates to the arrangements for reimbursing local authorities for the costs of administering the housing benefits scheme and for the cost of benefits awarded. There are no changes in the provisions of the order, which remain the same as for 1984-85. On their administration costs, authorities will receive a specific grant on their total administration costs, set at 60 per cent. in England, 65 per cent. in Scotland, and 70 per cent. in Wales, reflecting the different rate support grant arrangements. Authorities' remaining

[Mr. Whitney]

administration costs will, as before the housing benefits scheme began, be reflected in the block grant arrangements.

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): Will the Minister clarify the position regarding the remaining deficit, which presumably will have to be borne by the same rent-paying tenants who will already be suffering the cuts that he has announced?

Mr. Whitney: If the hon. Gentleman will bear with me, I will come to that point.

It has been suggested that these arrangements are not fair to authorities and that Government commitments to meet the additional costs to authorities arising from the housing benefits scheme are not being met. We have heard those arguments before and they are no more valid now than when we moved to the specific grant arrangement for reimbursing authorities' administration costs last year. The system which operated in the first year of the housing benefits scheme was that authorities separately identified "new" costs, which arose in implementing the new scheme, and "old" costs, which would have occurred under the rebate and allowance schemes that authorities previously ran.

That system could not continue much beyond the start of the scheme as the distinction between old and new costs becomes increasingly artificial. We therefore moved to a system which offers a very fair level of reimbursement to authorities. In broad terms, expenditure in 1983-84 on "new" costs according to authorities' subsidy claims amounted to about 45 per cent. of total costs. To reproduce these arrangements at national level would have implied a specific grant rate of 45 per cent. with costs net of specific grant reflected in block grant. But we recognised that such a rate of grant would have undercompensated authorities with "new" costs higher than this. That is one reason why grant levels were set at the significantly higher levels to which I have referred.

The great majority of authorities received at least as much support in 1984-85 as under the interim arrangements for 1983-84. Of more than 400 authorities which have submitted final subsidy claims for 1983-84, only about 20 have "new" costs above specific grant levels, and these "new" costs may include one-off development costs. We could not have ensured that no authority receives less support than in 1983-84 under the specific grant arrangements without absurdly overcompensating the majority of authorities and it would clearly be bad management and unfair to the taxpayer to do that. I cannot accept, therefore, that there are any grounds for reimbursing authorities' administration costs through higher levels of grant, as has sometimes been suggested.

We have heard a good deal about whether we are being fair to the authorities but much less about the need for authorities to administer housing benefits economically and efficiently. The change in 1984 in the subsidy arrangements for administration costs so that a fixed proportion of authorities total reasonable costs are met gives authorities more incentive to control costs overall. The Department closely monitors authorities' subsidy claims using a microcomputer checking system and asks authorities to explain any items of expenditure that appear to be excessive. We also draw the auditors' attention to points that require examination, including apparently high costs. However we note the Public Accounts Committee's firm view, expressed in its recent report on the housing benefit scheme, that we should do more to monitor both the economy and efficiency of authorities' procedures and the quality of service that they provide. Of course, the housing benefits review team was asked to consider how administration of the scheme could be improved, and the Government are currently considering its recommendations in this sector.

No changes are proposed in the arrangements for reimbursing authorities for the costs of the benefits that they pay. We have heard suggestions that the rate of reimbursement for certified benefit expenditure is inadequate and again the Government have been accused of not honouring their commitments to meet authorities' additional costs. I should explain, for the benefit of those hon. Members who have not yet come across the term "floaters" other than in reference to voters—a use of the word that may be familiar to some hon. Members—that floaters are a problem that affect this issue.

Authorities receive subsidy on certificated benefit expenditure — that paid to recipients who also get supplementary benefit—at a rate of 100·6 per cent. In 1984-85 this amounted to some £2,670 million of subsidy. The 0·6 per cent. "premium" on certificated expenditure compensates authorities for floaters—people who would have received supplementary benefit but for the introduction of the housing benefits scheme, but who were floated off on to standard benefit. As authorities receive reimbursement of only 90 per cent. of the benefit costs for standard cases, the premium rate on certificated expenditure was introduced to compensate them for the additional costs they bear—10 per cent. of the benefit costs for floaters. I hope that hon. Members, including the hon. Member for Oldham, West, will have remained with me during that somewhat technical explanation.

The premium rate on certificated expenditure was introduced to honour the Government's pledge to meet additional costs falling on authorities. The rate was based on the best information available at the start of the scheme, but we agreed that we should conduct a validation exercise to assess the accuracy of the rate. The Department carried out a statistical study for this purpose and the results were made available to the associations. The premium rate suggested by the validation exercise was 0·96 per cent.

Here, I should make it clear that neither Ministers nor local authorities agreed to be bound by the results of the validation exercise. Clearly decisions about the appropriate levels of subsidy at a particular time have to be taken in the light of all the circumstances. In our view, fine tuning of the subsidy arrangements, which is what a change from a premium rate of 100·6 per cent. to 100·96 per cent. would be, is inappropriate at a time when important changes to the housing benefits scheme are in prospect following the social security review.

The sums about which we are talking represent fine tuning—we are talking about one third of 1 per cent. of the amount paid in certificated housing benefits. The associations nevertheless complain that we are not meeting all their additional costs to the letter. I must point out that on the other side of the equation, changes in April and November last year reduced the proportion of standard benefit recipients, thus saving authorities money on the 10 per cent. of standard benefit costs which they bear.

Finally, I draw the attention of the House to the fact that article 5 of the subsidy order consolidates the provisions

to prevent the exploitation of the housing benefits subsidy arrangements. It brings together the provisions of the 1984 order and the amendment otder made in July last year.

Mr. Kennedy: I have been listening carefully to the hon. Gentleman. Where, in among all that, was the promised answer to my question?

Mr. Whitney: Would the hon. Gentleman care to repeat his question?

Mr. Kennedy: Is it not the case that the deficit from the percentages that the Minister has announced for the subsidy would have to be met in many cases by the same people who, as a result of tonight's order, will be facing higher rents?

Mr. Whitney: I have explained that the burden on the individual is small. On average, we are talking about 42p per person. Obviously, I cannot give an average for the whole area. That is simply not measurable. But for those affected the average is 42p.

I stress that the provisions are designed simply to prevent authorities——

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): The Minister keeps saying that the average is 42p. Earlier he said that 120,000 people would be affected and the saving would be £7 million. That is almost an average of £1.

Mr. Whitney: Obviously the cash costs are not met by a specific grant from the DHSS. They are reflected in the rate support block grant arrangements.

Mr. Field: We are not asking the question put by the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) to which the answer is yes. We are looking at the average cost per individual under the instruments that we are supposed to be debating. The Minister keeps saying that on average it is 42p. Earlier he gave us two sets of figures. On the one hand he says that 120,000 people will be affected and that savings will be £7 million. That is almost £1 a week.

Mr. Whitney: As I have explained already, it is 42p in those areas where the authority still keeps its high rent authorisation. In the other areas it is obviously a question of estimate, case by case.

The provisions are designed simply to prevent authorities, and only a small number are involved, from gaining extra revenue from the taxpayer via the housing benefit scheme. I hope that there can be no disagreement about that.

The hon. Member for Derby, South asked me about the lists of the authorities affected. I am not in a position to give her that information at the moment, but I shall write to her about that. Finally, the hon. Lady asked why we should not make high rent schemes compulsory. That would be inappropriate since part of the extra cost of operating them falls to be met out of local authorities' funds.

I call upon the House to reject the Opposition's prayer.

10.57 pm

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): I leave aside the Government's peculiar logic in saying that one of the main aims of economic policy is to keep down prices, although we are debating increases in rents and decreases in subsidies. If the Minister has a chance to reply, he will no doubt come back to that point.

In my short contribution I want to give a few reasons why we should not proceed with the instrument before us tonight. The first is that the Government already have in hand a major review of the housing benefit scheme. It is completely wrong to be continually bringing to the House changes in housing benefit when the Government have entrusted a group of people with a major review. I am surprised that those individuals continue with the review given the way that the Government treat them.

Secondly, we should not proceed with the instruments tonight for the reasons that my hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) put forward. The local authorities have only about two weeks to put them into effect. Even if we regard local authorities as outposts of Government, that is a short time.

Thirdly, the cut of £7 million will be concentrated on a small range of individuals. We learnt from my hon Friend that people earning £130 a week and paying average rents will no longer be eligible for housing benefit. To relate that to a dispute that is going on not a couple of miles away from the House, the postmen on strike at Mount Pleasant earn on average £130 a week and that includes 20 hours' overtime. We are debating a housing benefit scheme which would exclude those groups of people from any help.

The Minister had some difficulty—to put it gently—in explaining what the average loss would be, but we know that some people will face losses of over £5 a week. The losses will be heavily concentrated.

Mr. Whitney: The hon. Gentleman quotes unusual cases. Those who lose £5 a week will merely be brought back into the same position as others in similar circumstances, who have already been paying that.

Mr. Field: That is almost like saying to my constituents who have not been mugged, "Your neighbour has been mugged. We are going to mug you, so both of you can feel satisfied."

The Minister suggests that the best way to deal with high rent areas is to legislate to say that some are not high rent areas—although high rents will continue to be paid in those areas.

Those are the four main reasons why we should not proceed with these instruments, but I wish to also explain how they will affect the area that I represent. The fine print of the instruments shows that Liverpool will lose its designation as a high rent area for local authority accommodation. That means that Liverpool rents will probably rise by an average of £2 per week. In the Wirral, where my constituency is located——

Mr. J. F. Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): The hon. Gentleman may have inadvertently misled the House over postmen's pay. I have a letter that was sent to all hon. Members by Sir Ronald Dearing, the chairman of the Post Office. He writes:

"Attention has been drawn to the possible implications of reduced overtime on postmen's earnings and the fact that their basic pay is £101 with postmen higher grade getting £116. But only 4 per cent. of postmen are on this basic grade pay and average earnings in the provinces are £160 for postmen and £202 for postmen higher grade (£190 and £229 in London)."

It is important to get the true figures on the record.

Mr. Field: Another set of true figures has been put on the record. I do not dispute those figures. I was repeating

[Mr. Field]

what I heard on the 9 o'clock news, which goes to show that one should not believe everything that one hears on the 9 o'clock news.

Tenants in Birkenhead and surrounding areas will be affected by the regulations because those in sheltered accommodation will lose the high rent provisions that existed previously and will suffer rent increases, as will their counterparts on the other side of the river in Liverpool. Those are additional reasons why we should not proceed with the instruments.

The Minister brilliantly illustrated one of the difficulties of the scheme — its massive complexity. There is a message to Opposition Members who sometimes fondly think that a way of implementing social security reform is to merge tax and benefits. When we first discussed housing benefit, we were told that it was a simple measure which would be easily understood. For most of us as legislators, it is a mess; for most of our constituents, it is a nightmare.

11.3 pm

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): I shall follow the example of the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) and be brief and, I hope, to the point. I echo his closing remarks about the administrative nightmare which is the housing benefits system.

I think that Ministers will agree with the hon. Gentleman. If they do, it is all the more unfathomable that they should be making even more changes when they are on the verge of publishing a review that is supposed to be wide ranging and explanatory and which will, we hope, aim at simplifying the entire system. The fact that the Under-Secretary willingly nods in agreement when we say that the system is an administrative nightmare suggests that he is as confused as the rest of us about why he is proposing the regulations. However, he made it clear that the DHSS takes every opportunity, in every ad hoc way, to cut public expenditure at the behest of the Treasury. All too often, the first targets are those least able to bear the brunt of those cuts.

The loss of qualification as a result of this legislation is doubtless damaging. The Minister mentioned 90,000 people at a saving of £7 million. He set the measures within the context of the Government's economic policies, but it must also be set within the context of the erosions in the state housing stock. In recent weeks, Opposition Members and several Conservative Members have voted against various moves by the Goverment to reduce further the revenue that local authorities can, in different ways, pump into their housing stock or use to replace stock that has been sold. But this legislation will damage still further those who are entirely dependent on the state and who, therefore, cannot be overlooked.

The Government do not seem to realise—just as they do not with regard to the Health Service—that there is a conflict that they can never resolve between their economic policies, which make more people poorer, off-load more people on to state benefits and thus drain public expenditure all the more, and their aim to reduce the level of public expenditure. Consequently, nobody will benefit.

We shall certainly oppose the Government on this issue, because it is a morally wrong step to take at the moment. In practical terms it is clearly wrong. The Minister said that he did not want the high rent scheme to be compulsory because it would put further pressure on the rate support grants of local authorities. But, despite repeated questioning, he could not deny the fact that council tenants would face further penalties and rent increases as a result of this move. That is just as much an economic as a political contradiction.

We shall therefore vote against the legislation and what the Government are doing with regret, but frankly not with surprise. The review of the welfare state is beginning to look more tattered and dubious at the edges with every day that goes by. If this sort of scheme comes out at the eleventh hour, we await the final report with some trepidation.

11.7 pm

Mrs. Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): The hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) made a very sensible point—as he so often does—when he questioned the timing of this move. We are, after all, awaiting the outcome of the social security review. But, having said that, I have probably ended any unanimity that could exist across the Floor of the House.

The simple basic truth in such a very complicated matter is that we cannot go on making money available to those who do not need it. I was astonished to hear the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) say that the higher the rent, the greater the need. It could be said that the wealthier someone is, the better the flat he lives in, and the higher the rent he therefore pays. But in my book that does not mean that he automatically has a greater claim on the rest of society to pay his rent for him.

Mrs. Beckett: I am pleased that the hon. Lady listened with such attention. Did she take note of the figures that I gave for the loss of all entitlement to housing benefit for a family paying an average rent? A two-child family paying an average — not a high — rent loses all entitlement to housing benefit on an income of £136·40 per week. Surely the hon. Lady does not consider such a family to be well off. That is about 70 per cent. of the average wage.

Mrs. Knight: The hon. Lady must not try to dodge her statement by drawing attention to another of her statements. That is not a fair point of debate.

The whole basis of what the Government are trying to do tonight and in general is to direct scarce public funds to where they are badly needed. It is no use the hon. Lady talking of the greater the need, the greater the entitlement and the greater the rent paid because that does not make sense. The hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) also did not make sense when he said last week that dental care should be free for all regardless of income. That is the basic difference between the two sides of the House.

As my hon. Friend the Minister said, there is a 28 per cent. increase in expenditure on social needs, and one third of all public expenditure goes on the social security budget. If that is the sign of an uncaring and hard-faced Government, I do not recognise it as such.

However, it is crucial to recognise that the £7 million savings can be, and no doubt will be, directed to those in greater need than some of those currently receiving benefits. That is how I understand the business before us. Although I shall wait until tomorrow to try to follow the rather tortuous speech of my hon. Friend the Minister, I concede that the principle of what he is doing is right and he has my backing.

11.12 pm

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): When the Minister moved from the Foreign Office, I thought that I might escape his speeches. Now I realise that I cannot escape, and he is not improving. Having listened to his speech, we have one thing in common: neither he nor I knew what he was talking about. He has achieved one thing. Having spent last week listening to the Scottish Office Minister, this Minister has managed the unique achievement of making the Scottish Office Minister sound like an oratorical superstar. That is a real feat indeed.

The instrument directly affects my constituency, because a sheltered housing complex in Fife crescent, Bothwell, will be a recipient of the Government's move. The cut in my constituents' standard of living is not only important to them but has much wider implications for what the Government are trying to do elsewhere. They are trying to achieve niggardly savings at the expense of those who need help most. Those who have already suffered will yet again be hit by housing benefit cuts.

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Mrs. Knight) made a reasonable speech, especially when she described the Minister's speech. She hoped that the small savings that will be made through the order will be diverted to those most in need. That would fly in the face of all experience of this Government. We know that the main beneficiaries of the Government's economic policies are not the poor and needy, but those in the highest tax brackets. This measure is typical of the mean-minded attitude that has characterised the Government.

We have been told this evening that the savings will be between £6 million and £7 million—the Minister has managed to revise the total upwards, which is represented by cuts in the income of the poorest at a time when the whole system is being reviewed. It is being done in haste in an already complex system—the Minister amply illustrated the complexity of the system—at a time when there is already confusion about the rent and rate increases. That confusion is now at its worst.

The complexity of the scheme is already huge. Even reading the documents relating to the instrument is difficult for hon. Members, and the Minister seemed to find reading the brief with which he had been supplied to introduce it an almost impossible task. What trying to understand it must be like for those concerned—the beneficiaries under the scheme—is beyond belief. It must be a nightmare for them, and I am sure that most of them do not have the slightest idea what the scheme is about.

People simply know that housing benefit helps them. They also now know that what the Government are doing will cost them perhaps £2 a week from their income. Even the Minister's tortured, convoluted calculations showed that in areas which will suffer major cuts people will lose £2 a week, and that certainly applies to the people in my constituency. Yet they are the folk who need help the most. Leaving aside the complexities of and background to, the arguments, they only know that they will experience a loss of money at a time when the Government's figures show that inflation is rising.

This is a narrow, almost spiteful and certainly unnecessary change which will impose more hardship on people who have already been the victims of the Government's policies. It is ill-thought-out and rushed, it has been insufficiently planned and it will be arbitrary in its impact. Poor, old and vulnerable people will suffer for microscopic savings in a system which is being overhauled, anyway. This is a measure unworthy of the House, and it should be thrown out.

11.17 pm

Mr. Hugh Brown (Glasgow, Provan): I shall be brief for the simple reason that I do not understand the regulations. Indeed, even the Minister was unsure of his ground, and he had a brief to assist him.

There must be a better way of considering housing benefit regulations than debating them late at night, especially, as on this occasion, when there cannot be more than a few hon. Members who fully understand the complexities of the housing regulations, let alone the action that we are being asked to take tonight.

Mr. Frank Field: Hear, hear.

Mr. Brown: Knowing that my hon. Friend is one of the most expert Members on these Benches on this issue, when he agrees with me I feel somewhat comforted in my lack of expertise.

Am I right in assuming that we are taking away the categorisation of high rented authorities? I was not aware, if that is the case, that a principle was being applied. Are there any such authorities in Scotland?

Mr. George Robertson: Yes, there are.

Mr. Brown: My hon. Friend tells me that there are. I have not seen the list, but considering that it is always assumed that average rent levels in Scotland are low, I am surprised that we have such authorities in Scotland.

Mrs. Beckett: It applies mostly to sheltered housing.

Mr. Robertson: Sheltered housing in Argyll, Bute, Clackmannan, Dumbarton, Dundee and Hamilton districts is categorised under the regulations.

Mr. Brown: I am obliged to my hon. Friend for that information, which I recall reading in a document that I obtained from the Library. Nevertheless, it cannot be a major element in the authorities to which my hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) referred because none of the big authorities, such as Glasgow, seems to be involved. That does not make it any the less important and it would be interesting to know the sums about which we are talking and the amounts that will be saved by the authority mentioned in the regulations being withdrawn.

How much will the cost of the benefit—because we are talking of rent subsidies—be increased by the recent increases in rates in Scotland through revaluation?

Surely that is a pertinent question. There is a lack of liaison over public expenditure. Cuts are being made, which we are resisting, and yet the Government are increasing the burden of public expenditure through some other channel. Apart from the changes in housing benefit, the Government are in difficulty in Scotland because they have not been increasing the level of RSG.

Why are there differences in administrative costs? The Minister has said that there is some relationship between the cost of administration that is being carried by the Government and the level of RSG. If he is saying that he understands rate support grant as well as housing benefit regulations, I refuse to believe him. I do not know anyone who could make that claim. I assume that there is a simple and obvious explanation.

[Mr. Brown]

I can understand the position of the new town corporations and the Scottish Special Housing Association. Those bodies are Government funded and all deficits are funded by the Government. In their case there is no rate fund contribution. However, I cannot understand the differences between England, Scotland and Wales. There is something that I have missed or more information should be available. Have these matters already been discussed with the local authority organisations, or with COSLA in Scotland, and is the information already available? The answers to these questions may help me to understand what we are doing tonight.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 171, Noes 228.

Division No. 177] **[11.30 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Concannon, Rt Hon J. D.
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Cowans, Harry
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Dubs, Alfred
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Gould, Bryan
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKelvey, William
Mackenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Martin, Michael
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, M.
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rooker, J. W.
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'kl'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Torney, Tom
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
White, James
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. John Maxton.

NOES

Ancram, Michael
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Body, Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Budgen, Nick
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Colvin, Michael
Cope, John
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Crouch, David
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(SW N'folk)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jackson, Robert
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(W Herts)*
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Gregory *(Derby N)*
Knight, Mrs Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael

Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCurley, Mrs Anna
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Major, John
Malone, Gerald
Marlow, Antony
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Pawsey, James
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rifkind, Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(N Hertf'dshire)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, J.
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, David
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Michael Neubert and
Mr. Archie Hamilton.

Question accordingly negatived.

NATIONAL HERITAGE (SCOTLAND) BILL *[MONEY]* (No. 2)

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the National Heritage (Scotland) Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of moneys provided by Parliament of any increase in the moneys so payable under any other Act. — *[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

Orders of the Day

National Heritage (Scotland) Bill

Lords Amendments considered.

Clause 2

THE BOARD'S GENERAL FUNCTIONS

Lords amendment: No. 1, in page 2, line 9, after "to" insert "and interpreted for".

11.33 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Allan Stewart): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): With this it will be convenient to discuss Lords amendments Nos. 2, 3, 4, 9 and 10.

Mr. Stewart: Amendment No. 1 is straightforward. It is intended to emphasise the importance of interpreting for the public the items in the museums' collections. That duty is already implicit in the Bill, but the amendment serves to add a degree of emphasis to what is now generally agreed to be a central part of the museums' role.

I come to amendments Nos. 2 and 3, with which go amendments Nos. 9 and 10. Hon. Members will recall that following our dicsussions in Committee we added "artistic" and "archaeological" matters to the lists in clause 2(1)*(d)* and paragraph 3 of schedule 1.

Amendments Nos. 2 and 9 provide for the addition of the word "architectural", and the word "historical" is added by amendments Nos. 3 and 10.

Amendment No. 4 adds a new subsection to clause 2 which requires the board, in promoting the public's awareness, appreciation and understanding of the matters specified in subsection (1)*(d)*, to have due regard to the Scottish aspect of these matters.

In the light of the discussions that we had in this House, I hope to get the support of the Opposition in commending the amendments to the House.

Mr. Gordon Wilson (Dundee, East): I should like in particular to welcome Lords amendment No. 4. Recognising the hostility with which the Minister in Committee greeted my proposals to enhance the Scottish aspects of the administration of the museums, will the Minister say why the Government have now so changed their mind as to make special reference to the Scottish aspect? Was the amendment wished on them by the House of Lords? Why have they changed their attitude?

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): When will it be convenient to discuss the vexed question of the register of gardens?

Mr. Allan Stewart: I think that the answer to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) is that that discussion would be appropriate on Lords amendment No. 8 to which we shall be coming later.

May I say to the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson) that the amendment, in contrast to the one that he tabled in Committee, is worded in such a way as to avoid the danger of encouraging a chauvinistic approach which might lead the new board, paradoxically, to neglect the international aspects of its work. That was the point, as he will recall, that the hon. Member for Linlithgow also put to the Committee.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 2 to 4 agreed to.

New Clause

MUSEUM OF SCOTLAND

Lords amendment: No. 5, after clause 3, insert the following new clause—

" .—(1) The Board may form a "Museum of Scotland" and may include in that museum any or all of the objects which

(a) are presently in the collections of the Royal Scottish Museum or the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland; or

(b) may become vested in the Board in the future.

(2) Subsection (1) above is without prejudice to the Board's power to form other museums, either as part of the Museum of Scotland or otherwise."

Mr. Allan Stewart: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

The new clause provides that the board shall have the power to form a museum of Scotland which may include any or all of the current collections of the Royal Scottish museum and the national museum of Antiquities of Scotland, or any items which may become vested in the board in the future. The powers for the board of trustees to do so are already implicit in the Bill. Therefore, there is not any real need for the Bill to be amended to achieve that affect.

However, there is no doubt that, ever since the Williams committee report, the idea of a museum of Scotland has attracted widespread interest and enthusiasm. The point about a specific reference to a museum of Scotland was raised during consideration of the Bill in this House, therefore we accept that it would be appropriate to include a suitable signpost in the Bill to reflect that amendment. I commend the Lords amendment to the House.

Mr. Jim Craigen (Glasgow, Maryhill): I think that we would welcome this improvement to the Bill. I always remain curious as to how these things come about. I suspect that it has been through the effective efforts of Lord Ross of Marnock and the Earl of Perth in the House of Lords on the matter.

Will the Minister say a little more than whether the amendment is a signpost? I feel that much will depend on the kind of advice that comes from the advisory committee under Lord Bute.

The membership of the new board will be crucial to the way in which it interprets its task and the flexibility that it brings to the new scheme of affairs. Finally, I wonder whether the Minister agrees that the changes will bring the museum of Scotland concept more fully into line with the ambitions that the Williams committee had for that concept.

Mr. Dalyell: I should like to know whether we are any nearer than we were in Committee to getting a cost estimate for the concept of a museum of Scotland. The more one hears about it, the more expensive it is likely to become. Bluntly, how in heaven's name can we realistically talk about a museum of Scotland when apparently there is not the money available to pay the teachers properly?

Mr. Barry Henderson (Fife, North-East): I thank my hon. Friend the Minister and the Government for proposing to include the amendment in the Bill. Without it, it would be difficult for someone reading the Bill, who had not read the proceedings in the House and another place, to realise just where the museum of Scotland fitted in. It greatly helps the Bill to have that clear signpost, as my hon. Friend says.

Mr. Wilson: I am surprised by the Lords amendment, and particularly by the sudden decision, after we have been through all the proceedings on the Bill, to accept a major change in the likely structure of the museums in Scotland.

The formation of a museum of Scotland did not appear in the original draft of the Bill. What we had was the establishment of the unified board of trustees. The Government were utterly unwilling to go further, although attempts were made to prod them into changing the Bill in many useful ways.

What strikes me as strange is that, if there is to be a museum of Scotland, apparently it is to be established on the say-so of the board of trustees. There is no arrangement for a parliamentary order, yet there would be a major switch-over in the formation of the museum of Scotland from the individual museums that are now in existence. I do not think that the Minister can easily slide out of the change by giving the brief explanation that he did. He said that it was to be a signpost of things to come. What is the Government's thinking? When is the signpost to become a reality? How will the measure be enacted? Does the board of trustees have the power to carry through this major structural change, which might have an effect on the staff of the museums, without the consent of the House, another place or the Government? All the responsibility seems to be put into the hands of the board.

As the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) asked, where is the finance to come from? Will the Government lighten our darkness? Is the situation this, that the House of Lords has foisted the change on the Government, who were unwilling to accept it? If they were willing to accept it, why did they not put it into the Bill when it was first framed and printed?

Mr. Allan Stewart: The hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson) is making rather too much of the amendment. The point of the amendment was put by my hon. Friend the Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Henderson). The powers for the board of trustees to set up a museum of Scotland are already implicit in the Bill. However, there is a great deal of public interest in the concept, so it seems reasonable that we should accept the amendment that puts it into the Bill. I say to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mr. Craigen) that the amendment gained general support in another place.

I refer to the details about the museum of Scotland. As I said in Committee and on Report, we must await the report of the advisory committee and its recommendations. Of course, that applies to finance as much as to anything else. However, I hope that the House will recognise that we have increased the provision for the national museums for 1985-86 by some 12 per cent., both generally and in terms of purchase grants. That is a considerable sign of the priority that the Government give to the work of the national museums.

Mr. Dalyell: Finance is not a detail. It is a legitimate question, is it not? There must be some notional price tag attached to the concept of a museum of Scotland. What is that price tag?

11.45 pm

Mr. Stewart: We have no notional price tag. We have appointed an advisory board whose membership has been widely regarded as correct for the purpose. We must await its conclusions. I am happy to put on record once more that the Government will give priority to the needs of the national museums in the direction of funds from the capital programme over the coming years.

Mr. Dalyell: The Minister's answer raises the question: priority over what? Will it be priority over teachers' salaries, or what?

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 16

FURTHER PROVISION AS TO BOARD OF NATIONAL GALLERIES

Lords amendment: No. 6, in page 17, line 25, leave out "and".

Mr. Allan Stewart: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Lords amendments Nos. 7, 12 and 13.

Mr. Stewart: The amendments add a requirement that in preparing reports for the Secretary of State on the exercise of their functions, the boards of the national galleries and museums should include information about the effect of admission charges made by the boards.

The Bill already requires that in such reports the boards shall include a statement of the total amount received by way of admission charges and information in such detail as the board thinks fit about rates of, exemptions from and reductions in admission charges made by the boards. The amendments ensure that when the boards produce such figures a relevant commentary will appear.

The amendments were tabled in another place by Lord Ross of Marnock and Lord Carmichael of Kelvingrove, so I hope that they will receive the assent of the Opposition.

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): Of course we welcome the amendments. They show that a glimmer of sanity is creeping through the fairly thick cranium of the Conservative party. During the sittings in the House of Lords, Lord Ross of Marnock, Lord Carmichael and others had to teach the Conservatives some sense.

The Lords, however, did not succeed in getting rid of the main problem — the general question of museum charges. The amendment was tabled in the Lords after a vain attempt there to make the Government drop the nonsense of museum charges. The amendment is a help in that we will now be given information about the effects of museum charges. There is some historical evidence about that. I have quoted it at some length in the House and in Committee, and the question was pursued further in another place.

It would be useful if the Government could assure us that they do not intend to press the Scottish museum, or the various national museums and galleries in Scotland, to introduce charges. The Government should tell us that

[Mr. Norman Buchan]

now. South of the border, there has been such pressure. The National Maritime museum has already introduced charges. That was the first break in the ranks, and Sir Roy Strong of the Victoria and Albert museum went to great lengths on television last week to explain why he had changed his views. He says that we are no longer living in a welfare-oriented society. We have shifted to a monetary society, and the directors of museums and galleries must follow suit. In other words, because of the pressure on resources, there is pressure on galleries and museums to introduce charges. Indeed, south of the border there has been a fairly direct instruction or suggestion that charges should be introduced.

When Lord Gowrie opened a library in Ealing on 24 September, he positively encouraged the introduction of charges. He deplored the fact that he could not charge for the loan of books, because that would be illegal. He went on:

"If a charge is made for peripheral services provided by a library, then the user will appreciate what he or she is getting, use will be restricted to those who really have an interest, rather than a whim, and extra resources are available for the service as a whole."

First, he says that people will enjoy things better if they pay for them. As I am almost tired of pointing out, that through the ages is the philosophy of the harlot: if you pay for the service, you will enjoy it more. Then the noble Lord says that we should not allow people easy access to drop in merely on a whim. That might encourage the interest of some young people. Let them have an interest first; then make them pay to come in. Thirdly, he says that extra resources will be made available.

As we have seen with the National Maritime museum, the feeling about the necessity to introduce charges was because resources were being cut.

This debate is our last chance to get an answer from the Government. Do they intend to introduce charges in Scotland?

I am encouraged by my reading of the debate in the other place. Lord Gowrie has at least one convert. The main protagonist for the introduction of charges was not a Conservative peer. It was Lord Taylor of Gryfe, speaking, I presume, for the Social Democratic party. I do not see any member of the SDP in the Chamber at the moment, but at least half of the alliance is represented, and perhaps the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) will say whether the Liberals endorse the views of Lord Taylor of Gryfe on behalf of the SDP. After all, the concept of the noble Lord is exactly the same as that of Lord Gowrie: if a charge is made, the user will appreciate what he or she is getting.

Lord Taylor of Gryfe says that to have to pay to go into a gallery does not discourage him. He maintains that he enjoys it all the more and gets his money's worth. He was talking about seeing the Chagall and Renoir exhibitions. The noble Lord said——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is not allowed to quote a Member of the other place. He must paraphase. He may quote directly only from a Minister.

Mr. Buchan: That is a great pity, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I accept your ruling at once. It is unfortunate, because the noble Lord's remarks are well worth quoting. He talked about seeing the Chagall exhibition at the Hayward gallery. In fact, that was the Renoir exhibition. The Chagall exhibition was at the Royal Academy. But so enchusiastic was he about paying to get in and so valuable was the experience of paying that he forgot in which institutions he saw the two exhibitions.

We are entitled to ask whether the Liberal half of the alliance endorses the view of Lord Taylor of Gryfe.

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): My hon. Friend will probably agree that, following the Liberal party conference in Scotland over the past weekend, the alliance is probably as split on this issue as it is on defence.

Mr. Buchan: I do not wish to intrude into private grief.

Mr. Christopher Murphy (Welwyn Hatfield): Will the hon. Gentleman return his thoughts to Scotland and the possibility of the museum envisaged in the Bill? Does he accept that that there is considerable concern among his own Back-Bench colleagues about finance being made available? If charging were the system whereby additional finance was made available, that would be beneficial, the museum would be nearer to fruition, and everyone would gain. It would be better to have that gain than to adopt the dogmatic approach which seems unfortunately to be creeping into a debate which is supposedly about the heritage, not other spurious factors.

Mr. Buchan: On the last point, this is very much part and parcel of the argument. My hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) has already asked what funds will be coming forward — not a small amount to be supplemented by charges but the amount necessary to fund and develop the museums.

The third heresy propounded by Lord Gowrie was the statement that extra resources would be available because, if extra resources came forward from charges, Government funding would be cut. That is the whole purpose of the provision.

We need an assurance today. We want a pledge from the Government that on no account will they encourage this false development, which is alien to our traditions, alien to the benefactions left to our museums and galleries and alien to the traditions of the philanthropists of the past who gave us so many of the objects to be seen there. An assurance to that effect from at least half of the alliance party would also help.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for welcoming the amendment, as I believe he did. I know that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, would not wish me to indulge in a general debate on the subject of charges, but I have said on a number of occasions already that there is no question of the Government forcing trustees to introduce charges. The decision whether or not to charge for special exhibitions or otherwise will be entirely for the trustees.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Murphy) has said, the amendment will supply information which may stimulate more thoughtful discussion of this issue than is usually evident in some of the doctrinaire pronouncements of the Opposition.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 7 agreed to.

New Clause

AMENDMENT OF HISTORIC BUILDINGS AND ANCIENT MONUMENTS ACT 1953

Lords amendment: No. 8, after clause 19, insert the following new clause—

" .—(1) The Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act 1953 shall be amended as provided in this section.

(2) In section 5 (acquisition by the Minister of historic buildings, their contents and adjoining land) after subsection (2) there shall be inserted the following subsection—

"(2A) Subject as aforesaid, the Minister shall have power to acquire by agreement, whether by purchase, lease or otherwise, or to accept a gift of—

(a) any building situated in Scotland and which—

(i) is in an area designated as a conservation area under section 262 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1972; and

(ii) appears to him to be of special historic or architectural interest;

(b) any land situated in Scotland and which comprises or is contiguous or adjacent to any building mentioned in paragraph *(a)* above;

(c) any garden or other land which is situated in Scotland and which appears to him to be of outstanding historic interest but which is not contiguous or adjacent to a building which appears to him to be of outstanding historic or architectural interest.".

(3) In section 6 (which provides for, amongst other things, grants to the National Trust for Scotland for acquisition of historic buildings)—

(a) in subsection (2), at the end there shall be added the words "or of any land or garden contiguous or adjacent thereto or such as is referred to in section 5(2A) of this Act."; and

(b) in subsection (4) (extent) for the words "or buildings" there shall be substituted the words "buildings, land or garden".

(4) In section 8 (power of Minister to accept endowments of historic buildings)—

(a) in subsection (1), for the words "the following provisions" there shall be substituted the words "subsections (2) to (7)"; and

(b) after subsection (1) there shall be inserted the following subsection—

"(1A) Where any instrument coming into operation after the commencement of this subsection contains a provision purporting to be a gift of property to the Minister upon trust to use the income thereof (either for a limited time or in perpetuity) for or towards the upkeep of a garden or other land acquired or accepted by him under section 5(2A)*(c)* of this Act or a garden or other land which he proposes so to acquire or accept or for or towards the upkeep of any such garden or other land together with other property situated in Scotland, he may accept the gift and, if he does so and the provision does not constitute a charitable trust, subsections (2) to (6) below shall have effect."; and

(c) in subsection (4), after the word "building", where first and secondly occurring, there shall be inserted the words ", land or garden"."

Mr. Allan Stewart: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): I should inform the House that this amendment involves privilege. It will be convenient to take with it Lords amendment No. 15.

Mr. Stewart: Although there was no suggestion in our earlier consideration of the Bill that the existing powers in relation to historic buildings and land in Scotland be supplemented, I am aware of the expressions of interest in this in correspondence with Opposition Members in favour of parity with the powers available to the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England established under the National Heritage Act 1983.

Although it is unlikely that the extended powers will be used in the foreseeable future, I am nevertheless disposed to accept that there would be virtue in bringing the powers available in Scotland more closely into line with those south of the border.

Amendment No. 15 to the long title is necessary to bring the new clause within the scope of the Bill.

Mr. Craigen: I can see the point in extending the legislation in the way that the Minister has outlined, but I should have thought that if the Government were aiming for parity with the legislation in England they would have gone the whole way and agreed to a register of gardens in Scotland as I understand that that facility is available under the English legislation.

I have discussed this, albeit briefly, with the director of the National Trust for Scotland and I had the impression that sympathetic assurances had been given to the trust. At a time when the Government have fallen foul of the teachers and the ratepayers, I should have thought that they would not have wished to fall out of step with the National Trust for Scotland as well. In the interests of protecting the heritage of our gardens, it would seem highly desirable for the Government to agree to a register. I know that several of my hon. Friends have more specific points to put on this matter, and I hope that the Minister will seriously address himself to it.

Mr. Murphy: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am sympathetic to the alteration of the long title, but I trust that the spelling will be improved from that which appears on the Amendment Paper which says "acient monuments" rather than "ancient monuments".

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman's point will be noted.

12 midnight

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): I declare an interest, if not a pecuniary one, in the National Trust for Scotland. For the life of me, I cannot see why my hon. Friend the Minister has not accepted the amendments to bring gardens into this clause, that were tabled in the other place. I welcome the fact that a Minister now has the power to acquire by agreement the Lease of, or to purchase, historic houses, and that includes the purchase, by agreement, of gardens. Subsequently, there is now the power of the National Trust for Scotland to acquire gardens.

However, why will my hon. Friend not include a register for gardens? After all, there is the power in the English Act, which is clear and there for everyone to see. I accept that my hon. Friend will come back and say—*[Interruption.]* If Labour Members would only keep quiet, other hon. Members might be able to hear what is going on. I know that my hon. Friend the Minister will say that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has the power to have a register of gardens provided, and the Scottish Development Department and the Countryside Commission for Scotland did a study of gardens in Scotland. However, we cannot prepare the way for the purchase of gardens without having a list to go to and some sort of priority for what gardens might be purchased if they were available.

[Sir Hector Monro]

We must not forget that gardens are just as important to our heritage as houses and parks, and many of the finest houses that have come into the hands of the National Trust recently have significant and beautiful gardens with them. Therefore, it is important that we have a register of gardens. I would be satisfied with this clause only if my hon. Friend the Minister makes it clear that we shall have such a register, and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will use his power to arrange a register of gardens to be put into effect as soon as possible.

We are not asking for the earth. This list could be compiled relatively inexpensively, but we want one provided, and as soon as possible. I would be happier if I had such an assurance.

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): I am honoured to be able to say that I agree with everything that the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) said. I have to say so, because I declare the same interest that he does—a non-pecuniary interest as a member of the council of the National Trust for Scotland.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mr. Craigen) says, in a week in which the Government have managed to outrage just about every section of Scottish opinion, including the football supporters, one would have thought that the last thing on earth that they would have wanted to do was to make some more enemies, especially as the National Trust for Scotland holds the tenancy for the Secretary of State's residency in Charlotte square. That might be one of the most popular evictions that could ever take place. In that exceptional circumstance, my right hon. and hon. Friends would not object to that eviction.

However, a serious point is being made by the National Trust. It is asking for parity in line with legislation for England and Wales. It seems incomprehensible that the Government would stand out and attempt to say that powers that the Secretary of State for Scotland has are identical or even superior to those powers provided by the English legislation. The National Trust for Scotland disagrees vehemently with that, as do a large number of other people.

I know the strictures of order in quoting from the other place and I shall paraphrase what Lord Taylor of Gryfe had to say on 26 February. He said that it would be logical to have a register of gardens in Scotland similar to that available in England. The Earl of Caithness spoke on behalf of the Government. Whether that was a one-off occasion or whether he has joined the long list of the aristocracy serving the Government I do not know, but he said that he agreed with the logic of Lord Taylor and went on to say that it was already open to the Secretary of State for Scotland to compile a register of historic gardens if he thought that it would be useful. He said that there was no need to seek the specific power which was in Lord Taylor's amendment. That was the assurance given to Lord Taylor and on that basis he withdrew his amendment.

The National Trust for Scotland has now directly contradicted the assurance given by the Earl of Caithness by specifying that the legislation of 1953 and 1974 for Scotland says:

"grants may be payable for the upkeep of gardens . . . of outstanding historic interest".

But there is no explicit power to compile a register which would provide a basis for distinguishing between various sorts of important and historic gardens. There is a clear distinction between that and the power that is available within the English legislation for compiling such a useful register in such an important area of Scotland's tourist heritage. This is the opportunity for changing the legislation and bringing that about.

The idea that research is a substitute is to mistake the purpose of the English legislation. There are many valuable gardens throughout Britain. In England they will be compiled and described and prioritised in a register of gardens. But there is no sign either that the powers are available or that the intention of the Secretary of State for Scotland is to compile a similar register, despite the fact, as the National Trust says, that Lord Young, whose meteoric rise to the Cabinet we all noted with interest, has been asked by the Prime Minister to specifically study the tourist industry and its ability to generate jobs, especially for young people. Scotland's gardens are a natural resource and yet the power that exists within the English legislation is being denied to Scotland.

What is being asked for by the National Trust for Scotland, the matter having been considered by experts within it, it is a reasonable request which the Government could easily concede without contradicting any of the ideological hang-ups that they may have. The very fact that the hon. Member for Dumfries and I, and my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) can be as one on this matter is as good a sign as he will get of that. The National Trust believes that to be a reasonable request and I agree. The Minister should concede the case and try to buy back a fraction of the popularity that the Government have lost in the past few weeks.

Mr. Albert McQuarrie (Banff and Buchan): I welcome the new clause, but I was a little disturbed to hear my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary say that he did not envisage the Government using it in the foreseeable future.

Had the Bill been in force a few months ago, it would have saved considerable problems over Towie Barclay castle in my constituency, because subsection (2A) of the new clause would have covered some adjoining land.

I declare an interest as a subscribing member of the National Trust. It is well known to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary that the Trust had considerable problems in raising the cash to acquire Fyvie castle, which had some wonderful paintings and tapestries. Difficulties were posed by Sir Ian Forbes Leith, but eventually the money was raised. Subsection (3) of the new clause provides for grants to the National Trust for Scotland for the acquisition of historic buildings, and I hope that the Government will not decide that there is no need for the provision to be used in the foreseeable future.

More castles in my constituency are liable to be offered to the National Trust and I hope that we shall be able to approach the Government if the trust requires funds to acquire historic buildings for the nation and thereby retain Scotland's historic heritage.

Mr. Dalyell: What is puzzling is why there should be any resistance to the suggestion that a register of gardens should be compiled. What is behind the Government's reluctance? Will the Minister spell out the difficulties?

Secondly, does the Minister agree with the National Trust for Scotland that gardens are more sensitive to neglect than buildings? If he does not agree, he should say so. If he does agree, surely we ought to have the register that is asked for.

Thirdly, the 1983 English legislation was clear. What is the objection to our having parity with it?

Mr. Allen Stewart: May I tell my hon. Friend the Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. McQuarrie) that the powers in the new clause are additional to the Secretary of State's existing powers in relation to buildings of outstanding historic or achitectural interest. I said that the Government had no specific plans to use the new powers, but clearly occasions might arise when it would be appropriate to use them.

The National Trust warmly welcomes the emendment. The debate is about what is not in the amendment and not about what is in it. I reassure the House that if my right hon Friend the Secretary of State wished to establish a register of gardens in Scotland he could do so. A specific enabling provision is unnecessary.

Opposition Members gave stated that the National Trust for Scotland places great emphasis in the desirability of using the Bill as a means of securing parity of treatment for Scotland. I appreciate their concern, but the National Heritage Act 1983 did not confer on the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England a specific power enabling it to compile a register.

The new section 8(*c*) of the Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act 1953, which was created by schedule 4 to the 1983 Act, merely sets out certain procedural steps such as notification to owners, which would have to be taken if a register was set up. Nowhere does the 1983 Act take the specific power to set up a register which the National Trust for Scotland is seeking for north of the border.

Mr. Dalyell: Is the Minister saying that Mr. Lester Borley is wrong in saying that we do not have parity with England, and that the position is the same in England and Scotland?

Mr. Stewart: Of course I have read the letter from the National Trust. I am trying to explain the technical differences between the positions north and south of the border. I have outlined the position in relation to the Act, but of course hon. Members are more concerned with substance than with technical points. I shall spell out the position in Scotland.

Last year the Scottish Development Department and the Countryside Commission for Scotland jointly commissioned Land Use Consultants Limited to prepare an inventory of historic gardens and designed landscapes in Scotland. It is worth emphasising that an inventory involves much more detailed information than a register. A register simply consists of a desk study and a half-page narrative on each site. An inventory involves on-site visits, and detailed maps and photographs of the up-to-date position. That study will take two years to complete. It will involve detailed examination of about 250 of the most important gardens and designed landscapes in Scotland in terms of their extent, component features and condition.

I believe that our decision to join the Countryside Commission for Scotland in commissioning the inventory is ample evidence of our concern for and interest in the subject of historic gardens. So we are taking a different approach from that of the new English commission. But I believe that this very detailed work will be widely welcomed. The inventory will meet the legitimate anxieties of the National Trust that we should all be more aware of this important part of our heritage.

When we have completed the work—and the work on the inventory has been widely welcomed—we can look at the question of a register, with a half-page description of each site.

Mr. George Robertson: How does the Minister answer the point that the inventory and the register are not mutually exclusive? We are told by the National Trust that the development of the register in England and Wales is leading to advice being given to the owners and managers of gardens that will protect them in the meantime. An inventory will be fine when it is eventually finished, but it does not have the added advantage of the register. We are told that a register will give guidance to all owners and authies in respect of gardens of special historic interest that need our concern for future protection. Surely that is the key difference between the interim stage of drawing up an inventory and the register.

Mr. Stewart: The information contained in a register is much less than that contained in an inventory. My point is that it is sensible to obtain up-to-date information, with maps, photographs and so on, together with information from on-site visits from the inventory before considering whether to add to that detailed information with a register. Inevitably, that would contain much less information.

Mr. Wilson: However meritorious the proposal is to have an inventory of gardens with photographs and so on, that would not be available to most people. Have the Government thought of having a summary made of the inventory—in the form of a register or otherwise—that might make such attractions more available to the general public, if not to those with a special interest in such matters?

Mr. Stewart: The hon. Gentleman makes a perfectly fair point. We have not taken final decisions on the form of publication of the inventory. The information that it contains will certainly be publicly available.

Sir Hector Monro: My hon. Friend is splitting hairs in a monumental manner between the definition of an inventory and a register. Would it not be very much better if he said that the Countryside Commission and the Scottish Development Department are preparing a register of historic gardens for the Secretary of State? We would then all be happy.

Mr. Stewart: My hon. Friend has made a valuable suggestion. I have tried to explain the difference between the approach in England, which is to provide half-page narratives as a result of desk study, and the more detailed research for Scotland. I assure the House that in the light of the concern expressed by hon. Members I shall reconsider how best we can ensure that the information from the studies is made publicly available.

Mr. Buchan: We wish to register our approval of the Minister's last remark.

Mr. Dalyell: Can the Minister give an undertaking that he will see the National Trust formally before coming to a decision?

Mr. Stewart: I am always available to see the National Trust if it wishes to raise matters that are appropriate for discussion at ministerial level.

Question put and agreed to.—[Special Entry.]

Lords amendments Nos. 9 and 10 agreed to.

Schedule 1

THE BOARDS

Lords amendment: No. 11, in page 22, line 35, at end insert—

"( ) The Secretary of State shall include amongst the trustees at least one Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland."

Mr. Allan Stewart: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Hon. Members will recall that when the Bill was considered in the House I emphasised the importance that we attach to maintaining the links between the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland and the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland whose collections it founded and over which it presided for so many years. We made a number of changes put forward by my hon. Friend the Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Henderson) to take account of that concern.

It was suggested at that time, and again on Report by the hon. Members for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) and for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mr. Craigen) — with the sympathy of some of my hon. Friends — that the Bill should contain a more specific provision to clarify the relationship of the society with the new board of trustees. On reconsidering the point in the light of the representations, we came to the view that the historically unique nature of the society's involvement supported the need for some special arrangement.

This amendment, therefore, has the effect of requiring that at least one of the trustees appointed by the Secretary of State shall always be a fellow of the society. The society has expressed itself satisfied with this arrangement and I hope that the House will support the amendment.

Mr. Craigen: I welcome the amendment, but the Minister should wriggle a little more because he pointedly refused the proposal when it was put forward on Report. I know that the hon. Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Henderson) and other hon. Members made the point in Committee about recognising the long association of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland. I am glad that the Minister has come round to accepting the points put to him. I should like to see him wriggle a wee bit more in his explanation of how he eventually acceded to our request.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 12 and 13 agreed to.

Schedule 2

MINOR AND CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS

Lords amendment: No. 14, in page 31, leave out lines 37 to 40 and insert—

"The Capital Transfer Tax Act 1984 (*c.* 51)

4. In Schedule 3 (which relates to exempt transfers), for the words "The Royal Scottish Museum" there shall be substituted the words "The National Museums of Scotland.""

Mr. Allan Stewart: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

This is a technical amendment.

Mr. Craigen: Does this technical amendment imply that there was an error in the drafting of the Bill?

Mr. Stewart: No, Sir, and I will give the technical explanation for the amendment. It replaces the entry at present contained in schedule 2(4). It reflects the fact that the relevant provisions in the Finance Act 1975 were consolidated by the Capital Transfer Tax Act 1984, which came into operation on 1 January 1985. Hence the need for the amendment.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 15 agreed to.

LIAISON

Ordered,

That Mr. Harry Cowans be discharged from the Liaison Committee and Mr. Gordon A. T. Bagier be added to the Committee.—*[Mr. Durant.]*

Export Services

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Durant.]*

12.26 am

Mr. Richard Page (Hertfordshire, South-West): I do not think that anybody would put his hand on his heart and say that in 1979 our economy was in a financially sound position. We had inflation going through double figures and rising, a public sector borrowing requirement which was unacceptably high as a percentage of our gross national product, a record number of hours being lost through strikes, a luddite approach to new technology and increasing levels of imports. Indeed, our whole approach to work and productivity earned us the reputation among our foreign competitors of having the British disease.

Now, six years on, we have a sound economic base, and for that we must give full credit to the Government for creating an environment in which people are now accustomed to working for their living. Our inflation rate is well into single figures.

However, we still have immense problems, the major one being unemployment. Whatever reasons may be advanced for our level of unemployment — the demographic profile, the reduction in demand for the products of the traditional industries, the advance of new technologies, and so on — the Government have a responsibility and duty to tackle that problem.

The economic base on which we can now build is sound, unlike the base that existed in 1979. Among the choices that we now have to increase our economic activity, apart from doing nothing, are to put money into the infrastructure; to increase demand in Britain, with the risk, of course, of increasing imports; to bring about import substitution; or to encourage exports.

I do not believe in doing nothing. The Lord helps those who help themselves, and I believe that the most effective steps that we could take to improve the nation's economic activity would be to help exports, which is the main topic of this debate. Such help would be appropriate because we are a trading nation.

I refer in particular to support for our exporters, because the multiplying effect that could come from such assistance would be more effective in giving value for money by generating necessary economic activity in the United Kingdom. Any increased export help would produce some additionality — though I accept the difficulty in quantifying the value of that additionality— and would reduce the nation's social cost of unemployment.

I should like to deal with the whole range of export supports, but in the time available I can make only a few broad points and then refer specifically to certain areas of the aid and trade provisions and the role of the British Overseas Trade Board.

On the broad points, I should at the outset record the value of the strength of the interlocking operation that we have between the Foreign Office and the Department of Trade and Industry.

British exporters have mentioned the improvements that have come about over the past five years, and Foreign Office figures show the response that has been generated. There were about 43,000 market inquiries in 1980, and in 1983 there were 64,000. Visitors to overseas posts amounted to 66,000 in 1979 and in 1983 they had risen to 77,000. There has been a switch of emphasis in the role of staff within our overseas missions with about 30 per cent. of the staff now being engaged on commercial work. Work in the commercial sector is now a part of standard Foreign Office training.

The Foreign Office carries out an in-depth review every four years. It is a blockbuster review. The British Overseas Trade Board evaluates its resources every year. I ask my right hon. Friend to take steps to get the Foreign Office to carry out a mini commercial evaluation each year to reflect especially market changes. The changes that are taking place in countries around the Pacific basin are developing at an enormous rate. There is always the tendency to say, "We won't do anything until the review is agreed and out of the way." I think that we can respond slightly quicker than that.

I should also like to see more activity and resources being put into the countries that can pay the bills. We should take a leaf out of our competitors' books. France and Germany, for example, are concentrating their overseas missions in the countries that are able to pay for the services that they receive.

On the second point I would like to make, it is important that we get the best value out of our aid programme. That is the approach of every major contributor to overseas aid. I believe that British companies are concerned to know whether we are making the best use of the expenditure that is voted for the aid programme. Other major aid donors, such as France, Japan and Germany, give a far smaller proportion of their total aid programme to multilateral agencies. They prefer to keep the bulk available for their own Governments' use.

Multilateral organisations play an invaluable role, but why should multilateral contributions represent a higher percentage of our total aid programme in terms of GDP than those of other countries? Moreover, the multilateral funded projects are let on an internationally competitive basis. The British companies that win would have won irrespective of the size of our contribution. We can probably all produce tables to prove that point.

I also would like to ask why we give such a high proportion of our bilateral aid in the form of 100 per cent. grants. According to the 1983 aid commitment, France had more than $1 billion in the form of soft loans, Germany had about $900 million and Japan had $2·4 billion. The United Kingdom had only about $180 million in forms other than 100 per cent. grants. That means that other countries are prepared to offer lower subsidies in their aid. That in turn means that, for a given amount of subsidy, they can capture more business. I put it to my right hon. Friend that it might be more sensible to have more aid in the form of aid and trade provisions where a grant of about 20 to 30 per cent. is linked to export credit support and so generate perhaps four times the business that might come from 100 per cent. grants.

I believe that, for the first time for many years, last year's budget was spent completely. I do not know whether that occurred because there was more flexibility in the sectors or in the time scales or because the projects and exports policy ratio was allowed to exceed the three times factor. Whatever it was, it is welcome.

Any comment on aid and trade inevitably draws with it the Byatt report, which is concerned with the Government having to pay benefit now and collect later. The report raises doubts about whether benefits will outweigh costs and about the value of additionality.

[Mr. Richard Page]

Although the Byatt report is correct in asking questions about whether value for money is obtained, it tends to gloss over the fact that Britain is a trading nation. We obtain 33 per cent. of our GNP from exports and we do not live in a vacuum. We have to compete and sell in international markets if we are to survive. I am worried about the fact that previous areas of traditional excellence are under threat. Sectors in the electro-technical industry provide a typical example. In 1966 they had a positive trade balance in their favour of 37·8 per cent.; in 1983, that trade balance had dropped to 10·4 per cent. We cannot afford to lose such a percentage of the market share implicit in those figures.

I hope that the different rate of subsidy through "consensus" is closer to market rates today and will give better value for money. I believe that that has happened since the Byatt report appeared. Nevertheless, I should repeat what was said in the report on 15 March 1984 by the Comptroller and Auditor General about the Export Credits Guarantee Department. The report stated:

> "The National Economic Development Office seriously questioned many of the key assumptions underlying the Byatt study findings."

We would do well to continue to question those assumptions, because, whatever else we do, we are tied to the international market scene. The cost of staying in and matching our competitors' support — unfair as it might be sometimes — will be considerably less than opting out and trying to get back into those markets later. I hope that active investigation will take place into the value of increasing the aid and trade provision.

I should like to refer to the proposed changes to the British Overseas Trade Board's funding of overseas trade fairs and its effect on small and medium-sized companies. I mention that point because of my long-standing interest in small businesses and the fact that I am a vice-chairman of the Small Business Bureau and have been actively involved with small business ever since I became a Member of Parliament. Using the BOTB's definition of a small company as one that employs 200 or fewer employees, in 1983, 7,348 companies participated in overseas fairs. More than 5,000 of them were small businesses.

Working on the maxim that if one does not show one does not sell, I am worried that if we allow our support to the overseas trade fairs to erode the smaller companies will lose out. The larger companies have resources and can afford to go to the fairs; the small companies cannot. I appreciate the fact that more emphasis is to be given to putting the newcomers, rather than the regulars, on to the overseas trade fair scene. I suggest that that should be a separate argument and not one to reduce support for the regular companies which participate in overseas trade fairs. I am concerned about the proposal to reduce the travel rebate, giving it only to first-timers. It takes a considerable time to become established in overseas markets. It is not achieved by calling at the door for the first time. I understand that in one industry sector which normally takes part in six fairs a year, one fair has been lost and another is under threat. I hope that my right hon. Friend will consider that.

I started the Adjournment debate by mentioning improvements in support given to exporters over the past five years. I hope that my comments and requests for further support will be regarded as constructive, and not as criticism. I trust that they will be examined for their viability in boosting United Kingdom exporters and employment.

12.40 am

The Minister for Trade (Mr. Paul Channon): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, South-West (Mr. Page) for raising this important topic. I congratulate him on putting his finger on so many important points of great interest to British business and exporters.

My hon. Friend's interest in small firms is well known. I hope to show him that what we are doing will help small firms and that we are interested in trying to enable small firms to export profitably. I agreed with a great deal of what my hon. Friend said about the importance of a sound economic base, the great improvements that have taken place over the past few years and the importance of trying to help exporters at present.

I am grateful for my hon. Friend's well-deserved tribute to the work of the commercial staff of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and I shall ensure that his remarks are drawn to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary. I strongly agree with them.

I hope that I shall be able to deal with most of the points that my hon. Friend mentioned. The activities of ECGD, the aid programme, a wide range of visits overseas by Ministers and our trade policy work, aimed at keeping an open trading system, all help our export trade effort, as are the export promotion services under the guidance of the business men on the British Overseas Trade Board. The aim is to help smaller and medium-sized companies with the regulatory, technical and commercial difficulties of getting into new markets. We work with firms to grasp opportunities and enter markets that can and do pay for the goods that they receive. When the firms are established their sales should pay for the full costs. There is help for big firms as well, in particular in countries where relations with the Government are crucial, and we try to help with securing major project business. My hon. Friend referred to the aid and trade provision, and I shall return to that subject later.

I agreed with what my hon. Friend said about how we must ensure that we make the best use of the money and manpower paid for by the taxpayer in achieving our objectives.

We must obtain good value for money from the BOTB's budget. Next year that will be a net cash amount of £27·7 million. Those services are focused on newcomers to markets and smaller firms. From the surveys and questionnaires that have been sent out, it is clear that the export services are helping small firms. Up to three quarters of the users have fewer than 200 employees, and the measures designed to concentrate the help more clearly on newcomers to markets will help concentrate efforts on small firms even more. A number of things have happened in recent years which have helped in that—for example, the lower limits on the terms of the market entry guarantee scheme to help small firms, and the provision of £100 worth of free advice to small firms on the technical requirements of overseas markets. I could give other examples if time permitted.

My right hon. Friend determines the overall budget for all those activities as part of the normal public expenditure process, and he has to take into account the overall

priorities within his Department. Everybody could do with a bit more, not least the BOTB, but a bit more for everybody is not consistent with the proper control of public expenditure.

The detailed allocation of resources is under the guidance of the BOTB. It issued a consultation paper, and there were a great many replies which in general supported the emphasis on newcomers and smaller firms. The board has been very sympathetic to those points. It has modified its original proposals for providing travel grants for missions and those manning stands at overseas trade fairs to spread them over a long period and to give the opportunity for some more experienced exporters to take part, as was suggested in so many of the comments that have been received.

We are also trying very hard to find new firms with the capability to export and which can be helped. The regional offices were set a target last year of making 4,000 new contacts on the export side; in fact, they came up with 6,000. My hon. Friend may have seen the advertisements for the £150 introductory offer for firms which have not used BOTB services before. That alone brought in 500 new firms in the last few months of 1984. We did an analysis of a sample of those new customers in one of the regional offices, and it showed a high proportion of small firms, 98 per cent. with fewer than 200 employees, 89 per cent. with fewer than 50, and two-thirds with 10 or fewer employees. So it is very much targeted to helping small firms.

My hon. Friend rightly mentioned the importance of the aid and trade provision, which is a key element frequently in securing projects for British companies in developing countries. I note his views about the balance between the bilateral and the multilateral aid programme. That again is a matter primarily for my right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development, but I note my hon. Friend's view. Since its introduction in 1977, ATP support of about £350 million has secured 95 projects with a United Kingdom content of £1,500 million — a dam in Malaysia, an undersea cable in Indonesia, a coal mine in Egypt, a power station in India, the upgrading of an airport in Sri Lanka. They are some examples of orders won for British companies. When we win orders such as those, frequently only 20 per cent. of the value stays with the major contractor. About two thirds of the value might go to a wide range of smaller firms scattered round the country.

The £1,500 million of orders that I have mentioned will have led to many thousands of man years of work for a wide range of British companies. They will lead also to follow-on business in a variety of ways, either through repeat projects in the same developing countries or because of the shop window effect leading to similar projects in other countries.

If one wins a project, and a firm secures or maintains a presence in a developing country, that firm will be far better placed to win a range of future projects. Those benefits are, in the jargon, additional. Without ATP, the projects would have gone to other aid offers, typically from the French or Japanese, but indeed almost from any developed country, such is the growing intensity of international competition.

ATP was introduced to match the practices of others, and more and more countries have introduced similar measures. There is growing concern internationally about the potential trade distortions which arise from the increasing use of those measures, and it is certainly not in Britain's interests for trade to be determined by the amount of public finance countries are willing to provide for capital projects in developing countries. Within the OECD my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer and I are pressing, with strong American support, for steps to control and reduce such distortions. But while those distortions exist my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and I are not prepared to disarm unilaterally to the disadvantage of British companies. I welcome my hon. Friend's robust support in this matter, which heartens us in our task. I note his views on the Byatt report and I echo what he says about the effects of the consensus and better value for money as time goes on. I note his references to the NEDO report.

It is, or course, crucial that ATP should be operated as effectively as possible. It is particularly necessary to cut down bureaucracy, because inevitably a number of Departments are involved. We have taken some important steps towards streamlining those procedures. New delegated authorities to ODA mean less frequent consultations with the Treasury, although the Treasury has an important role in this matter. It is certainly my aim that no British company should lose a project because Whitehall has been dragging its feet. My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the importance of ATP, and I shall ensure that his points are carefully studied.

Let me put in perspective what my hon. Friend has been saying. He said that we are a trading country. Last year we saw some significant achievements by British firms in exporting. The volume of our exports in 1984 went up by approximately 7½ per cent., and that is not—I repeat, not — mainly oil. Leaving out erratic items, our manufacturing exports, for example, increased by 10 per cent. over the previous year. That healthy upward trend is continuing with the trade figures for February that came out last week. Leaving out the erratic items, the past three months compared with the same three months a year ago showed that our exports of manufactured goods are up 12 per cent. That is much higher than the volume increase in similar terms for imports, which was about half that figure. That is a highly important factor in the overall growth of output in this country. My hon. Friend is right about that. Today we saw further evidence that that momentum is continuing from the Confederation of British Industry survey, which stated that the balance of firms reporting that export orders were above normal was the highest since 1977.

Those figures are very good. However, one does not want only figures. Perhaps one wants to look at the actual cases occasionally. For example, when I look at some of the 250 applications for the Export Award for Smaller Businesses, I find them extraordinary in what they manage to achieve and the way that they are scattered all round the country. For example, a company making split key rings with 19 employees has doubled its exports for the past two years. A firm of 10 employees making church furnishings raised its exports from £5,000 in 1983 to nearly £500,000 in 1984. I could go on giving other examples.

The common theme is a strong spirit of enterprise, the will to get on and overcome the difficulties and a great deal of professionalism in running companies and getting into exports. Such small companies have problems in finding the right markets, investigating them and then getting a foothold in them. That is where the export services can and, I believe, do help. A small amount invested in

[The Minister for Trade]

helping those firms brings a flow of extra exports over the years. That is good both for the firms and for the United Kingdom. It helps firms spread the risk between different markets and exposes them to new ideas in product development and marketing from the international competition, which in turn helps to improve performance at home. Also, those exports bring new demand into the country, and that means more jobs for the firms themselves and the towns and villages where they are based.

My hon. Friend has done the House a service tonight in allowing me to outline to the House our priorities in this area and our commitment to export promotion. Of course, no programme can be exempt from rigorous public expenditure scrutiny and restraint, but I believe that the measures that the Government are taking will be effective in producing more exports and more jobs, particularly for smaller firms.

My hon. Friend raised several detailed points about the BOTB's proposals, which it announced this afternoon, for the detailed allocation of its budget. I shall make sure that the board carefully considers what my hon. Friend has said.

One of the reasons why there is a lower budget share for fairs, which particularly concerned my hon. Friend, is that the income from the charges for that service has been increased, particularly from those firms that have been going regularly for some time and are established in the market. There will be some cutback in the number of events supported in the next two years, but I hope that the higher percentage discount for first-timers in particular will make better use of resources and be helpful to small firms trying to break into a market for the first time. It is for the BOTB and the business men who run it to make proposals for the detailed allocation of money. That is a sensible way of running a programme that is designed primarily to be of use to British business.

Our export services do a good job. The figures for 1985 are encouraging. My hon. Friend raised several extremely valuable points, including the one about the Foreign and Commonwealth Office review. We are in constant touch with the Foreign Office on staffing. We make changes in between its four-year reviews — for example, we recently strengthened the New York office.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising this important debate, which will be of considerable use to us.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at five minutes to One o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 2 April 1985

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BOURNEMOUTH BOROUGH COUNCIL BILL *[Lords]*

Order for Third Reading read.

Queen's consent, on behalf of the Crown, signified.

Read the Third time and passed, with amendments.

ALEXANDRA PARK AND PALACE BILL

ROYAL BANK OF SCOTLAND BILL

Considered; to be read the Third time.

Oral Answers to Questions

EMPLOYMENT

Youth Unemployment

1. **Mr. Roy Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what is the level of youth unemployment at the latest available date.

The Minister of State, Department of Employment (Mr. Peter Morrison): On 10 January 1985, 197,678 claimants under 18 years of age were unemployed in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Hughes: Are those not alarming figures? It is all very well to talk about training, but training for what? Will the Minister bear in mind that in careers offices throughout Wales there are only 200 notified vacancies? In this International Year of Youth, does he not feel that youngsters deserve a better deal?

Mr. Morrison: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman agrees with the document that the Labour party has produced today, especially the passage that states:

"For young people, Labour's aim is a high quality two-year programme of education and training. The Youth Training Scheme must be recast to meet the needs of all 16 and 17-year-olds".

That is precisely what my right hon. Friends the Secretary of State and the Chancellor of the Exchequer have announced. It is nice to have the Labour party following us.

Mr. Powley: Does my hon. Friend agree that as well as the introduction of measures by the Department of Employment for the employment of youth, there is a need for him to liaise with the Department of Education and Science to ensure that school leavers are properly equipped with all the necessary skills to enable them to take their place in employment?

Mr. Morrison: I agree with my hon. Friend. That is why we have taken the initiative of introducing a pilot scheme of vocational education. It is sad that many Labour-controlled education authorities are not willing to participate in the scheme. They do not see the need to bridge the gap between education and work.

Mr. Fatchett: The Government regularly claim that low wages will provide the answer to youth unemployment. If so, why is the lowest rate of unemployment in the south-east, the region which has the highest wage levels?

Mr. Morrison: Presumably the hon. Gentleman is aware of the agreement between the Electrical, Electronic, Telecommunication and Plumbing Union and the employers, which resulted in a significant reduction in the level of apprentices' wages. As a result, the number of apprentices trebled. Surely that speaks for itself.

Mr. Andrew MacKay: Will my hon. Friend tell the House what response he has had so far from employers to the excellent extension of the youth training scheme to two years? Will he also confirm that in future the scheme will be biased more towards securing jobs at the end of the day?

Mr. Morrison: The employers' response so far has been encouraging, as was demonstrated by what the CBI had to say after my right hon. Friend's announcement. I am sure that all employers realise that to invest in a two-year training scheme is in their interests as much as it is in the interests of the trainees.

Mr. Sheerman: In the light of those dreadful figures for youth unemployment, surely the Minister must join his right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), who seems to know that the Government are pursuing a Luddite theory in linking low wages with youth employment. My hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, South (Mr. Fatchett) has observed that youth unemployment is lowest in the south-east, where wages are higher than elsewhere. When will the Minister give up theories that fly in the face of common sense, sound economics and the lessons of history and start to do something to create real jobs for young people?

Mr. Morrison: It seems that the hon. Gentleman was not listening to his right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition when he was speaking this morning. The right hon. Gentleman, when launching the Labour party's new document, said that there was no easy answer to these problems. The Government's answer is a soundly based economy that will win back jobs on a competitive basis.

Factory Inspectors

2. **Mr. Caborn** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what recent representations he has received about the number of factory inspectors in post.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Peter Bottomley): There have been nine representations since 1 January. Six have been from representatives of trade unions.

Mr. Caborn: Will the hon. Gentleman acknowledge that, to achieve improved health and safety at work, more direct action is needed by the factory inspector at the place of work? The problems involved in the storage and production of chemicals, which are covered by the hazards regulations which were passed a few weeks ago, will

require more inspection, especially in conurbations such as Sheffield. There was a major fire in Sheffield, and the factory inspectors expressed disquiet about the ability to control such hazards.

Mr. Bottomley: The whole aim of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and the activities of the executive are to build in safety rather than to try to bolt it on afterwards. The regulations for the storage of chemicals are very much in the mind of the Health and Safety Executive. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman discovered a good deal more helpful information during his visit with the area director to the Brightside fire site.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: Will my hon. Friend join me in congratulating the factory inspectors who were sent to Leicester to investigate the so-called sweat shops and who gave Leicester a clean bill of health?

Mr. Bottomley: My hon. Friend will recognise that interpretations of the report will vary. The important issue is that not only factory inspectors but management and safety representatives should continue with their assault on unsafe conditions and try to ensure that occupational safety and health are continuously improved.

Mr. Haynes: I would understand and accept the Minister's point, provided that was happening. Is he aware that, because of the Government's cuts, there are nowhere near sufficient inspectors in industry? It is high time the hon. Gentleman woke up and did the job that he was elected to do.

Mr. Bottomley: I am always grateful for the encouragement of hon. Members. I suggest that the hon. Gentleman should re-read the Health and Safety Commission's plan of work.

Employment and Trade Union Acts

3. **Mr. Knox** asked the Secretary of State for Employment whether he is satisfied with the operation of the Employment Acts 1980 and 1982 and the Trade Union Act 1984.

The Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Tom King): It is already clear that the Employment Acts 1980 and 1982 and the Trade Union Act 1984 together represent a significant improvement in rights of union members both in protecting them against the abuse of closed shop power and in ensuring that their views are taken into account before being required to take industrial action.

Mr. Knox: Has the legislation been framed to deal with ballot rigging? Will the legislation deal with allegations of ballot rigging in the Transport and General Workers Union?

Mr. King: The election took place before the provisions of the 1984 Act are due to come into effect. That will happen on 1 October 1985. The first change is that, with effect from July last year, we require the setting up of a new register by 1 October to keep an accurate and correct register of members. A presumption in favour of postal voting will also apply. Those provisions will clearly help.

Mr. Hoyle: Does the Secretary of State agree that, rather than anti-trade union Acts, measures to strengthen the trade unions are required, especially to protect them from companies such as Exclusive Cleaning and Maintenance Ltd. at UKAEA, Risley where 130 women cleaners have gone on strike because their wages have been reduced by 21p an hour, from £25 to £22·50 a week, despite the fact that the firm's profits have increased by 32 per cent.? Will he advise his colleague the Secretary of State for the Environment to sack this anti-trade union firm from its cleaning contract for the House of Commons and the House of Lords? Will the right hon. Gentleman do so, despite the fact that this firm contributes to the Conservative party?

Mr. King: I fail to understand how the hon. Member could describe as anti-trade union provisions that give greater democracy to union members. I am reinforced in that view by the MORI poll carried out for "Union World" on Channel 4, which found that 75 per cent. of union members supported secret ballots before strikes were held and 70 per cent. wanted secret ballots for union elections. Those are precisely our provisions, and I am glad that they have the overwhelming support of union members.

Mr. Madel: In view of what my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, Moorlands (Mr. Knox) said about possible ballot rigging in recent Transport and General Workers Union elections, should not the TUC satisfy itself that everything was done correctly in those elections?

Mr. King: Without wishing at this stage to enter into the details of those union elections, clearly the stories that have emerged, the allegations that have been made and the disciplinary action already taken leading to the dismissal of union officers in Bristol give rise to serious anxiety. It is precisely because it is important that union elections carry credibility that we put through our provisions in the Trade Union Act. They will prove overwhelmingly to be to the good of unions' reputations in the future.

Mr. Wrigglesworth: Will the Secretary of State confirm that he and his colleagues rejected proposals from the Opposition and Conservative Benches for the introduction of secret postal ballots in the 1984 Act? Do not the TGWU irregularities confirm the evidence that we presented to the Committee and to the House at that time? Will he therefore reconsider the Government's position and introduce secret postal ballots as the norm for trade union elections?

Mr. King: The hon. Gentleman's memory fails him. He will recall that the changes that we subsequently made required that, so far as reasonably practicable, everyone entitled to vote in an election must have a voting paper sent to him by post at his proper address and be given a convenient opportunity to vote by post. My understanding is that it is likely that the TGWU will be changing its future arrangements for the election of its national executive committee because of the need to conform with the new requirements.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my right hon. Friend agree that those Acts were put on the statute book to redress the imbalance brought about by the Acts put on the statute book by the Labour Government, who gave powers to trade union barons and leaders and removed those powers from the members? The Conservative Government put the power back where it belongs—with the membership—and made the leadership accountable.

Mr. King: I agree with what my hon. Friend says. I notice that Opposition Members are fond of criticising the

trade union legislation. I want to hear from them whether they propose at some future stage—if they ever have the chance—to take away from union members the right to have a vote and a say before they are called upon to take industrial action.

Mr. Winnick: When will the Secretary of State realise that penal laws and sanctions against trade unions cannot make employees stay at work if they feel strongly over an issue, as we saw yesterday at the Mount Pleasant sorting office? Is he aware that, just as previously when anti-union legislation has been passed by a Tory-dominated House of Commons, this law will be repealed like the rest of them?

Mr. King: The hon. Gentleman shows by that question just how much he is out of step with the general stream of union thinking. My understanding is that in the postal dispute to which he referred, the union membership will invite its members to vote in a proper ballot. I hope that the whole House will welcome that development.

Mr. Galley: Does my right hon. Friend agree that whilst the 1984 Act was a valuable contribution to employment law, the time is now ripe for further action, and that the Government should issue a Green Paper about the possibility of making strikes illegal and making binding arbitration agreements legally enforceable in essential services, such as teaching, health care, gas, electricity and water? That would have considerable public support.

Mr. King: I note what my hon. Friend says. That is not what we put before the country at the election. We said that we would consult about essential services to ensure that they were governed by adequate procedure agreements, breach of which could lead to loss of immunity. I am considering that matter in the light of lessons learnt in the recent miners' dispute.

Mr. Evans: May I give the Secretary of State and the House an assurance that the next Labour Government will repeal every scrap of Tory anti-trade union legislation? Is the Secretary of State aware that there is mounting suspicion that some Ministers, in particular the Prime Minister, are urging industrialists in general and chairmen of nationalised industries in particular to use Tory industrial relations legislation to create industrial disputes so that they can take on the unions? Surely, employment Ministers should recognise that co-operation, not confrontation, is what is necessary to put right Britain's economic problems?

Mr. King: Obviously, we listen carefully to that statement from the Opposition Front Bench, made with the full authority of the Labour party. I think we now see that in future union members are to be denied secret ballots —*[Interruption.]*—and are not to be allowed to have a say before they are told by their union leaders whether they have to strike. We now see the party of the ballot riggers in full cry.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Winnick: Dirty slander.

Mr. Speaker: Order. We often hear things in the Chamber that we do not like.

Later——

Mr. Hoyle: On a point of order, arising from Question Time, Mr. Speaker. Is it in order for the Secretary of State for Employment to make a slanderous statement about the "party of ballot riggers" and is it the kind of conduct, that you expect from Ministers at the Dispatch Box?

Mr. Speaker: I say to the hon. Gentleman and to the whole House that moderation in language is the essence of our debates.

Community Programme

4. **Mr. Hirst** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to expand the operations of the community programme.

Mr. Tom King: I have asked the Manpower Services Commission to expand the community programme by a further 100,000 places by June next year. At that rate it will then be providing some 300,000 places on the programme in a full year.

Mr. Hirst: I thank my right hon. Friend for his reply and assure him that it will be warmly welcomed in the west of Scotland. What will be the geographical disposition of the extra places? If there is a surplus of unfilled vacancies in parts of England, will my right hon. Friend be prepared to allocate them to other parts of the United Kingdom where there is unfilled demand?

Mr. King: I am aware of the point that my hon. Friend makes. I can confirm that, because I have written a letter to the MSC asking it to consider ways in which the programme could be expanded. We shall be giving consideration to just those points, and to the fairest method of allocation of those additional places. I am sure that the whole House supports the expansion of the community programme. There may be differences about the extent to which it can be expanded, but it is widely welcomed, and we are anxious to see how effective we can make it in helping the long-term unemployed.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is the Secretary of State aware that I have been a consistent advocate of the community programme in the northern region, particularly Cumbria, over the past few years? Will he assure me that the county of Cumbria, particularly west Cumbria, which includes my constituency, will receive a substantial increase in the number of community places?

Mr. King: I am aware that the hon. Gentleman has taken as close an interest as any hon. Member in the programme. His criticism has been that he wants more places; it has not been of the programme itself. He will not expect me to reply in detail to the points that he made. We are not yet able to say what the exact allocation will be, but I take note of the points that he raises.

Ms. Richardson: Does the Secretary of State accept that nobody will believe that the Government intend to expand the community programe unless they withdraw the change in the rules that deliberately excludes married women from the community programme? Does he agree that that is simply massaging the figures? Does not the House agree that, as the Equal Opportunities Commission suggests, it is illegal?

Mr. King: Inadvertently, the hon. Lady was not correct in what she said. Of course, the scheme is limited to benefit recipients. The hon. Lady may say that that may tend to disadvantage married women, but it does not exclude married women per se from the scheme, as the

hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) will tell her. The difficulty is that there are not as many places as people would like on the community programme. My hon. Friend the Minister of State and I had to try to find a determinant of greatest need. That was how we determined benefit recipients in this case.

Sir Anthony Meyer: The expansion of this excellent programme is most welcome, but will my right hon. Friend consider allowing more flexibility in the period for which people may work in it and the length of time for which elderly workers have to be unemployed before they qualify for a place?

Mr. King: We do not propose any major changes in the rules at this stage, but I note the points raised by my hon. Friend. We have already announced two developments which I hope will be helpful. We are anxious that the programme should be expanded in the most effective way so that it will genuinely help the long-term unemployed.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that restricting the period of employment to one year bears excessively heavily on voluntary bodies which use the programme to continue their project administration? Will he consider widening the rules so that such bodies can keep people in employment and continue their management projects?

Mr. King: I note that point, which has been raised with me before. I understand that exceptions have been made in certain cases, but we will certainly consider the matter again.

Skillcentres

5. **Mr. Kenneth Carlisle** asked the Secretary of State for Employment whether, following the reorganisation of skillcentres, more training will be provided locally where the skills are needed.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Yes, Sir. For example, we plan that in Lincolnshire the number of people being trained will more than double next year.

Mr. Carlisle: I welcome that news, but does my hon. Friend accept that it is important to make good training available where people live and work and that effective training is an essential arm in the battle against unemployment? In organising this substantial expansion, will he consult locally to ensure that training really meets local needs?

Mr. Morrison: I assure my hon. Friend that the greatly increased number of places that will be available for adult training and retraining will involve local consultation with industrialists and trade unions. I am delighted to see from the Labour party document that the Opposition also want a big expansion. Their problem is that that great expansion cannot be achieved without the reorganisation of the skillcentre network.

Mr. Eastman: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the Select Committee on Employment has been pursuing an extended inquiry into skill shortages and has found that the Confederation of British Industry is not playing its part in providing funding and skills training compared with the position in Germany and America? When will the Government put pressure on the CBI to spend some money on providing the skills that it needs?

Mr. Morrison: I have made it clear, not just to the CBI but to all employers, that it is principally their duty to provide funding for training. I shall continue to reinforce that message. I am glad that the hon. Gentleman joins me in that.

Mr. Whitfield: Does my hon. Friend agree that the chambers of commerce have an important part to play in the provision of training? Does he further agree that the Kirklees and Wakefield chamber of commerce is to be commended on the fact that it has its own training company which has provided no fewer than 800 places in that area? Should not other chambers of commerce be encouraged to do likewise?

Mr. Morrison: I am aware that that particular chamber of commerce plays a significant part in new training schemes, as do others throughout the country. That achievement certainly deserves congratulation and encouragement.

Mr. Colvin: Will my hon. Friend confirm that in the reorganisation each skillcentre will be dealt with on merit? If so, should not the Millbrook annex which serves my constituency, come off his hit list, first, because it is full, secondly, because it offers today's rather than yesterday's skills, and, thirdly, because it is extremely well supported by local industry?

Mr. Morrison: My hon. Friend and others came to see me about this matter. As my hon. Friend knows, officials of the Manpower Services Commission and the Skillcentre Training Agency are discussing with local employers the position with regard to that particular annex.

Job Release Scheme

6. **Mr. Woodall** asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to extend the scope of the job release scheme.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Alan Clark): As I announced to the House on 15 March, changes to the part-time job release scheme will be introduced from 29 April to make it more attractive to both employers and employees. The rules will be more flexible and a grant of £840 will be payable to an employer supporting a successful application for part-time job release.

Mr. Woodall: Does the Minister not agree that increasing the age of eligibility for men from 62 to 64 was a grave mistake, in view of the Government's insistence that unemployment should not be the only option for young people and the fact that they are presiding over record dole queues? Would it not be better to allow men aged 62 and over to take early release so that jobs could be made available for young people who hitherto have not had a chance under the Government?

Mr. Clark: All our special measures are governed by judgments about priorities and about where the emphasis should best be placed. That is why we have introduced and improved the part-time scheme, which covers the very age groups to which the hon. Gentleman rightly considers we should give consideration.

Mr. Latham: Will my hon. Friend keep this matter carefully under review? Many of my hon. Friends believe

that improvement of the scheme goes very well with expansion of the community programme and the YTS, as it will ultimately help young people to get jobs.

Mr. Clark: I appreciate my hon. Friend's concern. Reducing the age makes it less easy to monitor the replacement condition, which is one of the most important aspects of the scheme if the taxpayer is to get good value.

Mr. Canavan: As this incompetent Government have increased unemployment by 73 per cent., will the Minister consider extending the job release scheme to the entire Tory Cabinet?

Mr. Clark: I shall not be drawn on the question of reshuffles. However, I believe that not many members of the Cabinet fulfil the age criteria for the scheme.

Single Persons (Income)

7. **Mr. Ron Davies** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the average growth in real income for a single person on 60 per cent. average national income for each of the last five years for which information is available.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: For a single adult on 60 per cent. of the average national gross weekly earnings of all adult male employees, real take-home earnings, that is real earnings after deducting tax and national insurance, have increased by 5 per cent. over the past five financial years.

Mr. Davies: I hope that the Minister takes no comfort from those figures. In Wales, some 34 per cent. of households have an income that is 60 per cent. or less than the Welsh average. Given that Wales has one of the highest levels of unemployment—20 per cent.—are not claims that only wage moderation will produce more jobs not only pious but offensive and divisive?

Mr. Bottomley: The hon. Gentleman will agree that there is the greatest moral case for lifting people's incomes by getting them into work. Secondly, he will also agree that if we can avoid increasing nominal gross earnings by six times the rate of real income increase from employment, we shall find ourselves with more jobs rather than fewer, because the figures show that earnings have risen six times faster than real take-home pay.

Labour Statistics

8. **Mr. Proctor** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what is the current level of employment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tom King: The employed labour force in Great Britain increased by 342,000 between September 1983 and September 1984 to 23,494,000.

Mr. Proctor: Does my right hon. Friend agree that greater attention should be paid to the number of people who are in work and the increase in their numbers as well as to the number of those who, unfortunately, cannot get work?

Mr. King: It is true that, contrary to the experience of the previous three years, in the past year we have seen an encouraging improvement in the number of people in work. Our ambition now—reinforced by the measures announced in the Budget—will be to see that rate accelerating in the year ahead. I am somewhat encouraged by the measures that we have announced and the further measures that we are taking. This is the only major industrial country in western Europe in which the number of people at work increased last year.

Mr. Foot: The Secretary of State asks us to take encouragement from the number of those in work and to concentrate on those figures. Does he realise that chart 5 on page 7 of the employment paper which he published last week contains the employment figures over the years and shows that the best period for civilian employment was between 1974 and 1979? Those are the very years in which Labour was said not to be working. Will the right hon. Gentleman now give us an apology, or perhaps ask for his money back from Saatchi and Saatchi?

Mr. King: I think that the right hon. Gentleman has just warmly endorsed our policy of putting the facts before the nation. There are important facts to be understood about both employment and unemployment in this country.

Mr. Baldry: Does my right hon. Friend agree that we can win more jobs only if Britain wins a greater share of world trade? That means British industry and British commerce being more competitive.

Mr. King: I certainly endorse what my hon. Friend has said. However, I believe that we are winning the argument. I was pleased to hear even the Leader of the Opposition say today that of course jobs depend on customers. If we are getting that message across, even to the slowest of Opposition minds, we are at last making progress.

Mr. James Hamilton: Will the Secretary of State concede that since the Conservative party came to power there has been a record number of bankruptcies? Will he now take some lessons from his senior colleagues, and from the right hon. Gentleman who spoke after the Budget statement, who made it crystal clear that unless the Government changed their policies there would be no hope for the unemployed? Will he learn this lesson from his colleagues?

Mr. King: I am not sure whether the hon. Gentleman was referring to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. If so, it should be noted that although the Budget did not receive universal acclaim, I cannot recall any other Budget that was followed so quickly by two reductions in interest rates and by the sharpest improvement in the value of our currency to succeed any Budget.

Sir Kenneth Lewis: Does my right hon. Friend agree that as the new technologies will get rid of as many—if not more—jobs as they create, we should take an imaginative look at the way in which we can make more jobs available? It is time that we thought, for example, about reducing the retirement age of some workers and doing away with large-scale overtime such as occurs in the Post Office, and which is the cause of the present dispute.

Mr. King: I note what my hon. Friend says, and his point about overtime is very relevant. In the current dispute, it would be interesting to know whether those who profess such concern about unemployment are prepared to adopt a more sensible approach to levels of overtime and to give more encouragement to part-time working.

Mr. Prescott: May I make it clear to the Secretary of State that many of us think it absolutely contemptible that he could produce a White Paper on employment without making a statement to the House about it. In the interests of truth, will the right hon. Gentleman confirm the latest figures produced by the Central Statistical Office, which show that during the last five years of the Labour Government there was an increase in jobs of 315,000, which compares with a loss of 1·8 million jobs during the five years of a Tory Administration? Does he accept that for every new job created by the Labour Government, six jobs have been lost by this Tory Administration? That shows that it is a deliberate part of this Government's policy to create mass unemployment.

Mr. King: The hon. Gentleman asked about making a statement to the House. I should make the situation clear, because no discourtesy was in any way intended. I have just checked the record. There have been 20 White Papers in the past year: five have been accompanied by statements and 15 have been published without it being thought necessary to make a parliamentary statement, although there may have been debates and discussions on them. I confess that when I was a Back Bencher I was one of the considerable number of hon. Members who preferred to have a chance to read a White Paper before jumping to instant comment. I make that quite clear. I thought that the announcement of the Opposition's new campaign would herald a rather more intelligent discussion of the unemployment problem in this country. The hon. Gentleman knows that we have lost a very substantial number of jobs and that I have discussed those losses on more occasions than I care to recall. I hope that he can raise the standard of debate, because it does no service to the unemployed if we debate unemployment in abusive terms of that kind.

Public Limited Companies (Employee Involvement)

9. **Mr. Bruce** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he is taking to monitor the operation of section 1 of the Employment Act 1982 requiring public limited companies to include employee involvement statements in their annual reports.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department has been analysing reports from a large number of companies. I shall report the outcome to the House. Some reports seen so far are disappointing, but many bear out recent research evidence that employee involvement arrangements in companies are varied and widespread.

Mr. Bruce: In view of the mixed reaction so far to the Government's analysis, will the Minister tell the House what steps the Government propose to take to ensure that companies comply with the terms of the Act, and whether they propose to make a statement on employee involvement?

Mr. Bottomley: The hon. Gentleman will have to wait until the first analysis is published by the Government. Other institutions are also carrying out analyses. However, I can help the hon. Gentleman, and the companies, by saying that the aim of section 1 is to make sure that employees systematically get information that is of concern to them, that they or their representatives are consulted on a regular basis, that employee involvement is encouraged by employee share schemes or by other means and to achieve a common awareness on the part of all employees of the financial and economic factors affecting the performance of the company. Any company that believes it does not need such involvement needs to think again.

Mr. Janner: If the Minister accepts the principle that industrial democracy is necessary for this country, and if it is recognised that section 1 of the Act is hopelessly inadequate, do the Government intend to continue to block the draft fifth directive of the European Community?

Mr. Bottomley: The hon. and learned Gentleman will know that the Government are opposed in principle to inflexible prescriptive legislation on employee involvement. We are very much in favour of employee involvement and workplace participation, but we believe that it can be better achieved by means of voluntary, varied arrangements.

Mr. Penhaligon: May I remind the House that the amendment to this Act was forced upon the Government by an alliance Member of the House of Lords? Our impression is that the Government's heart is not in this matter, in that they are merely making inquiries and are not demanding that companies fulfil the legislation that was passed by this House.

Mr. Bottomley: The whole House acknowledges, I believe, the debt that it owes to Lord Rochester for pushing this forward and will also acknowledge that the Government have taken it on board. My role, and my keen interest, is to foster employee involvement so that companies prosper, employees share in that prosperity and more people who at present are out of work come into work.

Lambeth

10. **Mr. John Fraser** asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many people are currently unemployed in Lambeth or on youth training or similar schemes.

Mr. Peter Morrison: On 14 February there were 25,458 unemployed claimants in the borough of Lambeth. Nine hundred and eighty young people are currently receiving training under the youth training scheme and some 1,300 more people are benefiting from other employment measures.

Mr. Fraser: Does the Minister realise what a strain unemployment at that level throws on a community? Can he tell us when the Government's and the Prime Minister's economic and social policies will have reached such a high degree of success that they will be able to restore unemployment to the figure of 14,000 at which it stood at the time of the Brixton riots and the Scarman inquiry?

Mr. Morrison: I think the hon. Gentleman would be better advised to address that question to the Lambeth borough council, which deliberately does not wish to participate in the community programme that has been provided for all the long-term unemployed in Lambeth.

Mr. Rowe: As somebody who until comparatively recently lived in Lambeth, may I point out to my hon. Friend that had it not been for the constant and rapid rate increases in Lambeth a great many of the enterprises which could be providing jobs would still be there?

Mr. Morrison: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. During the course of the last two years the rates have more

than doubled in Lambeth. That is bound to have an effect on businesses coming into that borough and therefore is bound to have a bad effect on job opportunities for those who live in the borough.

Wages Inspectors

11. **Mr. Sean Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any new plans to increase the number of wages inspectors.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No, Sir.

Mr. Hughes: Will the adoption of either of the two options in the consultative paper on wages councils result in a reduction in the number of wages inspectors employed?

Mr. Bottomley: The hon. Gentleman and the House will do better to wait until the consultation period is over and the Government announce their intention.

Mr. Thurnham: When my hon. Friend considers the future of wages councils, will he bear in mind that it is not just younger workers, but older workers, who want the opportunity to enter the job market free of all restrictions?

Mr. Bottomley: I think the House will accept that, whatever decision is taken, in the end there will be a conflict of interest between those out of work who might be offered and be able to accept employment and those in employment who want as much protection as they can reasonably have.

Ms. Clare Short: Will the Minister admit that since 1979 the Government have deliberately and significantly cut the number of wages inspectors to encourage employers to pay illegally low rates as part of their strategy of pretending to create jobs while attacking the lowest paid people in Britain, showing that they respect only the laws that they favour?

Mr. Bottomley: No, Sir.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Evans** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 2 April.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I had meetings wth ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I hope to attend a dinner given by Her Majesty the Queen.

Mr. Evans: During the course of her busy day, will the Prime Minister take the opportunity to rebut the argument proposed by many of her hon. Friends that wages councils should be abolished so that the unemployed can be priced back into work at the expense of some of the lowest wage earners in the land? Does the Prime Minister accept that that argument is immoral and impudent as well as Luddite?

The Prime Minister: No, Mr. Speaker. The hon. Gentleman will perhaps be aware that the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development in its report on employment outlook in September 1984 said:

"Increases in relative youth wages appear to have reduced their employment in a number of countries."

Moreover, I fail to see what the hon. Gentleman is complaining about on our policy on wages councils, because the previous Labour Government abolished the road haulage wages council in 1978.

Mr. Gerald Howarth: Has my right hon. Friend read the report in the *Daily Telegraph* to the effect that in its attempt to indoctrinate our children ILEA's aparatchiks are ordering the removal from school libraries of books such as "Robinson Crusoe", which is imperialist and "Jane Eyre" which is sexist? In deploring that witch hunt, will my right hon. Friend agree that girls helping their mums and boys helping their dads is as natural as pictures showing Socialists in opposition and Tories in government?

The Prime Minister: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Kinnock: At the so-called rates summit at Chequers last Sunday did the Prime Minister and her colleagues give their attention to the Audit Commission's report, the views of the Tory-controlled Association of County Councils or the British Chambers of Commerce, all of whom conclude that the biggest single factor accounting for the doubling in the rates burden in the period that she has been in office is her systematic and continuous series of cuts in the rate support grant?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman forgets that the rate support grant also comes from taxes levied on people and businesses, and businesses are hit both ways. Therefore, the important thing is to hold a severe restraint on public expenditure.

Mr. Kinnock: The Prime Minister's answer makes it clear that last weekend's affair at Chequers had much more to do with trying to ease political pressures on her Government from irate Tories in Scotland and the forthcoming county council elections than with easing burdens of taxation of any kind on the families and businesses of Britain. Will she now, with all that performance, promise to abolish the rates again? If she does so, who will believe her, especially when she has ratted comprehensively on those undertakings twice in the past 11 years?

The Prime Minister: Last week's seminar on rates —*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask the House to hear the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister: Last week's seminar on rates was to review the work of the review of local government finance announced last October by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. With regard to the 1974 election, which, as the right hon. Gentleman reminds me, this party lost and his party won, may I point out a promise in the 1974 Labour manifesto, to the effect that prescription charges would be abolished, a promise which the Labour Government never fulfilled.

Mr. Fry: Despite the claim of the Opposition, will my right hon. Friend accept that her determination to reform the rating system will have massive support throughout the country, particularly if this leads to an ending of the inequality whereby many on low incomes have to pay and many on high incomes do not pay at all?

The Prime Minister: Yes, the rating system is an inequitable system. It will take a great step to reform it, and it will be very complicated, but we hope to bring forward proposals to do just that.

Mr. Steel: Has the Prime Minister read reports this morning that the Westinghouse corporation in America is claiming to have the contract for the Sizewell reactor in the bag? Does she agree that that rather prejudices the report of the inspector, and will she give the House an assurance that the Government are not prejudging the issue in any way?

The Prime Minister: We had this question some months ago when the Central Electricity Generating Board informed the Sizewell inquiry, last year, that it had placed the contract for the primary circuit for Sizewell B with Westinghouse. This contract involves a firm commitment for the design phase only. If the right hon. Gentleman recalls my reply then, I said that it was necessary to do that to keep open the possibility of developing Sizewell, should planning permission be given. In fact, the CEGB estimates that 93 per cent. of the total cost of Sizewell B will be placed in the United Kingdom, should planning permission be given.

Q2. **Mr. Skinner** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 2 April.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Skinner: Is the Prime Minister aware that in the east midlands since she came to power there have been 2,080 bankruptcies? Why is it, if she is prepared not to lift a finger for them, that she, together with the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Bank of England, can bail out Johnston Matthey Bankers to the tune of £75 million of taxpayers' money? Is there one law for the bankers and another for the rest? Will she give a guarantee that the report of the inquiry into this squalid deal will be published, or will there be a cover-up for the bankers and an amnesty?

The Prime Minister: I hope that Johnston Matthey will eventually be returned to the private sector. In the meantime, I remind the hon. Gentleman that he supported a strike designed to put many people out of work and many firms into bankruptcy.

Sir David Price: In considering the future of the rating system, will my right hon. Friend bear in mind the wise words of the Layfield committee, that whoever is responsible for spending money should also be responsible for raising it so that the amount of expenditure is subject to democratic control?

The Prime Minister: Yes, Mr. Speaker. The fact is that the rating system is not a true democratic system, as most of the electorate do not pay rates and therefore there is not proper accountability.

Q3. **Mr. Flannery** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 2 April.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Flannery: When will the Prime Minister stop answering like a latter-day Marie Antoinette? *[Interruption.]* When will she realise that the game is up —*[Interruption.]*—and that her reliance on blind market forces has resulted in an overturn of the opinion polls, the details of which, I trust, she has seen today? Is it not a fact that the jingoism of the Falklands has worn off and that the realities of economic life have now brought into play some powerful figures, who are opposing her, on the Benches behind her? Is she aware that the postmen are lined up against her—*[Interruption.]*—as are the teachers——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I trust that the hon. Member will be brief.

Mr. Flannery: I have had only one minute so far, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Yes, but the hon. Member has such long pauses.

Mr. Flannery: Is the right hon. Lady aware that a vote for the Conservative party is clearly a vote for industrial action, because the policies that the Government are pursuing are driving people to extremes, so that inevitably the fight back will come?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman talks of industrial action. He will recall that those who were recently called on to take industrial action did not have the chance to cast a vote in a ballot under Socialism. As for his remarks about opinion polls, I remind him that we are about 8 per cent. better than we were in 1981. If that continues until 1988, the game will be up for the hon. Gentleman not for me.

Mr. Cockeram: Does my right hon. Friend share the view that was expressed by the Governor of the Bank of England to a Committee of this House last night that lower interest rates are not a high priority? Or does she share the view of the CBI, of many on the Tory Back Benches, and others, that lower interest rates have a key role to play in investment decisions?

The Prime Minister: Yes, Sir. The Governor of the Bank of England, the Chancellor of the Exchequer and all Members of Her Majesty's Government agree that interest rates have a key role to play.

An Hon. Member: The Governor is not in the Government.

The Prime Minister: I specified the Governor of the Bank of England separately. *[Interruption.]* I am sorry that that remark should cause such hilarity on the rather silly Opposition Benches. My hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow (Mr. Cockeram) will be aware that no chances must be taken with inflation. Interest rates will be held at whatever level is needed to maintain monetary conditions that will continue to bring inflation down.

Q4. **Mr. Bidwell** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 2 April.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Bidwell: Is the right hon. Lady aware that a big lobby is taking place today about the Transport Bill and the effect that it may have on bus workers and bus services in general? Is she aware of the deep apprehension that exists among the members of my union, the Transport and General Workers Union, about their pensions, wages and conditions of service as a result of this crazy Bill? Will she please go into Central Lobby and try to allay their fears?

The Prime Minister: The Transport Bill is an excellent measure. *[Interruption.]* In the past, subsidies have gone

up enormously while the number of passengers and services have gone down. We hope that services will go up, as they have in the pilot scheme that we have run in several areas.

Q5. **Mr. Nicholas Winterton** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 2 April.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Winterton: Bearing in mind the tremendous impetus that my right hon. Friend has given to industry and employment through the Budget and the encouragement that she has given to industry and domestic ratepayers with the announced intention of the reform of the rating system, may I ask her to give a categorical assurance that the manufacturing base of this country is vital to the Government and that she will do everything in her power to ensure that its present position is not just maintained, but is expanded?

The Prime Minister: The manufacturing base is vital to this country. My hon. Friend will have seen the CBI survey, which has just been released. The CBI expects growth to rise to 4 per cent. in 1985. It expects manufacturing output to rise a further 3·75 per cent. this year; it expects manufacturing investment to grow by a further 13·5 per cent. in 1985; and it expects further growth in the very high volume of exports that we had in 1984. That was good news and has silenced even the Opposition.

Q6. **Mr. Ray Powell** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 2 April.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave a few moments ago.

Mr. Powell: The Prime Minister made many references in the House in October to her support for the NACODS agreement that was then drawn up. Will she now ensure that the NACODS agreement is carried out by the person whom she appointed to the chairmanship of the National Coal Board? At least then it will have the agreement that was negotiated in October last year.

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy yesterday made it perfectly clear that the National Coal Board stands by the NACODS agreement and looks forward to further discussions on it.

Mr. Pavitt: On a point of order arising out of Question Time, Mr. Speaker. Is it possible for the Prime Minister to put the record straight and to say that the 1974 commitment was to phase out prescription charges, and in fact 3 million——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is now seeking to do what the whole House is against — to prolong Question Time by raising points of order.

European Council

3.32 pm

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the European Council held in Brussels on 29 and 30 March, at which I was accompanied by my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary. I have arranged for the conclusions of the Council to be placed in the Library of the House.

The European Council effectively completed the negotiations for the entry of Spain and Portugal into the European Community. The treaty of accession will soon be submitted to the 12 national Parliaments for ratification, opening the way for the entry of Spain and Portugal on 1 January 1986.

The terms are very satisfactory for the United Kingdom. In particular, there will be quicker dismantling by Spain in the early years of its high tariffs on certain industrial goods, including cars, to the benefit of the United Kingdom exporters. There will be no detriment to our fishing industry, no reductions in the important quotas available to British fishermen and no new access for Spanish fishing boats to the North Sea fishing grounds. There will be a full opportunity for the House to consider these points when the act of accession is presented for ratification.

The European Council also agreed on the financing of what are called integrated Mediterranean programmes over a period of seven years to help the Mediterranean member states adjust to the effects of enlargement on their own economies. A total additional amount of 1·6 billion ecu—about £950 million—will be made available for these programmes.

As a result of the Fontainebleau agreement, the United Kingdom financing share will be some 7 per cent.—less than £10 million a year. The poorer Mediterranean areas will also benefit from the structural funds and from 2·5 billion ecu of loans from the European Investment Bank.

We had a full discussion of the economic situation, with particular reference to the creation of enterprise and jobs and the achievement of a single large market by 1992. In the course of this I proposed, first, that the European Council should cut the burden of bureaucracy on businesses by reducing the number of existing Community rules and regulations, and should scrutinise any proposed new Community legislation with regard to its effect on business. Secondly, we were all greatly concerned to moderate labour costs and remove restrictive practices, especially with regard to new technology.

The United Kingdom's initiative was widely welcomed in the European council and is reflected in the conclusions. The Commission has been asked to follow it through.

We also broadly endorsed the first report of the Committee on Citizens' Europe. This contains a number of specific proposals for easier movement across frontiers, higher travellers' allowances, right of residence linked to proof of adequate resources, easier arrangements for road transport and mutual recognition of qualifications—all of them designed to bring advantages to individual citizens.

With regard to frontiers, I made absolutely clear the need to maintain strong controls against drugs, terrorism and illegal immigration and also that the completion of the single internal market does not imply tax harmonisation.

The Council agreed the text of the revised decision on the own resources of the Community, and I am arranging for copies to be made available in the Library. It will be submitted to national Parliaments for ratification. The text provides for new own resources generally to be available from 1 January 1986. It also puts into law the Fontainebleau arrangements for abating the United Kingdom's contributions by reducing the amount of VAT paid to the Community. It includes the United Kingdom's 1,000 million ecu abatement for 1984, which will become available after ratification of this decision and without waiting for any general increase in the Community's own resources.

The European Council discussed the measures to strengthen technology in the Community, in particular through mutual recognition of industrial standards and the opening up of public procurement to competitive tender from firms across the Community.

We also discussed East-West relations, welcoming the opening of the Geneva negotiations, and exchanged views on the middle east, Latin America and South Africa, where we expressed grave concern about recent events.

This European Council marks the conclusion of a period of important decisions in the European Community — agreement on the entry of Spain and Portugal; agreement on the implementation of the favourable budgetary arrangements for the United Kingdom negotiated at Fontainebleau; agreement on the integrated mediterranean programmes; progress on the environment, including the recent agreement on vehicle emissions; and the launching of an initiative truly to open up the Common Market and to reduce the burdens on business as a means of stimulating the creation of more jobs.

It is a particular source of satisfaction to us all that 40 years after the end of the second world war the European Community has further demonstrated in this impressive way its capacity to resolve its problems and move forward in a spirit of partnership and co-operation.

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): First, I welcome the enlargement of the European Economic Community membership with the accession of the newest European democracies of Spain and Portugal, especially as the pressures generated by that enlargement must surely bring the consequence of radical reform of the Common Market.

Secondly, I endorse the Prime Minister's view that any proposals to dismantle border controls must be resisted so that we can retain that vital means of combating terrorism and drug trafficking.

As the Prime Minister has failed to use the British veto either to control our contributions or to restrict the growth of the agricultural budget, will she now specify the sorts of occasion on which she will use it to protect the interests of this country — can we now assume that she has thrown away the veto?

Does the right hon. Lady admit that, however necessary the extra aid to the poor Mediterranean countries, the programme will involve the redeployment of regional and other funds away from Britain? As half of the Common Market's 15 poorest regions are now in the United Kingdom, why did she not press for a similar programme of help for Britain's stricken areas?

As the Prime Minister appears to have approved the inter-governmental agreement, will she confirm that it involves no switch in budget spending away from the 74 per cent. of the budget that goes to the common

agricultural policy? Against that background, will she tell us why she has allowed the development aid budget to be cut in real terms while the agricultural programme—including food mountains — continues to grow remorselessly?

About 14 million people in Common Market countries are out of work and two out of five of them are under 25 years of age. Why has the summit yet again done nothing tangible to give those people help in getting jobs? Does the Prime Minister agree that the European Council would be better engaged planning jobs than discussing common passports and other gimmicks such as the so-called citizen's Europe?

The Prime Minister: I welcome what the right hon. Gentleman has said about enlargement and border controls. Prices under the agriculture budget are subject to majority voting and not unanimous voting. Only if a fundamental national interest is involved does the Luxembourg compromise come into play. We are not, therefore, able to exercise a veto on all agriculture pricing matters. *[Interruption.]* There was no need to use a veto on Spain. It was Greece which attempted to use a veto on Spain and we managed to overcome that by making reasonable arrangements.

Britain has done well out of the social and regional structural funds. The special arrangements under the integrated Mediterranean programme come from the increases in structural funds. It was made clear in the communiqué that the fundamental rules which govern the structural funds will continue to be the criteria.

We examined development aid, particularly in relation to African countries, and a report will be issued shortly. We came to the joint conclusion that sufficient food is being sent and that the real need is to ensure efficient distribution.

Sir Anthony Meyer (Clwyd, North-West): Is my right hon. Friend aware that, welcome though the entry of Spain and Portugal is, it strengthens the need for effective means of decision making within the Community? As my right hon. Friend said, the use of the veto must henceforth be restricted to when major national interests are at stake.

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. The veto can be used only in those circumstances. We have had occasion to use it, but the future of these matters will be considered in the debate on the Dooge committee in June. My hon. Friend knows our position. We shall not agree to any change in the treaty on these matters. It should stay exactly the same.

Mr. Roy Jenkins (Glasgow, Hillhead): May I endorse the view implicit in the Prime Minister's statement that this is our most successful European Council, for which a great deal of the credit, as on previous occasions, belongs to the Italian Presidency? Does the right hon. Lady agree that if the entry of Spain and Portugal had been delayed it would have spelt disaster for the whole Community? Does she also agree that, since no further candidates are likely, the Community can finally settle down with a membership of 12 for some time? In those circumstances, how does the right hon. Lady intend to improve the decision-making process? Does she recognise that wanting a reformed and changed Community—as I believe that she and her Government do—unanimity in a Community of 12 is a recipe for inaction and not for change?

The Prime Minister: I think it likely that 12 will be the limit of the Community for a very long time. The treaty provides for unanimity on certain crucial issues. The treaty must continue, since I think that on most issues it is important for debate to continue until unanimity is achieved.

On majority voting, the tendency has been to go to unanimity even on matters such as standards which require only a majority vote for agreement. Where majority voting is possible we can act without unanimity if most countries vote in favour and a small minority abstain.

Sir Anthony Kershaw (Stroud): I congratulate my right hon. Friend upon three years of sterling work in Europe, the result of which has been greatly to the advantage of the United Kingdom and Europe itself. Does she agree that it is time to press on as fast as possible with the breaking down of barriers to trade before enlargement? After that takes place, things will become much more glutinous and accordingly more difficult to move.

The Prime Minister: One of the comparatively difficult issues to negotiate with Spain was changes in industrial tariffs. It was vital to the United Kingdom to achieve a reduction in Spain's industrial tariffs and to secure the main part of it in the early part of the transitional period. That has now been achieved, and it would be greatly to the advantage of our car industry if it were achieved. I agree that it is important to break down any further barrier to trade within the Community and to complete the Common Market in internal services.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): The Prime Minister did not mention the much reported 30-minute meeting that she had with the Taoiseach. To dispel what must be misplaced rumours, what is afoot?

The Prime Minister: There was a brief communiqué issued after our meeting. We had a comparatively short meeting. It was held in the margins and was not part of the European Council. There is nothing further to report. The position is exactly as it was after the Chequers communiqué.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Will my right hon. Friend comment on what the EEC will do about Japanese trade, bearing in mind that the United States of America is finding, as we are, that the Japanese have pillaged much of its industry and its hopes? Are we to act with America in ensuring that at least the Japanese go in for fair competition by opening their country to our products, or are we to sit by in Europe and America while the Japanese grow fruitful and we grow bare?

The Prime Minister: This matter will be considered at the Bonn economic summit. My hon. Friend knows that there is a certain number of voluntary agreements between industries in the United Kingdom and Japanese industries on cars and certain machine tools. One of the fundamental difficulties is that the Japanese people are not as ready to purchase foreign goods as the British people, who are accustomed to doing so. We are constantly in discussions with the Japanese on how they can and should open up their markets further to exports from other countries. No one can expect to export to the whole world unless he is prepared similarly to open his markets.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): Bearing in mind the concern which was expressed at the Council about drug

[Mr. Tom Clarke]

trafficking, is the Prime Minister aware of the unanimous view of the Civil Service unions that the reduction in the number of customs officers has been unhelpful? Does she agree that member countries should be doing far more in allocating resources to deal with this problem?

The Prime Minister: An additional 60 customs officers were put on drug matters, followed by a further 100. We now have 160 extra customs officers tracking down the drugs as they come in. They had a record year last year in the amount that they discovered. Nevertheless, drugs remain one of our most serious problems. I was concerned that if we had only a few checks at borders in the Common Market we might be preventing ourselves from checking the movement of drugs. I made the observation that certain things must be checked at the borders, and it was well received.

Mr. Terence Higgins (Worthing): Why do we continue to make advances of own resources before they are legally due?

The Prime Minister: They are legally due on 1 January. This was to help Britain, possibly among others, to get its 1,000 million ecu refund this year by a deduction in the amount of VAT that would be payable in future and not by having to go through the previous arrangements with the European Parliament.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent): Does the Prime Minister recall that the Commission's President urged wealthy countries to pay more to help the poor nations of the EEC? That obviously included us. Is the right hon. Lady aware that the Chancellor of the Exchequer is undermining our claim for European funds by his bogus party political claim that Britain is no longer the sick man of Europe, especially in view of the fact that our wealthiest and relatively more prosperous area—the south-east—is, in terms of income per head, below the national average?

The Prime Minister: I doubt very much whether the right hon. Gentleman would wish us to compete for resources with Portugal, Greece and certain parts of Italy. With regard to the financing of Mediterranean programmes for some of those countries, we shall be paying 7 per cent., but Germany will be paying 33 per cent. and France 27 per cent. All told, we have a reasonably good deal. I should have hoped that Opposition Members would be prepared to help poorer countries and to help Portugal which, after all, rose up and asked for its country back from the Communists who threatened it.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): Will my right hon. Friend explain how the fishing agreement with Spain is not to the detriment of our fishermen when the number of Spanish fishing boats in the western approaches to Cornwall will increase and Spain's hake quota will more than double? Given those increases, what steps will we take to increase our policing to ensure that there is no wholesale increase in cheating by Spain?

The Prime Minister: I said in my statement that there will be no detriment to our fishing industry. There will be no reductions in the important quotas that are available to British fishermen and no new access for Spanish fishing boats to the North sea fishing block. I think that I am right in saying that we do not take up our full amount of hake. To let the Spanish have a larger quota of hake will, therefore, not affect our fishermen. I think that, on the whole, the hon. Gentleman will find that this is a very good fishing agreement. The fisheries protection fleet will continue to keep its normal careful watch on overseas vessels.

Mr. Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): In dealing with enlargement, which is very much to be welcomed, the Prime Minister stressed throughout her statement that the terms were not just satisfactory but "very" satisfactory to the United Kingdom. Does she agree that, if enlargement is to work, Spain and especially Portugal, where poverty is marked and which threw off the yoke of Salazar, rather than the Communist party, should be treated with not just political understanding but economic generosity? That is very important. Is the North sea agreement permanent or transitional?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman will remember that, well after Salazar, Portugal was nearly taken over by the Communists and it could have stayed a Communist country. Due to the great bravery of the Portuguese people, Portugal was rescued from that for democracy. *[Interruption.]* I am sorry that the Opposition do not appreciate the fantastic efforts made by the Portuguese people.

Spanish vessels will be subject to strict limits on the number of boats, permitting 150 to fish at any one time. There are strict reporting and monitoring requirements. Spanish vessels will have access only to those species controlled by the TAC and the quota under the common fisheries policy for which Spain receives quotas under the EC—Spain fisheries agreement—hake, monk, megrim and anchovy. Spanish vessels will not have access to the North sea. Those measures are to endure for the full duration of the common fisheries policy—to the year 2002.

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): Is my right hon. Friend aware that much of the disillusionment in this country with the Common Market is due to the great disparity between its aims and the realities? The internal market is choked by national restrictions and internal air fares are outrageously high. Will my right hon. Friend devote all her considerable gifts and energy to making real progress on these matters before 1992?

The Prime Minister: One of our objectives is effectively to complete the internal market. I agree with my hon. Friend that that is not yet complete, as clearly there are a number of non-tariff barriers operating, and we are far from completing an internal market in services. I agree with him that air fares are one of the matters with which we have had difficulty. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport has been successful in negotiating much cheaper fares on a bilateral basis, in particular, to Holland and Luxembourg. We have set the year 1992 for the completion of an effective internal market.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Bearing in mind the Government's well-known policy for the reduction of taxation and expenditure within the United Kingdom to the pain of the people of this country and of her party, is it not anomalous that expenditure and taxation within the EC are increasing?

The Prime Minister: With the agreement that we have obtained, the amount that we shall be spending and that will be going towards Europe is less now than it would have been if we did not have the Fontainebleau agreement.

Mr. John Mark Taylor (Solihull): Does my right hon. Friend accept that many of us on the Conservative Benches are pleased with the result of the European Council and her role, but may we none the less have a word of reassurance about the position and role of the Gibraltarians?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend is aware, the border between Gibraltar and Spain was fully opened a short time ago. That was absolutely necessary to enable the enlargement to go ahead. The position of Gibraltar is protected.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On the discussions on latin America to which the Prime Minister referred in her statement, can she give us the names of those countries that supported her attitude towards President Alfonsin?

The Prime Minister: I cannot remember the particular name or the country being mentioned in our discussions.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that one of the reasons why she was in favour of the accession of Spain and Portugal was her belief that thereby she would support democratic government in Spain and Portugal? Will she further confirm that, if Turkey adopts a democratic Government and applied to join the EEC, she will be in favour of that application?

The Prime Minister: If that were the case and Turkey applied, we should have to decide what position to adopt. I recognise the force of the point that my hon. Friend is making. The European Community is a community for which democracy is an absolutely vital condition of entry. One of the reasons why we are anxious to have Spain and Portugal in is to enlarge the area of democracy and to consolidate in those countries. I do not believe that we shall be faced with another application shortly, but if we are we shall have to consider it.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Does the Prime Minister remember the referendum campaign in 1975 when giant posters bearing the words of the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins) promised jobs for the boys through Britain's entry into Europe? What happened? Does the Prime Minister recognise that Britain's membership of the Common Market has cost £1·5 million a day since then? For that, working people in this country are on the lowest level of social security benefits as a percentage of former earnings, compared with any of the Ten. What did the summit do to take up those problems?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman is plainly wholly against the EEC. There is a communiqué on what we are trying to do about jobs. If he wishes to read in more detail, there was a full economic report following the Dublin European Council. Yes, there are problems on unemployment in Europe. There are far more problems than in the much freer enterprise economics of the United States and Japan. If perhaps we followed more their free enterprise tenets, we might have more jobs.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that before the House debates the treaty of accession and ratifies it we shall be given the fullest possible information about the cost of the enlargement of the Community to the United Kingdom and her people, in particular, the potential loss of social fund benefits, regional fund benefits and the flood of money from the CAP, from north to south, after the entry of Spain and Portugal?

The Prime Minister: We shall, of course, put as many of the details of the costs as we can before the House, but our share of the enlargement costs, because of the agreement which we negotiated at Fontainebleau, is only 7 per cent. That was a very good agreement for Britain.

With regard to the regional and social funds, as was said in the communiqué:

"The structural fund will continue to operate normally on the basis of a Community-wide regional policy in accordance with the regulations which have recently been revised."

Over the past five years the regional fund has committed £1,236 million and the social fund has committed £1,245 million to the United Kingdom. The United Kingdom has done very well from both funds.

Mr. Eric Deakins (Walthamstow): How can the Prime Minister justify improved rights of residence in Britain for people from the Common Market when our own Commonwealth citizens are so shabbily treated by the British Nationality Act and the immigration rules and procedures? Will the right hon. Lady come to my constituency in Walthamstow and justify to my Commonwealth constituents the reason for the increasing inequality between them and Common Market citizens?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman knows that that is a part of being a common market. We arranged during the discussion of the Committee on Citizens' Europe that the right of residence in one another's country should be linked to proof of adequate resources. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will welcome that decision.

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): In view of the fact that one of the biggest burdens upon business today is instability of exchange rates, was there any discussion about Britain joining the European monetary system, particularly as the majority of exporting industries in this country now support such a policy?

The Prime Minister: Not at this particular meeting, although we have had such a discussion before and shall probably have it again in June. The recent instability has also affected the currencies in Europe. Indeed, the deutschmark has been affected as much as if not more than sterling, so joining the EMS exchange rate mechanism has not shielded people from the shifts in the dollar, and would not do so.

Mr. John Evans (St. Helens, North): By how much will unemployment in Britain be reduced as a result of the measures adopted at the summit, and what were those measures?

The Prime Minister: As I have said, the measures were to encourage the development of enterprise, which was discussed in detail at the Dublin Council and in particular to try to get growth in labour-intensive industries, which are many of the service industries. There were measures designed to get across the fact that unit wage costs are very important. The hon. Gentleman is aware that it may be right for him to ask that question, but it is most unwise for anyone at this Dispatch Box ever to answer it.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind the House that there are two other statements and a ten-minute Bill before we reach the Committee stage of the Interception of Communications Bill, so I ask for brief questions.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the completion of western Europe through the inclusion of Spain and Portugal, but as she looks for a positive direction as Europe goes forward will she give an undertaking that she will not attempt to make any changes that undermine her right to veto increases in expenditure programmes or the right of the House to throw out any legislation with which it may disagree?

The Prime Minister: On the latter point, there is nothing that I could do to undermine the rights of Parliament. They are absolutely vital. On the veto, I believe that the position should remain as it is under the treaty, together with the Luxembourg compromise.

Mr. Gerald Malone (Aberdeen, South): Is my right hon. Friend aware that in Scotland there will be a broad welcome for the accession to the Community of the democracies of Spain and Portugal? Is she further aware that the sharpest criterion brought to bear on those accession arrangements is by fishermen in the north-east of Scotland? According to that criterion, she has passed the judgment of those fishermen, and accession is welcomed.

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. The fishery provisions gave rise to a great deal of negotiating difficulty, but I believe that we fully protected the rights of our own fishermen in the agreement that we obtained.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Bearing in mind the resistance in this country to changes in our currency, will my right hon. Friend say whether there was any discussion of a common currency for Europe and, if so, what was said?

The Prime Minister: From time to time there are requests and expressions of hope that the ecu will become much more of a common currency than it is now. Of course, the ecu is dealt with in the City of London. Undoubtedly some of our Community colleagues would wish it to begin to rival the dollar in its importance as a reserve currency. I confess that I believe that it will take a long time before that happens.

Mr. Andrew MacKay (Berkshire, East): In the light of the welcome news of Spain's accession to the Community, can my right hon. Friend tell the House when she expects to have an extradition treaty with that country?

The Prime Minister: I cannot at the moment. The matter is being pursued in the customary way.

Mr. Tim Yeo (Suffolk, South): Does my right hon. Friend agree that for ordinary men and women the elimination of passport controls would be one of the most tangible and welcome consequences of British membership? Will she give the House an assurance that Britain will participate fully in any such experiment?

The Prime Minister: Subject to what I have said about checks at certain frontiers—I believe that they are vital to apprehend those dealing with drugs and in terrorism, and illegal immigrants—it is important that we have freer movement among the countries of Europe.

Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory (Wells): Does my right hon. Friend share my concern about the nature of the pay-off to Greece and the extra payments to Italy and France for agricultural restructuring? Does she agree that that will increase the production of Mediterranean foodstuffs and lead to the same problems of surplus that we have with milk and cereals?

The Prime Minister: The figure is about 1·6 billion ecu—less than £1 billion—for the three countries over a period of seven years to enable them to make the necessary changes and adaptations to their own economies, bearing in mind that many of their products will have enormous increases through the enlargement, with the accession of Spain and Portugal. I agree that we already have surpluses, and it is for those countries to make the requisite changes over that period using the moneys to enable them to do so.

Postal Services

4.6 pm

The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Norman Tebbit): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the possibility of disruption to postal services as a result of industrial action by members of the Union of Communications Workers.

The Post Office has been discussing with the UCW for several months a number of measures to improve productivity and provide a more reliable mails service. The need for improvemt has been indicated over many years, most recently in the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on the letters service, published in September last year.

Negotiations last weekend resulted in a failure to reach an agreement acceptable to both parties. Some UCW members subsequently refused to continue operating the optical character recognition machine at the Mount Pleasant sorting office yesterday and were suspended. That led to a walk-out by staff. I understand that, following an injunction granted to the Post Office in the High Court, the afternoon shift reported at 2 o'clock today, and the OCR machine is now operating normally.

Subject to certain derogations, the Post Office enjoys the exclusive privilege of providing a letters service in the United Kingdom. My right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-East (Sir K. Joseph), the then Secretary of State for Industry, told the House on 16 July 1980 that powers are available to remove the monopoly, either in a local area or nationally, and that those powers would be used in the event of industrial action within the Post Office that resulted in a cessation or serious decline in the quality of service. That remains the case.

Mr. John Smith (Monklands, East): Does not the Secretary of State realise that the settlement of the differences between the Post Office management and the UCW over quite difficult matters such as the proposed large increase in part-time workers and the use of OCR machines throughout the country can be satisfactorily achieved only by negotiation and a real attempt by both sides to reach an agreement? Is it not remarkable that in the statement that the right hon. Gentleman has chosen to make to the House today, at no stage did he refer to negotiations or wish the process of negotiation any success? Is the right hon. Gentleman not aware that at this very moment discussions are taking place between the executive of the UCW and the chairman of the Post Office? Would it not be better to encourage that attempt to settle the dispute rather than, at this delicate stage, to make a provocative and ill-judged threat to withdraw the Post Office monopoly?

Mr. Tebbit: I have made no threat whatever. There has been no provocation and nothing that has been done either by me or by the Post Office management has been ill-judged. I understand that negotiations have been resumed and I welcome that. I believe that it is best not to comment on those negotiations at this stage, but I hope that they will come to a fruitful conclusion.

Mr. Robert McCrindle (Brentwood and Ongar): As disputes of this kind are very difficult to resolve once they have started, will my right hon. Friend confirm that there is nothing to prevent ACAS intervening in advance of any dispute if the parties are unable to reach agreement? To the extent that a dispute is possible, does my right hon. Friend agree that it is the Government's duty to allow and encourage the maximum movement of mail in this country? Is he satisfied that there are private sector companies ready and willing to do that?

Mr. Tebbit: My hon. Friend is right. ACAS is ever ready to offer assistance but it is up to the parties to agree on whether they wish to take advantage of such assistance. One of the most important aspects of the dispute is the fact that the Post Office has used the injunction procedure and thereby ended the industrial action. The question of suspension of the monopoly therefore does not arise at the moment as there is no problem with the post. Should the post be interfered with, I should, of course, have to consider the matter most carefully.

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): Does not the Secretary of State realise that the fears of the workers at Mount Pleasant sorting office in my constituency have been exacerbated by the management's provocative action in unilaterally introducing new technology and productivity measures? Does he agree that it is even more provocative for the Government now to be making implied threats about the future of the Post Office monopoly?

Mr. Tebbit: The hon. Gentleman refers to the introduction of new technology as though the machine in question had not already been working for a year.

"New technologies mean major changes in the way we work and how we live. In the Britain of the future, we will need a new flexibility in the way we work—with less hours at work, a positive approach to new technologies, a new priority to training and retraining throughout our working lives".

The prose may be pretty turbid, but that is the kind of stuff being put out in the names of the Leader of the Opposition and a pop singer called Bragg.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): As the TUC is constantly telling the Government to encourage the cutting down of excess overtime so that more people can be taken from the ranks of the unemployed, will my right hon. Friend invite the TUC to support the Post Office, which is proposing exactly that by cutting overtime and employing more people at present out of work?

Mr. Tebbit: The formal view of the TUC was expressed in its paper presented to the March meeting of the National Economic Development Council. It said:

"Although in limited cases for short periods overtime can provide extra flexibility it rapidly becomes entrenched and inefficient."

We all agree with that, don't we?

Mr. John Ryman (Blyth Valley): Will the Secretary of State concentrate on the real issues in the dispute? Is not the truth of the matter that the Government are now pressuring Sir Ronald Dearing to bash the Post Office workers, just as they pressured Mr. MacGregor to bash the coal miners? Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the Post Office union's conference takes place in six weeks' time and that if negotiations had been conducted with a bit more diplomacy and sensitivity these issues could have been amicably resolved? As it is, on 15 April part-time and casual workers are to be introduced without consultation or agreement with the unions. Will the Secretary of State use his good will to allow common sense to prevail in the negotiations and restrain the chairman of the Post Office from taking such hostile measures?

Mr. Tebbit: I gather from the hon. Gentleman that there is some criticism of the chairman of the Post Office. I must confess that I would not differ from the view that Sir Ronald Dearing is superb, inventive, humorous, loyal——

Mr. Ryman: Like you?

Mr. Tebbit: Indeed. Those adjectives were applied to Sir Ronald Dearing by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) in his book, talking about the Civil Service. I am surprised that the hon. Member for Blyth Valley (Mr. Ryman) is critical.

As for provocation, the Post Office management and the UCW have been in negotiation for many months on many of these issues concerning productivity and working methods. Although a good deal of progress has been made, the hands of the UCW negotiators were tied by conference decisions about the extension of productivity agreements corporation-wide and the recruitment of part-time staff. The Post Office had hoped that the special delegate conference[1] in early March would untie the union negotiators' hands, but the knots were firmly retied by very large majorities. In those circumstances, there seemed little point in waiting for the normal conference in May and every reason to press ahead with the introduction of arrangements which will benefit the staff and, above all, those who use the Post Office service. The Post Office is there for the public to use, not for people to play silly games in.

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): I welcome the news that there has been a return to work, but should not those who went on strike yesterday to preserve inefficient and high-cost services realise that no one is indispensable, as the United States air traffic controllers discovered when President Reagan sacked them? Although we welcome my right hon. Friend's cautious words about the Post Office monopoly and industrial action, as the Government are bent on deregulation is it not time to consider the matter on a long-term basis to see whether there is any justification for the monopoly?

Mr. Tebbit: I think that it is fairly clearly established that the Post Office monopoly of the letter post has benefits as well as disbenefits. If my hon. Friend feels that there are arguments about this as yet unrehearsed I am sure that he will give them a fair airing. Of course, if there are bouts of industrial action in the Post Office the balance will change, perhaps decisively.

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): We accept the case for introducing new technology and reducing overtime to achieve flexibility and to spread jobs, but does the right hon. Gentleman agree that a prolonged industrial dispute would lose all the benefits of those reforms? Does he accept that the key to solving the dispute may lie in assuring Post Office workers that productivity bonuses will go some way to reducing the loss of overtime earnings on a regular basis? Does he also agree that it would be foolish for the Government to convert the dispute into a battleground over the introduction of further privatisation?

Mr. Tebbit: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right. No one who is sensible about these matters would want a dispute in the Post Office. That would damage the Post Office and the prospects for jobs in it. We all expect excessive overtime to be cut back so that more workers can be taken on. That is common sense. There is, of course, the problem that some workers have become very reliant on long hours of overtime. I emphasise, however, that Sir Ronald Dearing made it plain in a letter distributed to all Members of the House that 55 per cent. of the gains from these changes would fall into the hands of the Post Office workers. That is a fairly generous split.

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): Bearing in the mind the success of private operators in providing a highly efficient letter service at very short notice in the last major Post Office dispute, will my right hon. Friend confirm that if there is a major dispute the monopoly will be lifted immediately, at the beginning of the dispute?

Mr. Tebbit: I think that it is much better not to jump to the conclusion that there will be a major dispute. We should work for a sensible solution. I have made it plain that I entirely stand by the words of my right hon. Friend the former Secretary of State which I quoted in my statement. Should there be a dispute which suspends or gravely damages the mail service, I shall make early and quick decisions about the suspension of the monopoly.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): Is the Secretary of State not aware that all that prevented the UCW and the Post Office reaching agreement on Saturday night on the operation of the OCR machine was the fact that in recent days the Post Office has thrown into the discussion the need to employ part-time labour? Will the Secretary of State accept that there is a suspicion now that the Post Office—today, unfortunately, joined by the right hon. Gentleman—is trying to pre-empt the presentation by the executive of my union, the UCW, to the annual conference in Bournemouth in May, of a much more flexible approach?

The relaxation of the monopoly did not operate in the way suggested by the hon. Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith). The cost of delivering a letter by using a private company was 10 times greater than the cost of a postage stamp. After the 1971 dispute ended, hundreds of thousands of letters were found in the possession of private companies and subsequently had to be delivered by the Post Office. I hope that the Secretary of State will not turn a grievance into a full-scale industrial dispute.

Mr. Tebbit: I am astonished that the hon. Gentleman, who has some connection with the union, should say that the issue of part-time workers was thrown in over the weekend. It has been under negotiation for months and months. Neither the Post Office nor I can stop the executive of the hon. Gentleman's union putting constructive proposals to the conference in May. Indeed, we were overjoyed at the thought that some constructive proposals might result from the conference in March. Some progress was made, but unfortunately not on the important issues of a corporation-wide productivity agreement and part-time staff.

Mr. Andrew MacKay (Berkshire, East): Is my right hon. Friend aware that customers—especially companies that took part in the recently published CBI forecast showing great economic recovery—will be delighted to learn that in the event of serious industrial action this essential national service will be maintained?

Mr. Tebbit: Certainly. If the Post Office will not, or is unable to, deliver the mail, it would be unpardonable for us to permit the service to cease when there are options available to us.

Mr. Gregor MacKenzie (Glasgow, Rutherglen): Will the Secretary of State accept that the sensible way of reaching a settlement of the dispute is to permit the chairman of the Post Office and the general secretary of the UCW to get on with the discussions by themselves? Will the right hon. Gentleman also accept that veiled threats of breaking the monopoly do nothing to calm the atmosphere so that the dispute may be settled?

Mr. Tebbit: I absolutely agree with the right hon. Gentleman. The best thing that we can do is to let the parties negotiate together. However, the hon. Gentleman describes as a veiled threat about the monopoly what he should regard as an assurance given to the consumer.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): Would my right hon. Friend accept that the action taken by workers at the Mount Pleasant office was nothing short of industrial sabotage? Will he warn the UCW that unless it co-operates properly and ensures that the post is delivered on time the Post Office's monopoly will be very much in question, and that the Post Office is a natural candidate for privatisation?

Mr. Tebbit: My hon. Friend expresses himself somewhat robustly. I am a moderate and quiet chap. I say only that if the Post Office cannot or will not operate the mail service there will be an increasingly strong case for allowing others, who can and will, to do so.

Mr. Ian Wrigglesworth (Stockton, South): Will the Secretary of State agree that industrial action is in no one's interests, particularly when we remember the damage done by the previous industrial dispute both to the Post Office and to its workers? Can the right hon. Gentleman tell the House what the position of Post Office workers will be if the productivity agreement is adopted? Will they be worse off? Will there be any redundancies?

Mr. Tebbit: I understand that Sir Ronald Dearing has assured the union that there is no question of redundancies arising from the agreement. Part-time workers will be taken on at normal rates of pay. They will in this sense be permanent members of staff, not casuals.

It is difficult to say what will happen to each individual's pay. Some Post Office employees currently work very long hours of overtime. I do not know whether in future they will have the opportunity to work quite such long hours of overtime, or whether the extra productivity payments would make up the difference. Those are matters for negotiation, and the parties should be allowed to get on with the negotiations and sort them out.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): Is my right hon. Friend aware that about half the mail of the firm of solicitors of which I am a partner is delivered through the private enterprise system? We use the private system because it is much cheaper than the public system, and only when mail is delivered by private enterprise can we guarantee that it will reach its destination on the following day.

Mr. Tebbit: I note what my hon. Friend says, as I hope will those concerned in the Post Office. It must have been quite a shock to the Post Office to read the recent report of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, which could not confidently say that the Post Office letter mail was being operated in the public interest.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): This morning I received, unsolicited and unenveloped, a seven-page letter from the chairman of the Post Office explaining his side of the argument over Mount Pleasant. Did the Secretary of State authorise the distribution of that letter? If so, why did the Post Office not bother to put it in an envelope like every other item of correspondence that hon. Members receive? Will the right hon. Gentleman ensure that equal facilities are made available to the UCW to write to all hon. Members to explain the union's fears about the method of introduction of new technology, the threat to jobs, and the threat of post office closures implicit in the Government's strategy for the Post Office?

Mr. Tebbit: The ability of the UCW to write to hon. Members could only be threatened if industrial action prevented the mail from being delivered. I am therefore very glad that the industrial action has ended. I am sure that if the UCW wishes to write to hon. Members, the union knows the address and the form. Of course Sir Ronald Dearing did not have to ask my permission to write to hon. Members.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I thought that three hon. Members had risen. I will call those who have consistently been trying to catch my eye.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Is the Secretary of State aware that so long as he heads the Ministry there is bound to be added anxiety and concern that the Post Office is being encouraged to pursue a policy of confrontation? When will the right hon. Gentleman understand that there is no effective substitute for negotiation between employers and trade unions without coercion?

Mr. Tebbit: For once, there is not much difference between the hon. Gentleman's view and my own. The right way to proceed is to get the parties together and to encourage them to negotiate and reach a constructive agreement that would be to the benefit, above all, of those who use the Post Office.

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): If the Secretary of State implements his threat of breaking up the Post Office monopoly, can he guarantee to those who use the Post Office that there will be no increase in charges?

Mr. Tebbit: I have made no such threat. I have undertaken to the House that if mail deliveries are suspended I will give careful and early consideration to the means of maintaining the service to the public. That is an assurance to the public. It is a matter between the public and those who would offer the service. I do not think that the hon. Gentleman understands the real world; he has been in the Labour party for too long.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Does the Secretary of State agree that the provocative manner in which the board and chairman of the Post Office have closed Crown and sub post offices, particularly in East and West Ham, bodes ill for the negotiations now in train? Will he have a look at the statement that he made concerning the optical machine now operating normally? Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that, according to the information that I have received, there was an agreement to operate that machine experimentally, which has expired? If that is so, will he make a correction, or let me know if I am wrong?

Mr. Tebbit: The answer to the hon. Gentleman's first question is no. The answer to his second question is that

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the machine is operating normally. It operates today in the way that it usually does. The letters go in, are read optically, and come out the other end. As I understand it, that is the normal way of operation.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Is it not hypocritical for the Secretary of State to talk about the reliability of the service and its quality when the Post Office is closing Crown post offices and destroying local services, abrogating local and national agreements, and putting profit before public service? Should not the right hon. Gentleman have announced today that it was the responsibility of the management of the Post Office to return to full consultation and negotiation with the UCW, before — if the angry mood of the Coventry postal workers is any guide—the dispute inevitably spreads?

Mr. Tebbit: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will do his best to spread the dispute. But he should consider whether a refusal to operate the machinery effectively represents an ambition to put profit before service to the community. Many people would think so.

Mr. Bob McTaggart (Glasgow, Central): If the Secretary of State is concerned about giving a service to the community and preventing the hardship that is caused to many people through post office closures, will he use his good offices to instruct the Postmaster-General to cease the policy of sub post office closures? That policy is causing great hardship throughout the country.

Mr. Tebbit: The office of Postmaster-General was abolished even before the hon. Gentleman became a Member of Parliament. But the substantive point is that the proposed closures are subject to an extensive process of consultation. Not all the proposed closures are carried through, and I believe that the Post Office adopts an extremely responsible attitude towards its obligations in that respect.

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I apologise for delaying the House, but many Opposition Members were unable to hear the precise answer that the Secretary of State gave in response to the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn). You will recall, Mr. Speaker, that the hon. Member for Islington, North asked whether the Secretary of State had given his permission for the chairman of the Post Office to circulate a letter. The Secretary of State either said he did, or he did not. We were unable to hear his reply. Could the Secretary of State clarify that point?

Mr. Tebbit: It may be for the convenience of the House if I make that point clear. I said that the chairman had no need or requirement to ask me for permission to circulate a letter. I did not give him permission to circulate. He did it entirely off his own bat.

English Channel (Fixed Link)

4.33 pm

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): I should like to make a statement about the Channel fixed link.

The House will know that in November 1984, I met the French Ministers responsible for transport to discuss the possibility of a fixed link across the English Channel. At that meeting we reaffirmed the willingness of the British and French Governments to take whatever steps might be necessary to facilitate the construction of a fixed link between the United Kingdom and France within the framework of the European transport network. We agreed that this project, for which essential political guarantees would be provided, should be financed without support from public funds or Government guarantees against commercial or technical risks and on the basis of conditions prevailing on the international financial markets.

We also agreed to establish a working group of officials of both Governments to draw up guidelines to potential promoters in order to give them a clear understanding of the requirements of the two Governments on, for example, safety and the environment, the undertakings that the two Governments would be prepared to give, and on any constraints affecting commercial exploitation. At the meeting on 29 November between my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and the French President, these decisions were confirmed, and it was decided that officials would be instructed to report to Ministers by the end of February.

Officials delivered their report on 28 February, and on 20 March we held a further meeting with the French Ministers to agree the final texts of the guidelines and to decide certain further points. In particular, we agreed that the closing date for proposals would be 31 October 1985, and that the two Governments would aim to reach a decision around the end of the year, on which proposal, if any, they consider should be enabled to go ahead. We also agreed that we should begin contingency work now on those elements of the treaty which would be common to any form of link chosen.

I have placed copies of the guidelines—or, to give them their proper name, the "Invitation to Promoters"—in the Vote Office.

In saying this, I do not want hon. Members to think that we have prejudged the issues. When they have had time to study the guidelines, they will recognise my concern to ensure that there is adequate public consultation, that environmental, social and employment impacts are fully appreciated and that the financial conditions are fully met. All these matters will be carefully considered before the two Governments arrive at a decision.

I cannot yet tell whether a fixed link will be built across the Channel or not. What I can say is that the private sector now has a unique opportunity. We have reached full agreement with the French on the conditions which the promoters must meet. I wish the promoters well in this great endeavour.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): We welcome any suggestion of considerable investment in the infrastructure. Indeed, we have been asking the

Government for many years for precisely this sort of infrastructure development, with its impact on jobs and industry.

Will the Secretary of State give us some undertakings? From a quick examination of the guidelines, it would appear that certain difficulties might arise. Will he give us an assurance that safety will be a paramount consideration in any decisions that are taken? I refer to the safety of those using the Channel now and of those using it during construction.

Whatever decisions are taken, I hope that several important factors will be borne in mind. First, will the right hon. Gentleman give an assurance that the environmental impact of any decision on the fixed link will be a paramount consideration? Secondly, what will be the impact on the creation of new jobs—which is mentioned in the guidelines — and of unemployment? In 1980, 9,000 jobs were dependent on ferries at Dover alone. Will any consideration be given to what will happen in the Dover area if investment goes ahead in other regions? What impact will the fixed link have on the regions? What attempts will there be to improve the infrastructure?

We are told that British Rail must be responsible for its commercial investments. Are the Government prepared to consider helping either British Rail or those who will need to support a fixed rail link or road and rail link? Can we be assured that, before any final decision is taken, the House will have a full opportunity to debate every aspect of the project?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Lady's welcome for this exciting and imaginative project seemed to descend into a lot of detailed points. However, I shall seek to answer them. First, of course, safety will be a paramount concern during the period both of construction and of any link. We shall make it a very important matter to satisfy ourselves that safety considerations have been fully taken into account before any proposal is accepted.

Secondly, any contender will be asked to put forward an environmental impact study of his proposals on the English side. The French will have a different procedure on their side. This will form a very important part of the considerations when deciding which proposal to accept.

Thirdly, traffic across the Channel is likely to double by the year 2000. That will leave room for both a fixed link and a very large ferry industry. It will possibly be as large a ferry industry as it is now, despite the fixed link. However, that will depend upon the capacity of the link, and I cannot forecast what that will be until we receive the offers.

Fourthly, a considerable number of jobs will be created all over the country for fabricating the various parts of the link, whatever the link may be, but the form of link will have to be determined before it is possible to ascertain the full impact on employment throughout the country. As for British Rail, if it is in its interests to make any further investment as a result of any link, it will go through the normal appraisal techniques and, if it is commercially viable, it will be authorised. If it falls below commercial viability, it will be up to the promoters to assist British Rail to top up the funds available to it so that it can make any extra investment show a positive rate of return.

Finally, the guidelines propose that the Government should sponsor a hybrid Bill, which will enable the House to express its views. If the hon. Lady wishes to have a further opportunity to debate the matter, I am sure that my hon. Friend the Leader of the House will listen to anything that the Opposition may have to say.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The House will have heard the last comment of the Minister. We shall undoubtedly return to this subject in due course. Therefore, I shall allow questions to continue until 5 o'clock, after which we must move on.

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): My right hon. Friend rightly speaks about a unique opportunity for the private sector, but does he accept that that also creates a dilemma? While the Government may not wish to indicate a preference for any particular form of fixed link until they can be absolutely sure that it can be financed privately, the promoters will have great difficulty in establishing whether it can be financed privately until they are sure what kind of fixed link the Government prefer. Could my right hon. Friend seek to try to break the deadlock by accelerating the Government's indication of what kind of fixed link they would prefer, so that the process can go forward?

Mr. Ridley: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for his welcome. However, I believe that the promoters are broadly satisfied that they can go ahead and prepare their propositions, including the financial backing that will be needed, and that they have enough time in which to do so before 31 October. That will enable them to assemble their bids, including the financial aspect. It would be quite wrong to preclude any particular type of link or proposition in case we cut out a horse which might turn out to be the fastest horse in the race.

Mr. Bruce Millan (Glasgow, Govan): Is the Secretary of State aware that, whether this link is financed by private or public capital, it will nevertheless represent a massive expenditure largely for the benefit of the south-east of England? [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] Yes, largely for the benefit of the south-east of England. There is already an over-concentration of population and economic activity on the south-east of England. Some Opposition Members are not enthusiastic, to say the least, about the proposal, however it is financed, particularly at a time when the Government are cutting regional aid.

Mr. Ridley: It is possible that a great deal of this capital will be footloose international capital, which may not come to these islands at all if the project does not go ahead. Therefore, I do not believe that the right hon. Gentleman should view this project in terms of a denuding of capital which might otherwise be available for other projects. Secondly, I think that the right hon. Gentleman must concede that if there is to be a tunnel underneath the Channel, it has to start from Kent rather than from Glasgow.

Mr. Terence Higgins (Worthing): Will the criteria used by the Government to judge competing proposals include the rate of return on capital? What guarantee will the Government require from any promoters that they will have the resources to complete the project?

Mr. Ridley: The rate of return on capital will be a matter for the promoters. They will have to demonstrate to their financial backers that they have a viable project. The Government's concern would be to make sure that any

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investment in British Rail or in roads showed a positive rate of return, according to normal criteria. We shall also ensure that sufficient bonded guarantees of finance are made available to satisfy the two Governments that adequate finance is available for completion of the project.

Mr. Stephen Ross (Isle of Wight): We on this Bench welcome the statement by the Secretary of State, which is a change and a pleasure. We believe that this is an imaginative idea and that a link should have been built long ago. Will the Secretary of State confirm that all options are open—rail only, road-rail, bridge and tunnel —and will he please assure the House that once the bids are in there will be no delay on the part of the Government in reaching a decision?

Mr. Ridley: I am grateful to the hon Gentleman and delighted to be in a spirit of accord with him. All options are open—the ones that we know about and the ones that we have not yet heard about—provided that they meet the criteria and come in time. Secondly, the firm intention of the two Governments is to complete their consideration and reach a decision by the end of the year, if possible. The French are as keen as we are to do this.

Mr. Michael Howard (Folkstone and Hythe): Can my right hon. Friend tell the House a little more about the requirement in the guidelines for public consultation? Can he give an assurance that the effects on south-east Kent, in economic as well as in environmental terms, will be fully taken into account before any decision is reached? Can he also describe the machinery that he has in mind for achieving these objectives?

Mr. Ridley: I am grateful to my hon. and learned Friend. Paragraph 12.42 of the guidelines sets out all the procedures for parliamentary and public consultation:

"the more effective the informal consultation carried out by the promoters with local authorities, expert bodies and other interested parties in advance of the Bill's Committee hearings, the greater the likelihood of a smooth passage for those hearings."

That is the point. If the promoters can ascertain local views and go as far as possible towards meeting them, they will find it much easier to persuade the Committee of this House that the proposals are in order.

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): Have not the Government's policies created a wide and ever-growing gap between the poorer regions of the north and the south, and have not independent consultants' reports stated quite clearly that the building of a tunnel will put the poorer regions in an even more vulnerable position compared with the richer regions? Have the Government carried out independent inquiries into the effect on the north-east of England of the building of the tunnel? If not, does it not show conclusively that the Government do not give a damn about the massive and ever-growing unemployment in the north-east?

Mr. Ridley: I refute entirely what the hon. Gentleman says.

Mr. Boyes: The right hon. Gentleman cannot do so.

Mr. Ridley: The right hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that the north of England and Scotland have many more estuarial bridges and tunnels than the south of England. All that is happening is that another toll crossing may be provided across the Channel. The building of the structure, whatever it may be, will create work for the industrial areas of this country. The improvement in our access to and trade with the continent will be of value to the whole country, if it proves to be possible to move goods more cheaply through the link than by ship.

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): Before we all get trampled over in the enthusiastic rush to abolish the good old English Channel, will my right hon. Friend confirm that his document, "Invitation to Promoters", which sounds suspiciously like a prospectus for a latter-day South Sea Bubble, is a highly speculative, tentative and hypothetical affair? Will he be careful to ensure that the considerable investment now going into the Channel ports in terms of jobs and money will not be placed in jeopardy by the scheme?

Mr. Ridley: It will be for investors, including merchant banks of all sorts, to decide whether they wish to invest in any promoter's scheme and to submit a proposal to the Government for that purpose. It must be for them to make up their own minds whether they want to show the correct amount of money to justify one of the schemes going ahead. It would be wrong of me to give guidance either way.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): Does the Minister recognise that not all Scottish opinion will be as insular as that expressed by the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan), that among the possible beneficiaries of such a scheme would be British Steel's Scottish plants, and that employment in the developing parts of Britain could be greatly assisted by at least one of the projects put forward? Why is the right hon. Gentleman proposing that the scheme should lapse in October?

Mr. Ridley: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for pointing out that there could be large benefits for the steel and other industries located all over Britain and for taking a much more sensible view than the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan).

The date of 31 October is the last date for the receipt of propositions, and all known contenders have so far agreed that that date gives them sufficient time to prepare their offers. If there were any strong plea for a delay to enable somebody else to come in, we would consider that.

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): I welcome my right hon. Friend's insistence that any fixed link should be financed through free enterprise, but will he give the House an undertaking that his Department will make the necessary investment in the infrastructure in north-east Kent before the building of any such link, because without it, far from benefiting, that area is likely to be devastated.

Mr. Ridley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for welcoming the project. We shall have to consider the implications for Kent's infrastructure. My hon. Friend mentions north-east Kent, but I suspect that south-east Kent will be affected as well. That will be part of the assessment that will have to be made when we receive any particular proposal.

Sir David Price (Eastleigh): As a member of the Select Committee which looked at the issue in the previous Parliament, may I ask my right hon. Friend two quick questions? Is he aware that not a single promoter who

appeared before us was willing to put up the money without a basic Government guarantee? Is there to be one? [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] Good.

Secondly, will my right hon. Friend bear in mind that the bridgers, in their evidence to us, were pushing the state of their art far beyond its ability to span the Channel?

Mr. Ridley: I have made it clear in the statement and in the guidelines that there will be no Government guarantees of a financial or economic nature. They will be confined to political guarantees, in the case of cancellation for political reasons, by one or the other Government. That is spelt out in the guidelines.

Secondly, I do not want to comment on any particular scheme, be it bridge, bored tunnel or tube, without seeing the full details of what is finally put forward. I do not want to prejudge the decision in any way.

Mr. Kenneth Warren (Hastings and Rye): I welcome the prospect of the promotion of a fixed link across the Channel, but to what physical extent will national law apply each side of the Channel?

Secondly, may I reinforce the wish of my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) to see the road and rail infrastructure brought up to a standard commensurate with the Channel tunnel when, as he well knows, in south-east England it is already running far behind current demand?

Mr. Ridley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. He will find the question of national law dealt with in the guidelines, but we may have to extend other jurisdiction to the centre of the Channel, as he will read. We must see what proposals come forward from the promoters before we can decide what is necessary on infrastructure, but I assure my hon. Friend that that will be taken into account carefully at the time of receiving propositions.

Mr. Den Dover (Chorley): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that British Rail will be able to sign an arm's-length agreement with the successful promoter and that that will in no way count against any public sector borrowing requirement?

Mr. Ridley: Yes, I can confirm that. British Rail can enter into any agreement that it wishes, but if any investment which it is called upon to finance does not show a positive rate of return, it will be for the promoter to help it with its contribution so that it does show a positive rate of return.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): If a Channel link were built, would not our trade pattern become so geared to it and so dependent on it, probably far more than any other country, that we would be vulnerable to a threat of closure at the other end? Can my right hon. Friend be certain that no French Government in the future, perhaps to further their bargaining position on some completely different matter, would ever make such a threat?

Mr. Ridley: We shall be seeking to sign a treaty with the French about that. The predictions seem to be that a sizeable ferry industry will remain, which will provide an alternative method of getting goods and people across the Channel. I believe that the French will wish to sign a treaty with us, which I hope will be an added protection for the real danger which my hon. Friend rightly mentions.

Sir John Osborn (Sheffield, Hallam): Does not the capacity of the final link have its own environmental, social and employment implications? Is my right hon. Friend satisfied that we have the equipment of Association Trans-Manche, the French agency involved? Will he consider the speeding up of Customs, because whatever link there is will be useless unless we do something on that front as well?

Mr. Ridley: I agree with my hon. Friend that the capacity of the link has consequences for the environment as well as for the infrastructure. We are asking the promoters to assess the effects so that we can take them into account in coming to a decision. I agree that Customs are important, and we are already in touch with them to make sure that we can facilitate the passage of goods and people in the quickest way possible.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): Does my right hon. Friend recall the sad political circumstances which surrounded the fact that the late Mr. Anthony Crosland was obliged to cancel the previous tunnel? Will he please take on board the importance of, as far as possible, getting all-party support for the project, bearing in mind that there are people in all parties who do not want it? In view of the obvious and understandable concern about regional policy, will he please do everything that he can to see that that aspect is high on his list of factors when he comes to make his decision? Finally, what will happen if we want one thing and the French want another?

Mr. Ridley: I have been encouraged by the wide support so far this afternoon for the principle that I have set forth in the statement. That bodes well for the House being prepared to give a good proposal a fair wind. My hon. Friend asks what will happen if there is a difference of opinion between ourselves and the French, but that is a hypothetical question and we must wait and see what develops. However, it is necessary for the French as well as ourselves to agree before anything can go ahead.

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Motherwell, South): Does the Minister expect the promoters to take into account the employment effects either during construction or subsequently in the operation of the fixed link? If not, will the Minister do so?

Mr. Ridley: Yes; the guidelines require the promoters to estimate the employment effects both during and after construction, and they will be a relevant factor in coming to a decision.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): Does my right hon. Friend share my amazement that, in the light of their recent statements, the Opposition do not appear to be happy at the prospect of improving the infrastructure? Does he agree that that may be because the Government are insisting on the use of private rather than taxpayers' money to finance this project?

Mr. Ridley: I think that the Opposition are a little uneasy about the fact that it does not cost the taxpayer anything if the project goes ahead, whereas their view often seems to be that the taxpayer must be made to pay more. Therefore, I am sure that my hon. Friends will be delighted if we can have the benefit of this great addition to our infrastructure without great additions to our taxes.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): May I say that, coming from the north-west, I am fully behind the project. I hope that will please my right hon. Friend. May I remind him that the promoters have already spent many

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millions of pounds on putting propositions to the Government, and can I therefore reinforce the request made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) that the Government might give some indication before 31 October of the sort of tunnel that they want? That would at least remove the necessity of making expensive proposals which will not even be considered.

Mr. Ridley: My hon. Friend has raised a serious point, and I have considered it carefully. I do not believe that any very expensive work will be necessary for the promoters before 31 October. We have so structured it that, if expensive testing work is necessary, that can be done only after a decision has been taken. Equally, I am sure that he would agree with me that it would be unfair to any group of promoters who wished to put forward a scheme if we were to rule out such a scheme before they had time even to put it forward.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): As the unanimous decision of the five banks' review was that there was no way in which this could be financed from private funds without external guarantees, can my right hon. Friend give us an assurance that there will be no question of national guarantees by the back door through the EEC? Can he give a clear assurance that, if no proposal comes forward by the end of the year, he will finally bury this silly and outmoded white elephant?

Mr. Ridley: Perhaps the new factor in the situation is that, despite what the banks said in the report, to which my hon. Friend has referred, miraculously they now find that they think they can finance the scheme without access to public funds or public guarantees. It may be that my hon. Friend will see something in that transformation. I am happy to give him the undertaking for which he asks. There will be no EEC funds or guarantees for the link, because that would merely be public money channelled through another route.

BILL PRESENTED

Horses and Ponies

Mr. David Amess, supported by Mr. Harry Greenway, Mr. Greg Knight, and Mr. Gerald Bermingham, presented a Bill to protect horses and ponies against abandonement by their owners; to provide for a statutory code of practice on the tethering of horses and ponies; to oblige owners to arrange for a humane method of identification for their animals; and for purposes connected therewith: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 26 April and to be printed. [Bill 118.]

Points of Order

5.2 pm

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I hope that the hon. Gentleman is not seeking to put a question which he might, and perhaps will put on another occasion.

Mr. Bruinvels: No, I am not. I wish to seek your guidance, Mr. Speaker. I wonder whether it is in order for BBC television news to have made an announcement last night prior to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport making his statement about the proposed channel fixed link. Is it in order for such an announcement to be made by the media before it is announced to Parliament?

Mr. Speaker: I have nothing to say about what is transmitted by the media. However, I say again that statements should always be made to the House first.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Rumours are sweeping the media that eight or more Scottish pits are to be closed, including Polkemmet colliery——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I know nothing about that either.

Young People (Scotland)

5.3 pm

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to make increased provision of facilities for, and to extend legal and other rights presently available to young people in Scotland and for connected purposes.

As you, Mr. Speaker, and hon. Members will be aware, this is International Youth Year, and the Bill that I seek leave to introduce today is one of a number of Bills introduced by Liberal Members specifically for International Youth Year. While the Bill specifically relates to young people in Scotland, it has implications for the whole of the United Kingdom.

This Bill and other Bills are necessary if we are to honour our obligations to young people, because young people are particularly badly affected by the difficult times in which we live. Forty per cent. of the unemployed—150,000 people in Scotland—are under the age of 25. The lack of suitable opportunities for young people makes starting out in adult life in 1985 much more difficult than it has been for many decades. For that reason, I believe that we urgently need a Minister with specific responsibility for youth. At the Scottish Office also, we need a Minister with specific responsibility to protect and promote the interests of young people.

I suggest that the first priority is to give young people a guarantee that between the ages of 16 and 19 they will have a job or training leading to the acquisition of appropriate skills or further education. This means that training schemes must be devised to meet real needs. They must be not merely a means of creatively massaging unemployment figures. The financial support for young people continuing in full-time education should be geared in such a way that no young person who is likely to benefit from further training or further education should be denied that opportunity for financial reasons.

The Bill would seek to ensure that young people are properly consulted in the areas of training and education that affect them. They should be represented, for example, on youth training scheme committees, school and college councils, and, indeed, on education committees, and they should be more fully consulted in the running and curriculum development of colleges and universities.

While the first priority is the acquisition of skills leading to employment, which is of major importance, a suitable place in which to live is also crucial to young people starting out in life. Changes in process at the moment—indeed, they are going through the House this week—will cut board and lodging allowances in a way which will have a particularly damaging effect on young people. Variations in accommodation costs fail to take full account of different local circumstances. I believe that this could lead to the break-up of families. It may mean that young people leave home and often will be unable to go back because they are not reconciled with their parents. This will increase the problem of homelessness among young people.

Indeed, I am advised that the stop-over short stay hostel for young people in Edinburgh, ironically enough located in the constituency of the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Ancram), the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, is under threat of closure as a direct result of the measure currently going through the House, and initiatives to bring in similar hostels in other parts of Scotland could

[Mr. Malcolm Bruce]

now founder. The Bill would seek to ensure that such hostels would be protected from the damaging effect of catch-all changes which, although they may not have been designed deliberately to have that effect, will do so because there is no Minister with specific responsibility for young people.

There is also evidence that these changes could lead directly to the eviction of young people in other kinds of accommodation that they can no longer afford. This is likely to be true particularly in high-priced areas such as Aberdeen, which I represent.

I think that many hon. Members will agree that young couples, particularly those who are unemployed or on low wages, find it difficult to start their lives together when accommodation is inadequate and jobs are scarce. They do not have the means, and the local authorities are unable to provide them with adequate housing.

It is little wonder that there has been a growth in social problems relating to young people. As I am sure all hon. Members are aware, there have been increases in drug and alcohol abuse. In Scotland, an alarming number of suicides and attempted suicides have occurred at Glenochil young offenders institution. While the regime has been cleared by the inspector of prisons, I think it is fair to say that we need to consider whether referring young people to these institutions is correct and whether, in taking some of the initiatives that the Bill would allow, we might have some chance to deal with these problems in a way that would not lead to suicides and suicide attempts.

There are a number of areas, I am proud to say, being a Scottish Member, where we in Scotland are more progressive than are other parts of the United Kingdom. These areas do not exclusively affect young people, though most of them affect them substantially, and I will give some examples.

In recent years the Scottish licensing laws have been liberalised, to general benefit. The effect has been to improve the quality of Scottish pubs and hotels, to reduce the problems of street drunkenness and to provide suitable places where youngsters over the age of 18 can go, rather than, as was the case before, having to hang around street corners or being obliged to drink and then to be turned out on to the streets at 10 o'clock at night.

One of the benefits of the Criminal Justice Act was the banning of alcohol from football grounds, a provision which English Ministers now seem to wish to implement. That measure has reduced hooliganism problems, as have developments such as all-seat, all-covered stands at Aberdeen football club's ground.

The banning of the England-Scotland match at Wembley suggests that the Prime Minister is confusing Millwall with Hadrian's Wall. Had she really considered what was happening, she would have realised that the problem exists much more in England than in Scotland. That sort of decision could only have been carried out by a Prime Minister who, apart from trips abroad, has left her home counties dugout only once in the last six months, and then only for a day trip to Newcastle.

Children's panels in Scotland have been a successful innovation. They have given young people and their parents support when youngsters have got into trouble. Hon. Members representing English constituencies may wish to see such panels introduced south of the border. The innovation has, however, been partly undermined by the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act, which goes against the spirit of children's panels by suggesting that appearing before a panel constitutes an offence, which is contrary to the spirit of the panel idea.

Representing a constituency in Aberdeenshire, I feel it appropriate, while speaking of areas where we in Scotland are progressive, to refer to the provision of free contraceptive advice clinics, which were pioneered in the city of Aberdeen. The recent ruling of the House of Lords in the Victoria Gillick case does not apply to Scotland, although, regrettably, many young people believe that it does. It is all very well for parents who have a good relationship with their children, as Mrs. Gillick clearly believes she has, but I believe that what has occurred in that respect will be a tragedy for many young people, at least in England and Wales, who do not get on with their parents and who, because of the ruling, will be denied the advice that they need.

My Bill seeks to ensure that the interests of young people in Scotland are not put at risk by any attempt to bring us into line with English rulings. It seeks to create a climate in which the members of older generations accept their responsibility towards young people in terms of giving them the best opportunities. In that area, we are falling down badly. My Bill seeks to do that in a way that shows proper respect for the views of young people, giving them a chance to participate in decisions that affect them.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Malcolm Bruce, Mr. James Wallace, Mr. Charles Kennedy, Mr Archy Kirkwood, Mr. Russell Johnston, Mr. Roy Jenkins and Mr. Robert Maclennan.

YOUNG PEOPLE (SCOTLAND)

Mr. Malcolm Bruce accordingly presented a Bill to make increased provision of facilities for, and to extend legal and other rights presently available to young people in Scotland and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 7 June and to be printed. [Bill 119.]

Orders of the Day

Interception of Communications Bill

Considered in Committee.

[MR. HAROLD WALKER *in the Chair*]

Clause 1

PROHIBITION ON INTERCEPTION

5.15 pm

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): I beg to move amendment No. 4, in clause 1, page 1, line 11, leave out from 'of' to 'the' in line 12 and insert 'the individual to whom'.

The Chairman of Ways and Means: With this amendment it will be convenient for the Committee to consider the following: Amendment No. 5, in clause 1, page 1, line 11, leave out from 'of' to 'the' in line 12 and insert 'the person to whom'.

Amendment No. 6, in clause 1, page 1, line 11, after 'person', insert 'not being a licensee'.

Amendment No. 7, in clause 1, page 1, line 11, at end insert

'as his residence or principal place of work'.

New clause 4—*Interception by person in charge of an institution*—

'Nothing in this Act shall be construed as permitting the interception of a communication by post or a public telecommunication system, where such interception is made or authorised by a person or people in charge of an institution where the recipient of the communication resides, unless authorised to do so under Prison Rules made under the Prison Act 1952, Mental Health Acts or this Act.'.

Mr. Corbett: The purpose of this series of amendments is to make it impossible, in the words of the Bill, for

"a person occupying the premises"

to give consent for the interception of mail or telephone calls of all tenants or residents or even of some of them. We are told that the Government do not intend that to happen. If so, we welcome that assurance.

It cannot be right for the managers of the Grosvenor, Savoy or Ritz in London, or of the Midland, Albany or Holiday Inn in Birmingham, behind the backs of residents, to okay the interception of mail for transitory guests, all guests or, for that matter, staff. The same goes for the wardens of old people's homes, of controlled schemes or of hostels for the homeless or for landlords of houses in my constituency and elsewhere whose premises are split into bed-sits, or for employers at offices or businesses.

On the basis of clause 1(1)*(b)*, literally millions of people, staying the odd night or residents in those types of premises, could be at risk of having every letter and phone call intercepted—opened, listened to, prised open and snooped over — and that would be part of the process of achieving a big sister state.

We accept, of course, that in cases of suspected terrorism or espionage, or where there is genuine concern over the security of the state, or where it is necessary to detect or prevent a serious crime, interception is a legitimate tool to use. But that tool should be used only as a last resort against known and named suspects and not as an excuse for a general fishing for information exercise.

It is to protect the rights of the innocent that we move this series of amendments. We hope that the Government will concede that, as drafted, the subsection is too wide, and will acknowledge that the interpretation that I have given of the provision as it stands was not that which was meant when the Bill was drafted.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): The purpose of amendment No. 5, which stands in my name and that of my hon. Friends, is broadly the same as that of amendment No. 4, save that it would apply to corporate persons as well as to individuals. I shall be interested to hear the Minister's view on that.

Mr. John McWilliam (Blaydon): The Clause states in subsection (1)*(b)*:

"with the consent of a person occupying the premises to or from which the communication is sent; or".

I have had experience of putting on taps where they have been requested. I have done that when, for instance, people have suffered nuisance telephone calls. Then, with the consent of the individuals concerned, taps have been instituted to enable us quickly to trace the source of the nuisance calls.

The trouble with the clause as drafted is that it goes too wide. I feel sure that the Minister does not intend the provision to be used in the way in which it could be used —to gain the consent of a person occupying premises to institute a tap against a person who might be a sub-tenant of his—but the way in which the subsection is worded would seem to make that possible.

There is good reason for having a subsection such as this, but with the amendment, for that would ensure that people who are subject to the sort of nuisance to which I have referred could permit the authorities to detect the location of the perpetrator of the nuisance.

The amendment would mean that the drafting of clause 1(1)*(b)*, which would make possible a rather broader interpretation, would be less wide. That is the sole point that we wish to make. We want to protect people, but we do not want people to be exploited as they could be under this clause as at present drafted.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Waddington): I am able to give some words of comfort to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett), the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) and the hon. Member for Blaydon (Mr. McWilliam). The Government have only one aim in preparing the exemptions in clause 1 — to ensure that those who may properly undertake an interception are protected from committing the offence. It is a question of protecting people who behave properly in the course of their legitimate duties. None of the interceptions can take place except in obedience to a warrant. If it strays outside the terms of the warrant or extends after the expiry of the warrant, it is not covered by the exception.

The four amendments all deal with the second exception, which has been included in the Bill to meet the circumstances in which somebody may wish his communications to be intercepted. Every hon. Member in the Committee this afternoon recognises that. A person may, for example, be the recipient of obscene telephone calls. Or, if a member of his family had been kidnapped,

[Mr. David Waddington]

he might wish the police to have access to recordings of all his calls. In principle, the Government believe that there is nothing objectionable in people giving consent to interception of their own communications. The objection here is to the effect of the drafting, whereby a live-in landlord could give consent in respect of a telephone shared by a number of people. That is the point made by all three of the hon. Members who have spoken.

The Government accept that in its present form the exception is cast too wide and we therefore undertake to introduce an amendment to narrow its application. The amendments that have been tabled will not work satisfactorily, however. They fail to meet the requirement to deal with both the post and telecommunications.

It is relatively easy to specify an exception along the lines which have been suggested for the post. Each letter, by its nature, is addressed to only one person and only the addressee would give his consent. But that does not work with telecommunications if people are sharing the same telephone. Until the interception has taken place, it is not possible to know whether it is for the individual concerned or for somebody else. The effect of the amendments, therefore, would be to render criminal the interception of any call on the line in question which was not for the individual who had given his consent. That cannot be right. It would mean, for example, that an offence would be committed if there were interception of a call for a member of a family who through absence from home had been unable to give his consent, although another member of the same family had.

The Government are looking at a means of dealing with the problems which have been identified, although what has been said on the amendments indicates that it is not an entirely straightforward task. However, we have given our commitment and we will find a form of words that deals with what all of us want to deal with — the situation in which a person may give his consent not in his own interest but in order to make trouble for others.

Mr. Corbett: To save me telephoning the Minister, I thank him for what he has just said will be done to meet the problems raised by us. I beg leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. McWilliam: I beg to move amendment No. 8, in clause 1, page 1, line 13, after 'the', insert 'maintenance or'.

I wish first to remedy a fault which I committed in speaking to the last amendments and declare my interest as a sponsored member of the National Communications Union, engineering section—a statement which applies throughout the proceedings on this Bill.

The problem that I find with clause 1(1)*(c)* is that it deals merely with the provision of postal or public telecommunication services, and there are many possible interpretations of "provision". It might mean provision pure and simple; it might mean continuing provision. I am not certain.

My intention in seeking to insert words in this clause is to protect those of my former colleagues who have to intercept a communication in order to determine the quality of service that is being given or whether faults are occurring. This is not all that straightforward in these days of advanced switching and telecommunications systems. A fault on a telephone or a line can cause problems 100, 200 or 300 miles away. The only way that these faults can be located during the maintenance of the service is by intercepting the communication and trying to trace where the fault is occurring or, having found it, trying to trace back and find where the condition is occurring on the line which is causing the fault. This is a matter not of providing service but of maintaining the standard of service.

I must stress that although, during these processes, there is interception, what is being said on the circuit is not being taken in by the men carrying out the interception. They are checking the continuity to see that speech is present. They are not attempting to make head or tail of what is being said. In these operations it is necessary to ascertain that speech is taking place. I have had a lot of experience in this and I could never remember, 10 seconds after an interception, what had been said. I was not interested in it, and my colleagues are not interested in it — unless, of course, somebody says something incredibly interesting, in which case one pricks one's ears. It is like a half-heard conversation on a bus.

The offence in such cases ought to be the communication of such information to a third party. I cannot think of any instance in the more than 20 years during which I was a telephone engineer of anybody getting into trouble for communicating snatches of conversation which they heard in such circumstances. We hear those snatches of conversation and forget about them immediately. This is not to say that telephone engineers are angels, but they are far too busy to be bothered with the problems of other individuals, and that is not the intention of the interception.

We wish it to be made clear beyond peradventure that the kind of work that needs to be done to maintain the quality of service and to trace back difficult faults can be done without the engineer's being in any danger of the law. That is the sole purpose of the amendment and we hope that the Minister will accept it.

5.30 pm

Mr. Waddington: It is quite clear from what the hon. Gentleman has said that he accepts how important it is to have this exemption. For example, a member of the staff of BT may, from time to time, need to do something that would amount to interception, although it would not usually be seen as such. If an engineer is attending to a line, he may discover the nature of a fault or whether it has been rectified only by listening in momentarily. It is an accepted practice that if a line has been engaged for a long period a caller may ask the operator to check whether the line is really engaged or whether it is faulty.

The question is simply whether clause 1(1)*(c)* adequately meets the position, and I believe that there is no doubt that it does. The term "provision" covers both the initial installation of a service and its continued operation — be that in its maintenance or repair or in other respects such as through the facilities offered by telephone operators.

Mr. McWilliam: I have studied the clause but have failed to find a definition of the word "provision". That is the problem. We tabled the amendment to make matters clear beyond peradventure and to rectify the absence of a definition.

Mr. Waddington: I assure the hon. Gentleman that one could not continue to provide a postal or

telecommunications service unless it was maintained in a state that allowed such a provision. That is why we have no doubt that it would not add anything to the clause to insert the words in the amendment. Indeed, the introduction of the word "maintenance" could cause doubt in drafting terms on the scope of provision and may, therefore, have the effect not of clarifying the position but of excluding certain necessary elements.

On telecommunications, the narrower meaning of "provision" that would be implicit in the amended version might cast doubts on whether operator services were included, as they certainly must be.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): What are the necessary elements that would be excluded?

Mr. Waddington: If we add the word "maintenance", that obviously casts doubt on what is meant by "provision". Adding that word would suggest that the provision in the Bill did not mean what everybody would normally expect it to mean. The word "provision" must include maintenance in ordinary pariance for the reasons that I have already given. Therefore, a parliamentary draftsman would say that adding the word "maintenance" would cast doubts on the true meaning of the word "provision".

That is why we say with complete confidence that, although we are grateful to the hon. Member for Blaydon (Mr. McWilliam) for raising these important matters, I can assure him absolutely that he will not improve the protection for those who work for BT by pressing the amendment. In those circumstances, I ask him to withdraw it.

Mr. McWilliam: I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. Robert Kilroy-Silk (Knowsley, North): I beg to move amendment No. 9, in page 2, line 1, leave out subsection (3).

The Bill makes it an offence to tap telephones or to intercept mail unless certain conditions specified in the Bill have been met. Anyone caught intercepting telephone communications or mail without having satisfied those conditions has committed an offence and can be fined and/or imprisoned. That, as far as it goes, is acceptable.

However, the Bill then provides that a prosecution can be mounted only with the consent of the Director of Public Prosecutions in England and Wales or the Director of Public Prosecutions in Northern Ireland. We cannot accept that, and certainly not in the absence of substantial reasons in defence of it, which presumably the Minister has at his disposal.

We cannot accept that position because the person who has been offended against—who has had his privacy invaded either by his telephone calls being intercepted and listened to or by his mail being intercepted and opened—must be able to take action on his own account. He must be able to seek redress for the offence that has been committed against him. If that individual feels aggrieved, affronted, slighted or damaged, he must be able to initiate his own course of action to gain justice.

Indeed, I should have thought that it was a fundamental principle of any criminal justice system that those who have been the victims of offences must be able to have access to the courts to remedy their grievances, even if the remedy is no more than a criminal prosecution and the consequence a fine or imprisonment.

Where an offence has been committed against an individual citizen, it is sensible that that individual should be able to initiate action against those who have committed the offence. Clearly if he is precluded—as he is by the Bill—from taking that action, he will not only feel extremely annoyed and frustrated but will suffer a substantial loss of confidence in the criminal justice system. That is not an unimportant matter, and I hope that the Minister will take it on board.

None of us wants anyone to be precluded from access to the courts, and none of us wants the results of any such preclusion to be an individual finding that he no longer has any confidence in the criminal justice system.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): I understand the hon. Gentleman's concern and it is important that the aggrieved citizen should have redress to the courts. But does he not think that he is going about it in the wrong way and that the effective remedy is through the civil courts? Is it not important to have a filter, such as the Director of Public Prosecutions, to avoid vexatious or frivolous prosecutions?

Mr. Kilroy-Silk: I understand the hon. and learned Gentleman's point, but I do not agree with him. A remedy in the civil courts may be possible and the hon. and learned Gentleman is entitled to table an amendment that would provide for that. However, a remedy is already provided in clause 7 of the Bill where aggrieved individuals have access to a tribunal. Clause 7(5) lays down the powers of the tribunal and states:

"direct the Secretary of State to pay to the applicant such sum by way of compensation as may be specified in the order."

Therefore, the principle is accepted.

The Opposition believe that where an offence has been committed against an individual citizen, he should have the right of private prosecution in the criminal court.

The hon. and learned Gentleman reminds me of the deficiencies of the tribunal. Not only are there limitations on the tribunal's purview, but there are defects in the remedies that it can propose. An applicant can apply to the tribunal alleging a contravention of the rules set out in the Bill. The tribunal, on investigation, may find that there had been a contravention—that a surveillance tap was not authorised or was improperly authorised—but need take no further action. The tribunal can ask the Secretary of State to pay damages, quash the warrant and notify the applicant, but none of those actions has to be taken. In such circumstances, a citizen will be even further aggrieved if he is told by the tribunal that an offence has been committed but that no action is proposed. That is an additional reason why a citizen should be able to take action on his own account.

A further reason exists. One cannot always rely on the Director of Public Prosecutions. I do not wish to cast aspersions upon that post, or upon the individual who occupies it. I know and respect him. However, the DPP often takes a long time to reach a decision which is unacceptable to a person whose privacy has been invaded. In addition, the DPP will not give reasons for his decision. Hon. Members will remember that that was one of the causes of dissatisfaction during the inquiry into deaths in custody. The controversy was not about the DPP making the wrong decision, but because he did not give the reasons

[Mr. Kilroy-Silk]

for his decision. The DPP does not explain the factors that he has taken into account before coming to a decision. When the DPP decides against a prosecution, the suspicion is that he may have been subjected to political pressure or that there is more to the issue than appears on the surface.

We are proposing no more than a mechanism to give proper rights to the individual which will also take the DPP out of the realm of potential controversy. We want to remove all doubt and suspicion from the DPP and to allow the individual to take action on his own account. There are no good reasons for not approving the amendment. We do not accept the suggestion that the amendment will result in a multiplicity of vexatious cases. A small number of justifiable cases will arise and the amendment will ensure a proper regard for and confidence in our criminal justice system.

5.45 pm

Mr. Eldon Griffiths (Bury St. Edmunds): The hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Kilroy-Silk), all too characteristically, said that he had absolute confidence in the Director of Public Prosecutions, both in his office and his person. I agree with him. However, the hon. Gentleman said that suspicions were aroused by delays. If he believes, as I do, that the director is beyond suspicion, his duty is to reject those suspicions, not to give currency to them. I hope that the Government will resist the amendment.

Mr. Waddington: A number of criteria determine whether it is appropriate to have a DPP consent provision, inluding the need to ensure consistency in bringing prosecutions and to secure the possibility of giving due weight to considerations of public policy. It might also be essential, as the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) said, to ensure that the law is not abused through vexatious or inappropriate private prosecutions.

The hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Kilroy-Silk) was taken to task by my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Mr. Griffiths). I shall not get involved in that matter, but the Government do not accept the suggestion that the Director of Public Prosecutions would act otherwise than in strict accordance with his public responsibilities when determining whether a prosecution should be brought under the Bill.

There is nothing unusual in the provision. Director of Public Prosecution consent provisions apply in no less than 70 offences in English law. There can be no ground for arguing that the prosecuting authorities would be remiss or negligent in bringing prosecutions for unlawful interception when, in the light of the information available, it is appropriate to do so.

It has never been demonstrated that anything other than the highest standards of probity have been applied by successive directors. There are no grounds for arguing that those standards will be relaxed.

Special considerations undoubtedly apply to the interception offence, not because of the formulation of the offence itself, but because of the nature of the system of authorised interception. The Government have never tried to disguise that. These considerations are reflected in the special, but undeniably essential, arrangements for the secret proceedings of the tribunal. A person must not be able to discover whether he has been the subject of a warrant, or if he has, the ground on which it was issued, simply by making an application to the tribunal. It is also essential that it should not be possible to mount a civil action against the Secretary of State for the alleged wrongful issue of a warrant in a manner which would enable someone to discover such facts without having to go the tribunal. They are justifications for the existence of the tribunal. It is obvious that we cannot have a system under which a person cannot find out what he wants from a tribunal, but can discover the information through another route.

The same considerations apply to prosecutions. The purpose and value of authorised interception would be seriously undermined to the point of absurdity and genuine harm to the necessary purposes of interception if the people against whom warrants might be directed were able to discover the particular and general use of authorised interception by mounting private prosecutions. Because a warrant is a necessary defence to the clause 1 offence, there can be no general prohibition on reference to warrants in proceedings for that offence. That is the reason for the provision in clause 9(4).

It would be ridiculous if, having established the special arrangements for the tribunal and jurisdiction over the Secretary of State's decisions, the arrangements could be circumvented by the mounting of private prosecutions. Important considerations of public policy are involved which can be met only by ensuring in England and Wales and Northern Ireland, as invariably in Scotland, that there no private prosecutions. The DPP consent provision is essential if the purpose of the legislation as a whole is not to be weakened or even ultimately undermined. I hope that the hon. Member will withdraw the amendment.

Amendment negatived.

Clause 1 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 2

WARRANTS FOR INTERCEPTION

Mr. Alex Carlile: I beg to move amendment No. 10, in page 2, line 9, leave out 'issue a' and insert 'apply to a judge of the High Court for'.

The Chairman: With this we may discuss the following amendments: No. 11, in page 2, line 9, leave out 'requiring' and insert 'permitting'.

No. 131, in page 2, line 9, leave out 'requiring', and insert—

'.—(2) A warrant under this section may require'.

No. 13, in page 2, line 17, leave out 'issue' and insert 'apply for'.

No. 132, in page 2, line 18, after 'is', insert 'urgent and'.

No. 133, in page 2, line 27, at end insert—

'(3A) A Judge of the High Court may, on the application of the Secretary of State issue a warrant if he considers it necessary for the purpose of preventing and detecting serious crime.

(3B) The Board may on the application of the Secretary of State issue a warrant if it considers it necessary:

(*a*) in the interests of national security; or

(*b*) for the purpose of safeguarding the economic wellbeing of the United Kingdom.'.

No. 20, in page 2, line 29, at end add—

'(5) A warrant shall not be issued unless a High Court judge is satisfied that the warrant is necessary on the grounds set out in (2)(*a*), (*b*) and (*c*) above.'.

No. 134, in clause 4, page 3, leave out line 32.

No. 27, in page 3, line 32, leave out 'issued' and insert 'applied for'.

No. 135, in page 3, line 33, leave out '(*a*)' and insert 'An application for a warrant shall not be made except'.

No. 136, in page 3, line 33, leave out from '; or' to end of line 37.

No. 32, in page 3, line 36, leave out 'issue' and insert 'apply for'.

No. 33, in page 3, line 37, at end insert—

'(1A) A warrant shall not be issued on the grounds set out in section 2(2)(*b*) above except by order of a judge of the High Court.'.

No. 34, in page 3, line 41, after 'period', insert 'apply to'.

No. 138, in page 4, line 4, leave out subsection (5) and insert—

'(5) A warrant shall not be renewed except by—

(*a*) a Judge of the High Court on the grounds set out in 2(5) above;

(*b*) the Board on the grounds set out in 2(6) above.'.

No. 37, in page 4, line 4, leave out

'an instrument under the hand of'

and insert

'by order of a judge of the High Court upon application by'.

No. 139, in page 4, leave out lines 7 to 13 and add—

'(*a*) in relation to a warrant issued by the Secretary of State the period of six hours beginning from the time when it was issued.

(*b*) in relation to a warrant issued by a Judge of the High Court the period of three months beginning with the day it was last issued or renewed.

(*c*) in relation to a warrant issued by the Board the period of three months beginning with the day it was last issued or renewed.'.

No. 40, in clause 5, page 4, line 15, at beginning insert 'apply to a judge to'.

No. 42, in page 4, line 18, at beginning insert 'apply to a judge of the High Court to'.

No. 44, in page 4, line 31, leave out from 'by' to end of line 37 and insert

'order of a judge of the High Court'.

No. 48, in clause 6, page 5, line 1, leave out

'the Secretary of State issues a warrant he'

and insert

'a warrant has been issued by a High Court judge the Secretary of State'.

New clause 8—*Functions of the Board*—

'(1) Her Majesty may by letters patent appoint a Board of five members of Her Majesty's Privy Council which power shall be exercisable on an address presented by the House of Commons and no motion shall be made for such an address except by the Prime Minister.

(2) The Board will carry out the functions assigned to it under section 2 and 4 of this Act.

(3) As soon as practicable after the end of each calendar year the Board shall make a report to the House of Commons with respect to it carrying out its functions under this Act.'.

Mr. Carlile: This debate is about the issue of warrants and whether they should require prior approval. Two alternatives are presented in my amendments and the other amendments. Prior judicial approval for the issue of warrants is required under those amendments; and in new clause 8, tabled by the hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Norris), a board of Privy Councillors is suggested.

The *Times* diary has given us a day-by-day account of what goes on in a Select Committee. A Select Committee of the present type could not be expected realistically to carry out the role of prior scrutiny. However, a different view could be taken of a board of five members of Her Majesty's Privy Council who, ex hypothesi, do and would keep secrets. Indeed, I feel sure that it is not one of Her Majesty's Privy Councillors who has been leaking information to the *Times* diary.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk: Does the hon. and learned Gentleman want to bet?

Mr. Carlile: The hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Kilroy-Silk), from a sedentary position, is offering me a financial bet on that proposition. I shall have a word with him afterwards, because I am sure that if a bet is struck I shall win it.

The idea of judicial authority has not been plucked out of the air by myself, my right hon. and hon. Friends or others who support the view that there should be prior judicial authority. The Royal Commission on criminal procedure was of the opinion that there should be prior judicial authority before the issuing of a warrant. I am surprised that that recommendation has not found favour with the Government, unless they are about to change their mind, which I suspect is not the case.

I am surprised especially that the royal commission's recommendations have not been taken up by the Government, because they were drawn in extremely persuasive terms. I shall not weary the Committee by going through those terms as the arguments are well known by the few right hon. and hon. Members who are in the Chamber. The Bill has rightly been sent to a Committee of the whole House because of the importance of the matters which come within its compass. However, and ironically, I suspect that if it were being considered by a Standing Committee in a Committee Room there would be far more right hon. and hon. Members present than there are now in the Chamber. It does little credit to the House of Commons that so few Members are present to deal with matters of such importance.

I do not rely for my argument in favour of prior judicial authority solely upon the Royal Commission on criminal procedure. Throughout the world—this is not confined to Europe — there are examples of the use of prior judicial approval. It is used in Canada, for example, and in Denmark, where the decision is taken by a competent judicial authority. The procedure is used in Sweden, in Spain and in Switzerland. In Switzerland, the investigating judge must submit a copy of his decision with a case file and an explanatory note to the President of Indictments. If the President decides that the judge has overstepped the limits, he will revoke the order, and the revocation will stand.

The procedure of prior judicial approval is used also in Italy, where a warrant may be issued by a public prosecutor in the place where the offence has been committed, or by an investigating judge. I am not terribly enthusiastic about issue by a public prosecutor, but the Italians have a well developed judicial system. As we know from today's tragedy in Sicily, Italian judges take as fiercely independent a position as our own judges are accustomed to taking.

In Austria, there is a well developed and tried system from which we could learn a great deal. There tapping has to be approved by a college of three judges, which authorises the warrant and supervises the investigation. That system works perfectly well in Austria. There is no reason why something similar should not be adopted here.

It was made clear by myself and many others on Second Reading—by definition, our arguments were apparently

[Mr. Carlile]

accepted because we are debating the Bill in Committee on the Floor of the House—that the Bill codifies—for which we are grateful—a severe intrusion into private property, private life and the private conversations and communications of the private citizen. It is vital that we give the best possible protection to the private citizen against the unjustified issue of a warrant, while of course bearing in mind that there are cases where a warrant of this sort must be issued in the public interest.

There are those who take the view—I believe that the Labour party does—that judges are not responsible enough, capable enough or even intelligent enough to be able to consider the issues which would be placed before them on an application for the issue of a warrant. However, we are not asking for the application to take place before a lay magistrate, or a stipendary magistrate, or even a circuit judge; we are saying that a High Court judge, one of the 70 or so most experienced judges in England—Liberals would seek to introduce a similar provision for Scotland and I confess that I overlooked the different terminology that would be required in drafting amendments Nos. 10 and 11 to make them apply to Scotland as well—should be asked to consider whether a warrant should be issued.

High Court judges are accustomed day by day to dealing with extremely complicated urgent ex parte applications and to sifting most complex and difficult facts. They deal with issues of public policy which may be of the most sensitive nature—for example, many such decisions were required of judges during the miners' strike. The proper protection of the citizen would be met by requiring the authority seeking the warrant to go before a High Court judge, to submit itself to a proper procedure and to apply to the judge for the warrant.

Mr. Douglas Hogg (Grantham): Is the hon. and learned Gentleman not ignoring the distinction, both in theory and in practice, between a judicial act and an executive act? Judges are extremely well versed in judicial acts, but the considerations involved in an executive act are often different and are matters to which they are not accustomed.

Mr. Carlile: The hon. Gentleman has assisted me in highlighting the reasons why the amendments have been tabled. I recognise that what is provided for at present is an executive act. I believe that it should cease to be wholly an executive act. The executive act should be the decision that one should apply for a warrant. There should then follow a specific judicial act. I note that the Minister is casting admiring glances at the hon. Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) as thanks for later argument. It is desirable and necessary that we should introduce a judicial level of inquiry—the judicial filter—before such warrants are issued. I hope, although I am not confident, that the Government will accept the view which I have expressed and will recognise that we should follow the example of our friends and some of our neighbours abroad and introduce the concept for which I am arguing.

6 pm

Mr. Steve Norris (Oxford, East): In discussing this group of amendments, we are considering the most important issue in the Bill—who is to judge the suitability of a warrant to intrude upon a fundamental civil liberty of the citizen, to subject that citizen to the type of control by the state which, under any circumstances other than those outlined in the Bill, would be intolerable. A warrant may be considered necessary in relation to serious crime, national security or—this is another dubious category—the state's economic well-being.

Given that we must decide who shall judge, we must face the fact that the Government insist that it is the Home Secretary alone who shall act, not just as judge but as judge and jury, in his application to carry out his executive action. This is despite the fact, as the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) pointed out, that the royal commission specifically recommended an independent judicial review process. The Bill does not refer to the alternatives that are available to us and that are entirely safe in the context of the requirements of national security. As far as I know, no hon. Member would seek to diminish those requirements or to suggest that they are irrelevant. We have the option of allowing judges the power to provide an overview of an executive application made by the Home Secretary. The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery was correct in his response to the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg).

While we are happy to allow judges to decide, in similar circumstances, whether to issue a warrant to search an individual's premises or to issue a care order, we are not prepared to do so when an application is made for a warrant to carry out interception. That is odd, especially as one of the main justifications for interception is suspicion that a serious crime will be prevented or detected. That is an unreasonable distinction, because we have already given judges this power in other circumstances. I do not know whether the interception of a person's communications is regarded as a greater invasion of privacy than a search of a person's home. I should have thought that both were equally important and serious steps that should not be taken without proper supervision. For many years we have been prepared to allow judges to authorise the issue of search warrants, so surely the same procedure could apply to warrants for interception.

Mr. Maclennan: Does the hon. Gentleman recognise the difference between warrants to search a house and warrants to intercept communications? Although the need to uphold the law may require interception in a home, in the case of interception of communications we are speaking about reasons of state. There is a difference between asking a judge to consider whether the law would be assisted by interception in a home and asking him to consider the matter for reasons of state of the type set out in clause 2.

Mr. Norris: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for reminding me that I should have better ordered my argument if I had started by reminding hon. Members that there are three classifications that must be considered in applying for a warrant to intercept—suspicion of serious crime, the security of the state and the economic well-being of the state. I apologise to the Committee for not making that point clear. My point about the right of judges to issue warrants was confined to consideration of serious crime. As evidenced by my having tabled new clause 8, I have other ideas on national security which the Committee should discuss.

We are happy to say that judges should have the right to decide whether the police are acting properly in seeking to infringe a person's fundamental civil liberty by entering his home against his will; yet the Bill says that judges should not have the right to supervise the potentially equal infringement of a civil right in relation to interception of communications.

Mr. Eldon Griffiths: Not by the police.

Mr. Norris: As my hon. Friend observes, not by the police. Judges should decide whether a proper case has been made out in an application for a warrent to intercept, to detect or prevent a serious crime. We must consider equally the applications for warrants in matters of national security and economic well-being. The Opposition suggest that the appropriate mechanism should be an application by the Home Secretary to a Select Committee. As the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery observes, Select Committees are, regrettably, not noted for their own security, as any reader of the *Times* diary could confirm. However high one's opinion of one's colleagues might be, to suggest that a Select Committee, chosen from among all hon. Members, is the appropriate body to consider the serious and confidential applications that are likely to be made under this procedure is naive. Such a procedure is not viable in any way.

I sympathise with the Opposition's desire to ensure that such applications are ultimately within the purview of Parliament and that there is a degree of accountability to Parliament for the actions of the security services and the directions of the Home Secretary, but I suggest that there are alternative ways of achieving that end.

The Germans specifically recognise the distinction between serious crime and national security, and in the case of serious crime, applications for warrants are made to a judge. My right and learned Friend the Home Secretary put it to me that judges in Europe generally have a more investigative role than judges in Britain. My hon. and learned Friend gave that as a reason for distinguishing between the suitability of British and German judges to authorise search warrants. That is not a valid reason. The existence of a procedure to issue search warrants, care orders and so on shows that judges are capable of making decisions about serious crime.

In the case of national security, in Germany the appropriate Minister vets an application, ensures that it is suitable and then submits it to a committee of the German Parliament. I suggest that a board of five of Her Majesty's senior Privy Councillors is the appropriate mechanism to consider applications. Such persons should not be active on the Front Bench of either party, but would still be Members. If I may be allowed to pay him tribute, the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan), whose integrity in such matters is unquestioned, would be one of those able to bring to the board the appropriate experience and judgment that clearly would be prerequisites of members of the board.

A committee comprising senior Privy Councillors, who are above the daily hurly-burly of political life in the House, would be able to consider applications made to them by the Home Secretary and to approve or disapprove of them, depending on their suitability. Such a board needs to be accountable. I have suggested in new clause 8 that the board should report to Parliament as soon as is convenient after the end of each year, outlining those parts of its work that can be outlined and that would not compromise the integrity of the security services. I do not seek by that mechanism to diminish the Home Secretary's role or, it goes without saying, to cast any doubt upon my right hon. and learned Friend's integrity, or at any point to disagree with his assertion that he has, as his predecessors will have done, always taken a considerable amount of trouble to ensure that applications, when approved, are approved only on the highest possible criteria.

Hon. Members on both sides of the Committee do not want to see the operation of the security services opened up so that they are no longer effective, or spread out to the public view so that their ability to act is compromised, but want them to be brought clearly and unequivocally within the purview and remit of Parliament. The mechanism that I propose covers that circumstance and would be an effective method of ensuring that we had genuine accountability to Parliament in these important matters.

I trust that my hon. and learned Friend the Minister will allude to that proposition in his reply, because it is the most crucial part of the Bill.

Mr. Eldon Griffiths: No one doubts that this is a crucial part of the Bill and of our practice, because when we talk about national security we are speaking about the risk of treason, espionage and grievous terrorism. A heavy responsibility must be discharged by anyone who causes a warrant to be issued to tap telephones or to intercept mail, but it is done for equally serious reasons — to safeguard the public interest and the security of the realm.

The debate is about who should legitimate the Secretary of State's exercise of his prerogative. I may disappoint my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Norris) and the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile), but I believe that only the House can legitimate the proper action of the Secretary of State. So long as the Home Secretary has the trust of the House, that is as far as it needs or ought to go.

I shall deal with the first point made by the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery, who always speaks eloquently and mellifluously. I accept that judges make a number of decisions that affect the issue of warrants for the police; but so do magistrates. While judges may know a great deal about the law, I do not believe that they can take the kind of decisions that apply where urgent matters touching upon espionage, terrorism, mutiny or treason are involved. I do not believe that that is within their working competence.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Will the hon. Gentleman tell us why he considers that judges are incapable of taking urgent decisions on important and difficult matters? Is he aware that almost every night of the week a judge somewhere, often in his home or at the judge's lodgings, has to take that type of decision?

Mr. Griffiths: I did not say that judges were incapable of taking difficult decisions. That is what they are judges for. In an issue touching upon the security of the state —the public safety—one should look to Her Majesty's Ministers who, for the time being, have the confidence of the House. They must take that decision. Her Majesty's Ministers must decide whether our soldiers, sailors and airmen go to war. The same Ministers must decide whether

[Mr. Griffiths]

there is a tangible risk to the security of the state. That is my judgment and what I offer. I am not persuaded that a decision by the judges would be the right approach.

Similarly, my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East has suggested a group of Privy Councillors. We all know Privy Councillors. I have the greatest respect for most of them. *[Interruption.]* I know that the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan), who was Prime Minister for a number of years, will understand when I say with the greatest affection to the personality involved that I read the memoirs of a Privy Councillor, Mr. Richard Crossman, with the greatest interest. I suspect that when he was writing those diaries and was a senior member of the Privy Council and of the Government he was perhaps acting in a way that my hon. Friend would think was not entirely appropriate for the five-man Privy Council. The Secretary of State cannot, as it were, put into commission his exercise of the proper powers of prerogative that must belong with Her Majesty's Ministers responsible directly to the House.

6.15 pm

Mr. Norris: I presume that my hon. Friend is arguing that clause 2(2)(*a*),

"in the interests of national security",

should be dealt with by the Home Secretary alone. That is an argument that can be advanced. My hon. Friend will not find me defending the posthumous reputation of Richard Crossman. If my hon. Friend had listened carefully to what I said, he would have understood that I was not suggesting that people who were active should be involved. I believe that my hon. Friend is confirming what I said about clause 2(2)(*b*):

"for the purpose of preventing or detecting serious crime".

The idea that only the Home Secretary is capable of making decisions in respect of warrants

"for the purpose of preventing or detecting serious crime"

when judges do it every day in respect of search warrants surely is nonsense.

Mr. Griffiths: I hope that my hon. Friend will allow me to say that I am probably as familiar with the police seeking and obtaining warrants from magistrates and judges as anyone in the House. However, we are not talking about that; we are talking about where the security of the state—public safety in the broadest and highest sense of the word—is at risk. I have said before, and I have to say it now, that whether we like it or not we are driven to trust the Home Secretary. I have trusted Labour and Conservative Home Secretaries. Although it sounds simple to say that, I believe that it is the proper constitutional, and by far the most expedient and practical, position to be in.

Issues of speed can militate against judicial arrangements and Privy Councillors. There is the issue of the "need to know". How widely these matters must be spread before authorisation is an important point. Issues would arise as to how for judges would require sources of information to be revealed to them before they decided. The same would apply to Privy Councillors. The House must face the dilemma. Let us suppose that a judicial review by five Privy Councillors were to reverse the Home Secretary's request and say that he could not have the warrant. What, then, is the Home Secretary's position? In my judgment, he would have no choice but to resign because he would, as a Minister of the Crown charged with the public safety, have formed a judgment. Ministers have to decide whether our soldiers, sailors and airmen can be committed to war. They can be involved in places such as Northern Ireland with the most difficult, sensitive and in every way demanding decisions. The reverse of that is that they must be equally capable and willing to take decisions that affect the defence of the state against treason and espionage.

If the Home Secretary of the day, on the advice that was available to him from the security services and others, had come to the conclusion that public safety, the national interest and the security of the state required that an interception warrant be issued, and then a group of judges or a group of Privy Councillors were to reverse that decision without having access to all the information on which the Secretary of State had formed his judgment, would not the position of the Secretary of State become impossible? He would have to resign. We should not have any longer the prerogative—and it is a prerogative—of Her Majesty's Ministers being able to determine, while they are in office, the security of the state. In fact, their high office would be put into commission. That is not practicable. So long as the Home Secretary bears the responsibility, he must be given the trust of the House in carrying it out.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There is a distinction to be drawn between the national defence and economic well-being argument and the argument about

"for the purpose of preventing or detecting serious crime".

With regard to the interests of national security and economic well-being, it is utterly inappropriate to leave the matter to judges because it is essentially and necessarily an Executive action. If there has been an abuse of the Executive power, there should be a review, and it is at that stage that the judicial intervention takes place, although it is perfectly true that judicial intervention in this instance takes the form of a tribunal. On the two major categories of national security and economic well-being, there is a major distinction between the executive role of Government, who are responsible for doing the executive act, and the judicial role, which is, if necessary, to provide a remedy if the executive act has been outside the statutory powers. I entirely disagree with the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) when he seeks to confuse the two.

There are pragmatic arguments as well. I shall mention three. First, what about appeals? If a judge refuses the Home Secretary's application, does the matter go to appeal? If it does, does it go to the Court of Appeal, and what sort of publicity will be given to that, if any? If it cannot go to appeal, is a single judge to be able to frustrate the Home Secretary's application based on grounds of national security? Frankly, I find that concept utterly preposterous.

Secondly, there is the matter of speed. I can conceive of quite a few cases in which expedition is of the essence. If the Home Secretary has to make a detailed application, set out his grounds, accumulate the evidence and no doubt instruct counsel, it will take a long time. Counsel might be the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery or even myself. I am not one to refuse briefs of that kind or of any kind. I am not proud. *[Interruption.]* I shall represent my

hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Mr. Griffiths). However, if the Home Secretary has to do that, a great deal of time may pass.

The third point is consistency. The plain fact is that judges are not wholly consistent among themselves. We need consistency in approach. We shall not get that from a bench of judges, especially when it comprises people such as Lord Denning.

Passing from those considerations, I refer now to others of serious crime. My hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Norris) has a point about paragraph *(b)*. There is no particular reason why judges should not be able to do what my hon. Friend is suggesting they should do. It is possible, and I have no great objections to the principle. However, I do not believe that any benefit will be derived from the process. The difficulties are essentially pragmatic ones of consistency and expedition. I doubt that the judgments will be entirely consistent, and I believe that they would be more lengthy in the obtaining.

The mischief that my hon. Friend is seeking to gainsay is largely cured by the review mechanism provided for under the Bill. Therefore, I see no great advantage. The possible difficulties are taken into account through the review procedure. Therefore, I would not support my hon. Friend, but he has a point.

Mr. Norris: My hon. Friend mentioned the principles of consistency and expedition in relation to the review by the Home Secretary. Does he agree that those same principles of consistency and expedition apply equally to search warrants? In that case, it has been accepted for a considerable time that judicial involvement is perfectly reasonable. Does not my hon. Friend think that the same applies in this case?

Mr. Hogg: Those things do not march exactly together. To start with, search warrants are common—and have to be—and arise in many thousands of cases, whereas in the case of paragraph *(b)*, on serious crime, the number of warrants issued each year is but a few hundred.

I come back to the point that there are some pragmatic objections to be raised. The present procedure is not a serious mischief, and the review procedure will take into account such mischief as may arise, so I see no great merit in what my hon. Friend suggests.

Mr. Mark Carlisle (Warrington, South): Having listened to what has been said, I believe that the suggestion that the matter could be dealt with by a High Court judge is impractical and unsuitable. There is no clear analogy between the granting of a search warrant, which, as my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) says, is a common everyday occurrence, and the granting of the Home Secretary's approval for interception.

It is also important that the applications should themselves be dealt with in total security. As a junior Minister in the Home Office for four years, I never saw a single application for a warrant for telephone tapping because applications go directly to the Home Secretary, and the Home Secretary alone. If someone else is involved, inevitably there is a greater danger that the knowledge about the application being made will get out. When one is dealing with national security, one does not want to know that the person whose telephone one wishes to intercept is indeed having his telephone intercepted.

In the end, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Mr. Griffiths) said, it comes down to trusting the Home Secretary. I am happy to say that, certainly in the years that I have been in the House, I have had complete confidence in leaving that decision in the hands of the Home Secretary of the day, irrespective of the party to which he belongs. There is no other way to deal with the matter. If we try to turn it over to the judges, there will be arguments about lack of accountability. It is a matter of whether one trusts the Home Secretary with that power. I believe that one should and that we have been well served by those who have had it to date.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk: The Labour party has no problem about supporting the series of amendments tabled by the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile), which lay down more stringent conditions to be satisfied before warrants are issued. Like him, we regard safeguards as necessary and important, and we want those safeguards to be as stringent and effective as possible. We want warrants to be issued only when they are absolutely necessary.

Unfortunately, we cannot agree with the hon. and learned Gentleman in his desire to substitute a judge for the Home Secretary in issuing warrants. The hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Norris) favours a committee of Privy Councillors which we cannot accept either. The hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Mr. Griffiths) also mentioned this matter. We are now discussing perhaps the most crucial area of the Bill, which is about the question: who guards the guards? Who is responsible and under what conditions? What degree of political accountability is there for issuing warrants?

There is no dissent by any party on either side of the Committee from our objective of obtaining proper accountability and responsibility. We all want to ensure that there is a proper balance between the needs of accountability and of public interest in these matters. A fine line has to be drawn between the one and the other. There is no hard and fast argument for any one of the propositions that we are now debating, but after a great deal of consideration it seems to us inappropriate to vest such responsibility either in a High Court judge or in a committee of Privy Councillors, respected or otherwise, politically active or dormant. That is irrelevent.

We cannot accept a system which allows a Home Secretary to divest himself of this important function—not, as the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery seemed to suggest, because we have anything against judges, although in their speeches some of the apparently learned members of another place show a remarkable naivety about the British constitution as well as about political life and, indeed, life in general, which cannot inspire anyone with much confidence in their judgment in that area. We are not against judges, but this is not an issue that they are appropriate or competent to decide. It is not a judicial function. It is a political and executive decision which must be taken by a political and executive figure who is responsible to the House of Commons. It is a matter not of whether judges are competent, but of whether they are appropriate and acceptable. As the hon. Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) has said, there is no good reason why one judge should be set up as a greater authority to determine whether a warrant should be issued in the national interest than the Home Secretary, who is responsible to the House of Commons. Clearly, the Home Secretary is in a better position to take such a decision than any one judge, however eminent, learned or competent.

6.30 pm

More importantly, we want to ensure that there is some accountability for decision-making in this area, however tenuous and remote it may be in practice. We know that leaving the power with the Home Secretary does not mean that he will make statements in Parliament or answer questions, either orally or in writing, but he will be no less accountable than a High Court judge operating on exactly the same criteria.

Although the Home Secretary is not formally accountable in the sense that he is not prepared to account for himself by answering questions in Parliament, there is a practical sense in which he will be accountable and will regard himself as such in a way that no High Court judge could or would. First, we expect any Home Secretary, whatever his party, to do his job conscientiously and diligently and to ensure that only warrants that are necessary are in fact issued.

That goes without saying. In that respect, he is no different from a High Court judge or a bevy of Privy Councillors. More than that, however, a Home Secretary knows that there may be a leak or a scandal. There may be a Cathy Massiter lurking in the background. Perhaps not while he is Home Secretary, but in the months, years or decades ahead, a scandal may break and he will be responsible. His reputation will be on the line for the actions that he has taken. The whole House knows of the reverberations in the homes and private offices of all previous Prime Ministers and Home Secretaries who held office during the period to which Cathy Massiter's allegations related. Every one of those distinguished and honourable individuals wanted to be sure that he had acted properly in the circumstances prevailing at the time and issued only warrants that were appropriate and could be defended both at the time and subsequently.

That pragmatic aspect of the accountability and responsibility of a Home Secretary, tenuous and remote though it is, is extremely important. Only an incumbent of that office can really know the importance and the influential nature of making oneself potentially accountable to the future in one's everyday actions as Home Secretary. The fact that his reputation, integrity and competence may be at stake in the future must make a Home Secretary far more circumspect and diligent in his decisions than any High Court judge. For that reason alone, therefore, we prefer to retain the provisions in the Bill and must regretfully oppose the amendments proposed by the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery.

Mr. Waddington: I shall not weary the Committee with a long speech because the arguments advanced by the hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Kilroy-Silk) and by my hon. Friends the Members for Bury St. Edmunds (Mr. Griffiths) and for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) have really clinched the matter.

The arguments can be put quite shortly. I do not believe that it is right in principle for judges to be involved in these matters. When one reflects even for a moment on all the recent excitement about matters of this kind, I am sure that no High Court judge would wish to have the job thrust on him. One can think of no task more likely to put the judiciary straight into the centre of the political arena. My hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds is entirely right. The Home Secretary is responsible to Parliament, and he has vast responsibilities which he cannot shuffle off on anyone else. There is no way in which a responsibility as solemn and important as this can be shuffled off on anyone else.

There are also practical problems. Judges are entirely unqualified to carry out these responsibilities. My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Carlisle) has said that he never came across any of these warrants when he was at the Home Office, although we know that there is a direct line to the Home Secretary who has skilled people to advise him on whether he should exercise his powers. It seems incredible to suggest that a judge would be capable of reaching a more correct conclusion about whether it is necessary to issue a warrant than a Home Secretary furnished with information by people who have dealt with these matters for a long period under a variety of Governments and are used to dealing with members of the security services seeking to put applications before the Secretary of State.

I am not at all impressed by arguments about what goes on in other countries. Judges in other countries discharge a whole range of responsibilities that our judges do not have. From the little knowledge that we have about other legal systems, we know that judges carry out administrative and all kinds of inquisitorial responsibilities which our judges do not undertake.

I listened carefully to the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Norris) about search warrants. That is a typical case of confusion being created because the same word is used for entirely separate things. There is not the slightest resemblance between warrants for interception and search warrants, except that someone was unwise enough to describe them both as warrants. That is the only connection between the two.

A search warrant relates to the exercise of police powers. The police seek it and the police execute it. Its issue relates to the long-standing responsibilities of magistrates for enforcement of the law. The search is a public act. The occupier of the house knows of it and is entitled to see the warrant. That is how the person executing it gets in. The results of the search are likely to be included as evidence in subsequent proceedings.

Here we are dealing with the issue of a warrant to obtain information that is never used in evidence in any proceedings. Such a warrant does not necessarily have anything to do with the police, and the results cannot be used in court. Therefore, with respect to my hon. Friend, it is impossible to draw any analogy between search warrants and the warrants under discussion.

Mr. Norris: I bow to my hon. and learned Friend's infinitely superior legal knowledge and experience, but there is at least one analogy between the two warrants which goes beyong the mere use of the same word. Both involve a fundamental infringement of an important civil liberty, which should not be undertaken without due account having been taken of all the circumstances in which that civil liberty is to be infringed. In that context, the two are not just similar but almost identical.

Mr. Waddington: I agree with my hon. Friend. We are talking about an infringement of civil liberties. That is why the Home Secretary is so careful in using these powers, and why, in this legislation, we are for the first time giving to the individual who feels that the Home Secretary has not properly exercised his powers the right

to say to a tribunal that, in the circumstances, he does not think that the Home Secretary has properly exercised his powers.

My hon. Friend was right to recognise that this is a most important departure in our law. It should at once be recognised in the country, as it already is in the House of Commons, that the Bill does not restrict but extends people's rights. For the first time, there is to be a new check on the exercise by the Home Secretary of his power.

Let us now revert to the essence of the debate. I cannot see that it matters two hoots whether one introduces a judge, five Privy Councillors or 15 Privy Councillors. The buck stops, and should stop, with the Home Secretary. That is the argument on which we stand, and that is why we are convinced that the structure of the Bill is right.

Mr. Alex Carlile: It is troubling to hear the Minister of State smugly adhering to a unique aspect of the British system which is lacking in almost all the other countries that have been referred to — the rule that the Home Secretary, on his own, should decide whether a warrant should be issued.

The debate seems to have revolved around two points. The first is that we trust our Home Secretary and therefore the buck should stop with him. The second is the proposition that the Home Secretary is accountable to Parliament, and that is enough.

Of course we trust our Home Secretaries; I do not suggest otherwise. However, the real question is whether the accountability relied upon truly exists nowadays.

I shall have to speak from memory, because I had not anticipated that the question of accountability would be so prominent in the debate. However, I recall a pamphlet issued by the Conservative political centre in about 1973 and written by the present Secretary of State for Education and Science. I also recall the Dimbleby lecture delivered in, I believe, 1975 by the present Lord Chancellor. In both cases the point was forcefully made that Parliament no longer provides a satisfactory form of accountability to redress wrongs done to the private citizen who would be likely to suffer from such wrongs. Both the right hon. Member for Leeds, North-East (Sir K. Joseph) and the Lord Chancellor argued in those publications — the lecture was published later—that what was needed was not only a written constitution but court procedures in our domestic jurisdiction designed to protect the liberty of the citizen.

I do not accept that the accountability point is sufficiently strong. By keying the arguments to those two questions—whether we trust our Home Secretaries, and whether there is sufficient accountability—the point of the amendment seems to have been missed. The point is that this should no longer be a purely executive act. It is not good enough to say that we can forget about procedures in other countries because their judges have administrative roles. Our judges have administrative roles. They are the arbiters of administrative law. Every day they hear applications for judicial review.

The great constitutional argument on the Administration of Justice Bill, arising under clause 43, is whether judges should continue to play such an important part in administrative law. In another place, where many experienced judges and lawyers sit, the verdict has been given on more than one occasion in no uncertain terms.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The hon. and learned Gentleman is confused about the role of judges. He speaks of judicial review. In those cases, the judges are determining whether an executive action is within or without the existing law. They are not taking executive action themselves.

6.45 pm

Mr. Carlile: With respect to the hon. Gentleman, whose arguments during the debate have been persuasive, I suggest that there is a perfectly clear role for judges. I would adopt the analogy of search warrants, which relate to material of the highest confidentiality, as we can see from the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. I adopt the analogy suggested by the hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Norris).

I have confidence that the matter will not end here and that there will be extensive arguments on these points in another place. With the leave of the House, and in the keen anticipation of those arguments, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I beg to move amendment No. 12, in page 2, line 17, leave out subsections (2) to (4) and add—

'(2) The Secretary of State shall not issue a warrant under this section unless there exist reasonable grounds for considering and he does consider that the warrant is necessary—

(a) for the defence of the realm;

(b) for the purpose of preventing or detecting serious crime; or

(c) for the purpose of safeguarding the economic well being of the United Kingdom.

(3) A warrant shall not be considered necessary as mentioned in subsection (2)*(a)* above unless the information which it is considered necessary to acquire is information required to defend the United Kingdom from external and internal dangers arising from attempts at espionage or sabotage or from the actions of persons and organisations whether directed from within or without the country which may reasonably be considered to be subversive to the state. No action shall be considered "subversive to the state" unless it is an action which can reasonably be regarded as one which threatens the safety and well being of the state and which is intended to undermine or overthrow parliamentary democracy by unlawful political or unlawful industrial or by violent means.

(4) A warrant shall not be considered necessary as mentioned in subsection (2)*(b)* unless normal methods of investigation have been tried and have failed or must from the nature of things be unlikely to succeed if tried and unless there exist good reasons for believing that an interception would be likely to lead to an arrest and conviction. For the purpose of subsection (2)*(b)* a crime is not to be regarded as a "serious crime" unless it is one for which a man with no previous criminal record could reasonably be expected to be sentenced to at least three years imprisonment or an offence of lesser gravity in which either a large number of people is involved or there is good reason to apprehend the use of violence.

(5) A warrant shall not be considered necessary as mentioned in subsection (2)*(c)* unless the information which it is considered necessary to acquire is information relating to the acts or intentions of persons outside the British Islands.

(6) A warrent shall not be considered necessary as mentioned in subsection (2)*(a)* and *(c)* above unless in each case other methods of investigation have been tried and have failed or must from the nature of things be unlikely to succeed if tried.

(7) References in the following provisions of this Act to a warrant are references to a warrant under this section.'.

The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): With this it will be convenient to take the following amendments: No. 14, in page 2, line 18, leave out 'he considers that'.

No. 15, in page 2, line 18, after 'considers', insert 'on reasonable grounds'.

No. 16, in page 2, leave out lines 19 to 23 and insert—

'*(a)* for the defence of the realm;

[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means]

(b) for the detection or prevention of a major subversive, terrorist or espionage activity that is likely to injure the national interest; or

(c) for the purpose of preventing or detecting a grave offence; and unless the following conditions apply—

(i) normal methods of investigation must have been tried and failed, or must from the nature of things be unlikely to succeed if tried; and

(ii) there must be a good reason to think that an interception would be likely to lead to an arrest and a conviction, or, in the case of warrants for interception on behalf of the security service, the material likely to be obtained by interception must be of direct use in compiling the information that is necessary to the security service in carrying out the tasks laid upon it by any directive given by the Secretary of State to its Director General.'.

No. 17, page 2, line 23, at end insert—

'(2A) A warrant shall not be issued unless—

(a) no other method of investigation is available, or all other methods have failed or are impracticable; and

(b) in the case of paragraph *(b)* of subsection (2), there are reasonable grounds for believing that an interception is likely to lead to an arrest and conviction.'.

No. 18, page 2, line 24, leave out subsection (3).

No. 49, in clause 6, page 5, line 3, leave out 'he considers' and insert 'are'.

No. 50, in clause 6, page 5, line 3, leave out 'he considers' and insert 'are reasonably'.

No. 52, in clause 6, page 5, line 22, leave out from 'that' to end of line 23 and add

'the Secretary of State on reasonable grounds considers necessary in accordance with section 2(2)*(a)*, *(b)* and *(c)* above'.

Government amendment No. 60.

No. 140, in clause 10, page 9, line 9, at end insert—

'"grave offence" means a criminal offence for which the penalty is fixed by law or for which the maximum sentence is 14 years imprisonment.'.

No. 141, in clause 10, page 9, line 19, at end insert—

'"subversive" means having in contemplation the overthrow of the government by unlawful means;

No. 117, in clause 10, page 9, line 28, at end insert

'"serious crime" means a criminal offence for which the penalty is fixed by law or for which the maximum sentence is 14 years imprisonment.'.

Government amendment No. 118.

Mr. Hogg: The purpose of the amendment is to give greater clarity to the three phrases in clause 2(2). The justification for giving greater clarity to them is twofold. We are now legislating to define the relationship between society and the individual. We have to bear in mind that what we are contemplating is an infringement of the right of privacy, and that it is right that the House should define as exactly and fully as possible the circumstances in which an infringement of privacy is justified. I am very much opposed to giving wide, general discretionary powers to any Home Secretary or any Minister — although, of course, my right hon. and learned Friend the present Home Secretary would exercise such power in a singularly fair manner. It is the duty of Parliament to define such powers as fully and precisely as is possible. That is the principle that I put before the House in support of a clear definition.

There is a second and related reason why the Committee needs to define the powers clearly. For the first time, we are enacting a review of an appeal procedure. We are laying down the circumstances in which an aggrieved person may apply to a tribunal in order to have an executive act by the Home Secretary inquired into. There is not much point in providing such a procedure unless the tribunal is to have standards and criteria against which it can set its examination. If powers are too widely or broadly defined, it is difficult for any review tribunal to determine whether they have been exceeded or incorrectly adhered to. That is the twofold objective that I had in mind when I drafted amendment No. 12.

The Government have made it plain that the Bill does not in any way extend the scope of the existing practices to which my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary presently adheres. In other words, the Bill does not enlarge the circumstances within which warrants may be issued. In drafting the amendment I sought to include only those practices that fall within existing practice and custom. There is nothing here that either enlarges or reduces the powers of a Home Secretary.

I turn briefly to subsection (3). We are dealing with the concept of the defence of the realm. The "defence of the realm", or, if hon. Members prefer it, "national security", are phrases that by themselves have little meaning. They mean only what the person involved wishes them to mean. I find that unsatisfactory. The concept of national security and of the defence of the realm is capable of more precise definition. The definition that I have adopted is one that was given in September 1952 by Sir David Maxwell Fyfe, as he then was, in his directive to the security service. I understand that that defintion is the one that is presently adhered to by my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary, and it has stood the test of time.

I should like the definition given by Sir David Maxwell Fyfe, or some similar definition, to be incorporated into the statute so that the power is not unfettered and so that the Home Secretary of the day knows the tests that are to be applied when he has to consider the concept of national security or the defence of the realm. In subsection (3) I have tried to determine the meaning of "subversive". Again, I have adopted existing practice and have used the language that the Lord Harris used in 1975. It is highly undesirable that a phrase such as "subversive" or "subversive to the state" should not be defined. After all, what is subversive in some people's eyes is no more than a proper expression of political dissent in the eyes of another. These things are capable of precise definition and should be incorporated into the statute. That is the justification for subsection (3).

A similar proposition applies to what I have proposed in subsection (4). The existing practice has been only to issue warrants in respect of serious crime in the circumstances set out in subsection (4). The Government are to be congratulated on their amendment No. 118, which largely — although no doubt more eloquently — does what I have tried to achieve in subsection (4). It defines the meaning of "serious crime", and I would support the Government's amendment, because it seeks to achieve the purpose that I have in mind.

The hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Kilroy-Silk) said that clause 2 formed the heart of the Bill, and he is right. It forms the heart of the Bill for two reasons: first, it defines the circumstances in respect of which the Home Secretary may issue a warrant; secondly, it defines the circumstances against which the review tribunal must apply its tests if there is an appeal to it. I am against broad phraseology, especially when the liberty of the subject is involved. It is the duty of this House to define as exactly as possible what we mean by such phrasing. I have done

no more than to incorporate in statutory form the practice that has been adhered to by many Governments since 1952.

If my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary is not prepared to accept my amendment, perhaps he will tell us why. I have not endeavoured to cut down his powers or to enlarge them. I have endeavoured only to define the custom and practice as they now exist. The question that I put to him is, why is he not prepared to give statutory definition to the present practice, if that is indeed his position?

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): The amendment moved by the hon. Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) is one very good way of trying to remedy the shortcomings of clause 2(2). As it stands, subsection (2) is dangerously widely drafted. We have tried to remedy the position in other ways. But, like the hon. Gentleman, I acknowledge that the Government have at least moved in one area, in tabling their amendment, and we welcome that.

If I were in a more captious frame of mind I could, I suppose, tease the Government for having put yet another definition of "serious crime" on the statute book. Section 116 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act contains the definition of a "serious arrestable offence". In Committee we spent many wearying but enlivening hours discussing that. But the definition that the Government have put forward this time does not bear much resemblance to the definition in that Act. I do not wish to be over-captious, because we are grateful to the Government for what they are doing on this occasion, but it is not a good idea for there to be different definitions of serious crime or serious offences in different pieces of legislation. A time will have to come when we seek definitions that can be used in every piece of legislation and transferred from one measure to another.

We certainly welcome the definition in the Government amendment to clause 10 regarding serious crime. The Government have been sensible and helpful in including in statutory parlance the criteria regarding serious crime that are contained in the 1980 White Paper, but we cannot understand why they have not gone further, and have not brought in the other criteria in that White Paper. That is why we have tabled amendments to that end. Perhaps I should give you notice, Mr. Armstrong, that if the Government do not respond satisfactorily to our case, we shall seek a vote on amendment No. 16.

7 pm

We have simply lifted the words out of the 1980 White Paper in an effort to define more strictly the three areas governing the issuing of warrants. In a sense, those areas are more important than serious crime. According to current practice, as stated in the White Paper, the periodicity for the renewal of warrants on those other areas is much longer than that for the renewal of warrants for serious crime. If the Government intend, as we hope, to put into statutory form the practice that the Home Secretary affirmed on Second Reading would continue, it is impossible to understand how they can be satisfied with a Bill that defines so slackly some of the most serious areas for the issuing of warrants.

When the Home Secretary responds, as it seems apparent that he will, to this group of amendments, I hope he will say that the Government will give further consideration to these two other areas. They have shown themselves in quite a short time able to redraft 2(2)*(b)*. That being so, it may be more difficult for them to define "national security" in a way that would cover their objectives. Nevertheless, we believe that between now and, if not Report stage, when the Bill reaches the House of Lords, the Government should attempt to provide a better definition. We also believe that it is essential for the Government to provide a better definition of "economic well being".

The fact is that, despite any assurances that the Home Secretary may give, I am sure in good faith, the definition of "national security" in the Bill would allow the Government, if they wished, to permit the interception of the communications of, for example, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. The Government may have no wish to do so. The Home Secretary has made certain statements about his view of the status of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, but we are talking not about the Secretary of State's good will but about what will be the law.

As the Secretary of State has rightly claimed that this is an innovation, in that for the first time there is to be statutory regulation of the interception of communications, it seems to the Opposition to be very important indeed that if for the first time there is to be a statute it should incorporate the practice rather than that the practice should be left to assurances given, I am sure in good faith, by the Government. That is why, whatever reassurances the Home Secretary may give about CND not being tapped under the national security provision, the fact is that the Act would permit it to be tapped. We do not believe that that is right and proper.

I suppose that it could be regarded as appropriate for the Home Secretary to authorise a warrant for the interception of the communications of Friends of the Earth under either paragraph *(a)* or *(c)*. If, for example, a nuclear power station were to be built at Sizewell and Friends of the Earth or another organisation decided for its own, in my view admirable, purposes that it wished to act in a strong way against the construction of that power station, it might affect national security because nuclear matters are involved. It might also affect economic well-being, in the sense that the power supplies of the nation might be put at risk. Although I am sure that the Home Secretary has in mind, when referring to economic well-being, only external communications, nevertheless those could be involved. That being so, we are very disturbed by the slackness of these two definitions.

I repeat that we are not dealing, and we never deal, with assurances given to Parliament by Ministers. Assurances given to Parliament by Ministers are not the law. We are making a law and I believe that we should make a strictly and properly defined law. The Home Secretary has conceded the need for a strictly and properly defined law by his amendment to clause 10 which will define serious crime, as stated in the subsection.

Therefore, I trust that when the Home Secretary replies to the debate he will say that he will think more carefully about this matter. Although he has said that it has been the practice under Conservative Governments for the economic well-being criterion to be used, we have great misgivings about it being put into a statute in such a loose and improperly defined way.

On the question of subversion, I agree with the hon. Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) that an attempt to overthrow a Government is not of itself a subversive act. I am engaged in an attempt—I trust it will be successful

[Mr. Gerald Kaufman]

—to overthrow the Government. It is my dearest wish that that should be brought about, but I trust that that does not make me a subversive.

Mr. Corbett: One never knows.

Mr. Kaufman: As my hon. Friend says, one never knows.

The right to seek by lawful means to overthrow a British Government is one of the most cherished rights of British people. Indeed, a former Conservative Prime Minister seems to be involved a good deal in it at the moment. That is why we have tried to provide a definition of subversion in amendment No. 141. We know that it is not a good definition and we should like it to be a better definition. However, it states clearly that to be subversive a person must have

"in contemplation the overthrow of the government by unlawful means".

I am sure that everybody will agree that to attempt to overthrow the Government by unlawful means is subversive and against which society has the right to protect itself, but to seek to do so by lawful means must be a democratic right in our society.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Does not my right hon. Friend agree that what he is suggesting in another amendment regarding the redefinition of subversion brings us closer to what was suggested by Lord Denning and to what was in force until Lord Harris of Greenwich, when he was Minister of State, changed the definition in his speech in another place in February 1975. Does my right hon. Friend agree that as the definition of subversion now stands, under which it could be said that one was trying to undermine or overthrow parliamentary democracy by political or industrial means, the security services and the special branch are given all the ammunition that they need and that it has led to the very serious allegations in the recent film about MI5?

Mr. Kaufman: My hon. Friend intervenes at a felicitous moment because I was about to turn to the definition given by Lord Harris. It is about time that we took this imprimatur of holy writ away from the Lord Harris definition. If the Labout Government at that time had wanted to provide an ex cathedra definition of "subversive" they would not have chosen a minor debate on a day which was unimportant in itself in terms of that debate. The date of the announcement of the Government's policy on the European Community referendum was the main issue of the day. The Labour Government would not have chosen a minor debate in the House of Lords as the vehicle for a major definition of "subversive". Nor, with respect to the noble Lord, would they have chosen a junior Minister at the Home Office as the appropriate person, in the middle of his speech, to provide the categorical ex cathedra definition which was to run through British political life and constitutional practice for a decade or more. I do not think Lord Harris contemplated that that was quite the role for which he was being cast in that otherwise uneventful debate. Therefore, I hope we shall not say, just because Lord Harris happened to say that on that day, that that is it. We want a better definition.

We do not claim for a moment that our definition in amendment No. 141 is the best definition. We hope that, with all their great drafting assistance, the Government can find a better definition, although after the little bit of a mess that they got themselves into over the live-in landlord, one begins to wonder just how marvellous the powers of parliamentary counsel now are.

My hon. Friend the Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Kilroy-Silk) has already said that clause 2 is at the heart of the Bill. The Bill regulates the interception of communications by the two means given in the long title. It is not a Bill, as the Government have made clear, to expand the interception of communications. The definitions in subsection (2)*(a)* and *(c)* and the definition of "subsersive" on which they rest could he used to allow the expansion of this area. Therefore, I hope that the Secretary of State will agree to look again at subsection (2)*(a)* and *(c)*. If he does that, we will find it reassuring.

Mr. Eldon Griffiths: In view of the uncharacteristic harmony that seems to be prevailing, will the right hon. Gentleman say why he has not included the term "parliamentary democracy" in his definition?

Mr. Kaufman: We did not feel that we needed to. The Government exist because of parliamentary democracy. Without parliamentary democracy in Britain we would not have a Government. Therefore, we felt that the overthrow of the Government by unlawful means was enough in the circumstances. But I would not argue with the hon. Gentleman. Anyone seeking to overthrow parliamentary democracy by unlawful means would be committing the most intolerable crime against Britain.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): I am sorry that I missed the first few minutes of the speech of the hon. Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg), but I listened to the rest of it carefully. His amendment exposes the Bill's weakness. First, we are discussing a narrow area of Government interception. We are excluding all surveillance. Unfortunately, the Bill's long title prevents us from discussing the fact that without a warrant, without the Bill, the Home Secretary can authorise surveillance of virtually anybody's telephone. Indeed, the guidelines issued by my right hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees), which I think the Home Secretary has tightened up a bit, allow the Home Secretary to listen, in effect, to whoever he wishes to listen to.

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Leon Brittan): No.

Mr. Benn: That is my understanding.

Mr. Brittan *rose*—

Mr. Benn: Before the Home Secretary intervenes, perhaps I should warn him that his words might be taken as seriously as those of Lord Harris, so I hope that he gets it right.

Mr. Brittan: Having made such an assertion, will the right hon Gentleman say what there is in the guidelines that leads him to take that view? If he will identify the paragraph, I shall be able to deal with it.

Mr. Benn: The simple point is that the warrant and the legislation do not cover surveillance. I am saying only that the Bill is deficient. The point that I am clearly making is that the Home Secretary does not have to sign a warrant. Indeed, he subcontracts—his predecessor did and I think that he does—to police officials the power to engage in

surveillance. From the point of view of somebody under surveillance or being intercepted, there is not much difference. A person is being listened to. That is my point.

Mr. Brittan: The right hon. Gentleman must not delude himself or try to delude anybody else. There is the world of difference between listening to somebody on the telephone, which is essentially what interception is about, and surveillance. The right hon. Gentleman has just said that under the cloak of surveillance people's telephone conversations can be listened to. That simply is not true.

Mr. Benn: With great respect, if the Home Secretary looked at the guidelines—I confine myself to those published by Lord Whitelaw, which had been issued by my right hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South in 1977—he will find that surveillance includes listening to what people say on the telephone. There is a narrow difference between permanent interception and surveillance of a line to see whether certain things are being done and said.

The Bill does not have credibility, in part because all we are being invited to do is to put into statute what has always been done by prerogative. There is no change of policy in the Bill. If anybody thinks that this is a great liberal measure which suddenly represents an advance on past practice, he would be wrong. It is simply a Bill to put into statute what has previously been done by prerogative. That is all. Nobody should assume that there is any change.

7.15 pm

Now I come to the ingenious and lengthy, if not slightly windy, definition of subversion of the hon. Member for Grantham. The reality is that we cannot define national security, crime and economic well-being other than in the way it has been hitherto defined by every Home Secretary—that the security services want to listen to people's telephone communications on those three grounds.

I want to put a point of view to the Committee which may not find acceptance but to which I hold strongly. There is only one legitimate criterion for listening to or intercepting a person's telephone calls—that a crime is being, is about to be or is thought likely to be about to be prepared or has been committed. Once we depart from what people do and include what they think, which is what subversion is all about, we are getting away from a basic principle, upon which British justice is supposed to be founded—that people are answerable only for what they have done. Subversion is about opinion and the advocasy of opinion. That is the way in which the term "subversive" is normally used, loosely, by the press, and much more than loosely by the security services.

It is true that some statements may be against the law when they are contrary to certain provisions of race relations legislation or other matters that might lead to incitement. Any right hon. or hon. Member who goes along the Corridor, as I did not long ago, to look at the state trials for the 17th century, will find that a Jesuit priest who was found in Britain at that time was executed. It was assumed that if he was a Jesuit priest he worked for the Pope. There was no argument or trial about whether he was a loyal citizen. Jesuit priests in Britain were executed by law because they were thought to be subversive.

I know that it is difficult in this present atmosphere to put to the Committee the point about which I feel most strongly. Parliamentary democracy has been referred to. I have always believed that we should have an elected Parliament. That may be an old-fashioned view, but I have never believed in the other place. Is it subversive for someone to say that we should get rid of the House of Lords? According to Lord Harris's definition, a person who advocates the undermining of parliamentary democracy by political means, which includes advocating the abolition of the House of Lords, is subversive. I know that that is a notional idea, because the security services have so much on their plate watching Militant, the Socialist Workers party, the Communist party and so on, that they probably do not have time for people who are simply in favour of getting rid of the House of Lords.

But once Parliament steps outside the principle that a crime entitles interception, it has moved into an area which even the hon. Member for Grantham with his legal knowledge could not clear up by longer and longer amendments. It is a crime which is potentially being prepared or executed or has been executed that entitles interception, and nothing else.

Mr. Eldon Griffiths: Does the right hon. Gentleman include all crimes? If so, he would be going a long way beyond the Bill. Some crimes are very minor. Does his definition include the contemplation of a crime as a ground for interception?

Mr. Benn: It depends on how one defines "contemplation". If people think about a crime, if contemplation has a slightly cerebral quality, I am not sure that even the hon. Gentleman would be in favour of that. Of course, I include serious crime. Everything justifying interception has to be criminal. Then we have to differentiate between the person who does not pay his parking ticket and those engaged in serious crime. Serious crime covers espionage.

Mr. Eldon Griffiths: In contemplation or in prospect.

Mr. Benn: I am talking about preparation. Contemplation is a difficult concept. The hon. Gentleman is trying to build a false bridge between criminal intent and opinion. Once we shift into the area of opinion we are on a slippery slope.

I hope that the Committee will believe me when I say that although I am supposed to be involved in a lot of Left-wing activities when I meet many people and attend meetings where I am criticised, I have never met a revolutionary in Britain. If by a revolutionary is meant somebody who is engaged not in preparing policy but in preparing to overthrow the state by force, I have never met one.

One of the ideas which have to be eliminated from the minds of some hon. Gentlemen—I will give the reason in a minute, because the Bill could work in the hands of a Labour Government or Governments of a different colour—is what I would call the Chapman Pincher tendency in the security services—the honest belief that if a person reads the *Morning Star* or contributes to *Socialist Worker* or *Militant*, he is, as the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Mr. Griffiths) would say, in contemplation of the crime of overthrowing the state. If that is the belief, then truly the Home Secretary might just as well take the total powers that he has taken. I make that as a general point only because I am not concerned at this stage with individual examples.

I say to the Committee that at its peril does it move from crime to opinion, the advocacy of opinion or the

[Mr. Benn]

organisation of opinion, even if the opinion means that one changes the structure of power in the parliamentary system —and I have given one example in respect of the House of Lords.

One might argue certain other matters that I have argued. I have always believed that the right to make peace or war should be vested in the House of Commons, and nowhere else. In the United States, the President cannot make war without the consent of Congress. In Britain, war-making is a prerogative right. At the time of the Falklands war, the Prime Minister properly reminded Parliament that it had no right whatsoever to say whether we should go to war in the south Atlantic. I think that that is wrong, but it is a part of the constitution that Parliament should have no power of treaty-making or war-making.

The point I make is that the advocacy of opinion and the organisation of opinion, even if it goes to what are some of the central tenets of what we now call parliamentary democracy, is not subversive. The matter should be seen in that way.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I agree with what the right hon. Gentleman has said about the advocacy of opinion, but does he agree that if one can define the means and they be unlawful, then that is subversive?

Mr. Benn: One then gets to the problem of the attitude towards law-breaking, which is a different question.

I believe strongly and have said in Parliament before that all our liberties were won by law-breaking. The Act of Uniformity said that one had to adhere to the 39 articles. Humanists, Catholics and Jews would never have had the right to worship as they wished if they had not broken the law. Is breaking the law on conscientious grounds subversion? I do not believe that it is for a moment. The Prime Minister would not be Prime Minister if the suffragettes had not chained themselves to the railings and broken the law. The law—dare I say it as a non-lawyer — proceeds majestically from breach to breach. But when people break the law, they take the consequences of breaking the law.

My old uncle, Ernest Benn, who was an individualist, did not believe in the census. When he was about 75, he would not fill in a census form. He thought that the Government had no right to ask him questions about how old he was, and so on. In fact, he was an early monetarist. I wish that he had lived to see the Prime Minister, because he would have loved to think that his ideas, which, when he advocated them, were seen as the lunatic Right, should now be regarded as Conservative. He was taken to court for not filling in the census form. What infuriated him more than anything else was that his barrister said, "Your honour, he is an old man, I hope that you will forgive him." He was not an old man who hoped to be forgiven, but a principled law breaker. He did not believe in the right of the Government to find out about his domestic circumstances, his age, what he did and how many children he had. I know that is not a serious crime, but it is law breaking.

The Home Secretary is not going to budge, I know. The people in the civil servants box are there to see that he does not budge. No predecessor would ever have allowed him to budge. For many years—this is why in the Bill there is no political advantage to be gained by Labour against Conservative or, dare I say it, by Liberal against Conservative, because when the Liberals were in power they pursued people and opened their letters, and it is all on the record—Home Secretaries, entrenched by law, have had total discretion to intercept, because it was done under the prerogative. That is why in 1660 the Post Office was nationalised by Charles II. He wanted to open the letters. From 1660 onwards, letters have always been opened. The king had to know who was saying what to whom. Therefore, from that time to this, successive Home Secretaries may have been occupying the bridal suite in the grand hotel called the Home Office, but the maitre d'hotel there has decided what has happened. The Maxwell Fyfe directive entrenched it. Maxwell Fyfe must have written that directive to please the permanent secretary or whoever it was who looked after security at the Home Office. Maxwell Fyfe said, "I, the elected Minister, will never interfere in what you do." Is that a principle of accountability? I am talking now not about parliamentary accountability, but about ministerial responsibility. The Home Secretary, assuming that he abides by the Maxwell Fyfe directive, is not even allowed to ask the security services what they have been up to.

As a matter of fact, the security services, being very human, have all sorts of ideas. I mentioned the Chapman Pincher tendency. Then there is the Cathy Massiter tendency. Within the security services, there are those who think that everybody to the Left of the leader of the Liberal party or the SDP, is a subversive; and there are others who think that, if one bugs CND, that is a direct attack upon civil liberties. Within that family—if that is the word—of the security services, there are tremendous arguments going on. Maxwell Fyfe said, "I am not going to interfere."

What I said on Second Reading I must say again. The United States would not permit the Home Secretary to accept the amendment because British intelligence is under the supervision of American intelligence. In saying this, I know exactly what I am saying because, as a Minister, I had to go to Washington to get permission from the Atomic Energy Commission under Dr. Glenn Seaborg for a minor change in our nuclear technology. The special relationship with America, which was part of the provision of the nuclear exchanges, means — and I have had responsibilities in this area over a very long period— that the Americans will not disclose nuclear secrets to us unless we satisfy them that they can supervise our intelligence services. Hon. Gentlemen may disregard this, but it is true. I know it to be true. I was within the framework where it was true. Therefore, the Home Secretary cannot budge on this.

I turn to the next point. Assuming that the Home Secretary cannot budge, he will be very courteous when he replies to the hon. Member for Grantham, as one always is when helpful Back Benchers come up with suggestions, and the hon. Member for Grantham will be patted on the head. The prerogative is one thing, and it has happened for centuries. What goes on in the secrecy of power is something that Parliament does not know about and may not want to know about, but put it in the Bill and we take responsibility for it.

No Parliament should give this power to any Executive —Labour, Tory, Liberal or SDP. No Parliament should do it, and I will tell the Committee why. It is because another Government—perhaps a Labour Government or a Government of another colour — could use the language of the Bill to intercept the telephone calls of

every Conservative Member. Once we started discussing national security, assuming that there was a change of Government and that we were to decide not to pursue the missiles and to get rid of cruise and so on, every Conservative party member who thought that was wrong and kept people informed as to what was happening would be acting contrary to national security as defined by the new Government. Every stockbroker who tried to export his capital abroad when exchange control was in operation in this country could have his telephone calls intercepted, because what he was doing could be, in the mind of a Labour Secretary of State, damaging to the economic well-being of the nation.

This is the clause which will lead me to vote against the Bill. I am not arguing a particular definition of national security or economic well-being. I am saying that no Parliament should entrust such powers to any Executive. Once we entrust such powers to the Executive, we are responsible for what it does. At present, we are not responsible for what the Home Secretary does. We shall have to wait for his memoirs, in which he will tell us what really happened, and then it will be too late for any of us to know and, if one waits 30 years, the file will have been weeded so that this will not be seen anyway. But once we take responsibility as a legislative assembly for giving the power to the Executive in statute, we are retrospectively legitimising 300 years of Executive interference in the right of free communication. It is justified only if a serious crime, defined in the proper way of espionage or violence of any kind, is in preparation, is being committed or has been committed.

7.30 pm

Once we have a toehold in the Bill—which changes nothing except the basis of authority, for which the Home Secretary will act entirely without regard to any principles that we control—it is time for Parliament to look at the security services. If Maxwell Fyfe could say what he said, then it should be in a Bill. If Lord Harris could say what he said in the House of Lords in 1975—I do not know whether it was what the civil servants told him to say or what suddenly came into his mind in a flash of rhetoric—it is clear that these are policy matters.

Parliament should decide policy matters. For example, let us discuss what is a subversive, let us legislate, and so on. Policy is for us. Operations must necessarily be for those who are responsible. Once an operation is completed, we expect those who have undertaken it to be accountable for that operation.

There must be many examples—because the security services are comprised of ordinary people—where errors have been made. I shall give one. A special branch man went to Wales to find out who was studying a course on Marxism at a school there. The matter was in a newspaper and I recall raising it with the then Home Secretary. That was the special branch going into what one might call the sphere of academic freedom, because it wanted to know who was studying Marxism. Is that, according to Maxwell Fyfe, excluded from ministerial responsibility? Is the Home Secretary not to prevent excesses or errors of that kind from recurring?

This is an important Bill. The last thing that I want to see is the House of Commons just rubber-stamping gross abuses of civil liberties that have occurred under all Governments and all Home Secretaries for as long as they have exercised that prerogative power. Whether I go into the Lobby with the hon. Member for Grantham is a technical decision. The reason that I have given in my remarks will explain to the Committee why I can support neither the clause nor the Bill.

Mr. Brittan: The right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) explained candidly why he wishes to tear up 300 years of history as he invited the Committee to remove from the use of Government the powers which, on his highly selective reading of history, have been exercised for those 300 years.

His was a highly selective reading of history because when he talked, for example, about the use of surveillance at the beginning of his remarks, he wrongly suggested that a way to get round the powers was to ignore the provisions in paragraph 12 of the latest guidelines on surveillance, although that paragraph makes it clear that they cannot be used as a way to secure interception by the back door.

Similarly, to say, as the right hon. Gentleman said, that the Bill made no change but simply enshrined existing practice, was doing less than justice to the important innovation of the Bill in providing for a tribunal with effective power and access to information, with the right to strike down a Home Secretary's warrant and to award compensation. That is an innovation of the first order of magnitude.

Although the right hon. Member for Chesterfield has an encyclopaedic knowledge of everything that has happened since the days of the Stuarts, his energies would be better directed—if he wants to be fair in these matters—to taking account of that major innovation, one which no Home Secretary has previously put before Parliament and no Executive have been prepared to concede.

Mr. Benn: I am anxious to be fair to the right hon. and learned Gentleman. The point that he makes is in the Bill. Will he, for the purpose of clarification, explain the difference between the new system of monitoring that he mentions and the speedy examination of exactly the same issue that was undertaken by Lord Bridge? Was the Bridge job any different from that which the right hon. and learned Gentleman provides in the Bill?

Mr. Brittan: Lord Bridge conducted an inquiry, as it were, not under the backing of the Bill. Nor was he concerned with awarding damages or quashing a warrant of any kind. Under the Bill, the tribunal—it will not be a single judge but a tribunal comprising five people—will be empowered to do all of those things. The right hon. Gentleman fails to take account of what the Bill says. He allows his journey down 300 years of history to get the better of him when he fails to acknowledge the substantial change that is made by this legislation.

The memory of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield is not only selective about the last 300 years but is highly selective in rendering an account of what is in the Bill. Going back a shorter period than to the time of the Stuarts, it is strange that the right hon. Gentleman should criticise Parliament so severely for contemplating giving to Secretaries of State the powers provided in this measure, with the additional safeguards, when he ignores the fact that Parliament entrusted the power to intercept to the Secretary of State in the Post Office Act 1969, a piece of legislation which the right hon. Gentleman might recall from his previous ministerial career.

Mr. Benn: I do not rise from a desire to clear my reputation. That is not what I am about. The right hon. and learned Gentleman, to be fair, will recognise that when the Post Office was a Crown Department, the prerogative operated through the Postmaster-General. When it became a public corporation, the continuation of that prerogative under the legislation was not an endorsement but a continuity. If the right hon. and learned Gentleman examines the position, he will find that, as a Cabinet Minister, I raised all these points at the time.

Mr. Brittan: I do not know what points were raised in Cabinet. It is a fact, however, that the right hon. Gentleman was a member of a Government who did exactly what he now says we should not do—that is, gave parliamentary approval, not by an executive act and not by the prerogative but by way of specific statutory approval, to the act of interception by the Home Secretary of the day, which was what the Act to which the right hon. Gentleman referred did.

To say that it merely preserved continuity in the changing circumstances of the Post Office was an unworthy point for the right hon. Gentleman to make. To do him justice, he normally concentrates on matters of substance rather than on matters of form. In terms of the substance of the matter, there can be no doubt that the legislation to which he was a party did exactly what he is now condemning us for inviting Parliament to do.

I am grateful to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) for what he said about the Government amendment and the approach of the Government to these issues. The right hon. Gentleman put a number of points to me which were designed to tighten up the Bill. I have considered them all carefully, and many of them are reflected in Government amendments, such as the one that we are considering. While we have had a constructive dialogue, I do not expect the right hon. Member for Gorton to be satisfied with the remainder of the Bill. For my part, this has been a useful way to consider the exercise of powers which, as the right hon. Member for Chesterfield said, Governments of all political complexions have used.

The central question of this debate is the extent to which one can put precise definitions in a statute. My hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) was seductive in inviting me to be as precise as possible in the definition of what are draconian powers. I hope that he will feel, as the right hon. Member for Gorton was good enough to say he felt, that the fact that we have sought to define crime in the amendment in a way more specifically than the Bill defines it shows that where it is possible to be more precise, I wish to be so.

It is not always possible to be more precise, even in that area of serious crime. The difficulty is illustrated by the fact that we were teased, even if mildly, for having a different definition from the definition of "serious crime" for the purposes of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984.

The reason why we hesitated to define serious crime for the purposes of this legislation was precisely that the definition in the Police and Criminal Evidence Act, if applied here, would have enabled Home Secretaries to have a greater power of interception than has been past practice, as defined in the 1980 White Paper. It seemed crazy to introduce a definition that would allow more interception than has been the practice or than has been desired. It was for that reason that, after some hesitation as to the appropriateness of the language, we included — at the invitation of the Opposition — a definition culled from the 1980 White Paper rather than from the 1984 Act. That illustrates the difficulty of having a definition of a more precise kind than appears in the Bill for many of these areas.

Much of the discussion has been about the definition of national security and the definition of the economic well-being of the United Kingdom in relation to information regarding the acts or intentions of persons outside the British Isles.

"National security" is an expression which is necessarily imprecise, but it appears in the European convention and is not some uniquely British and vague authorisation for executive discretion.

It is also fair to say that the word "subversive" covers one aspect of national security, but the foreign aspect of it is necessarily not covered by the operation of the security services and therefore would not be adequately covered by the definition of my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham. The problem with that is its limited character. It was for precisely this kind of reason that we came to the conclusion that no portmanteau definition was available that would cover both the aspects of national security relating to what can be broadly described as subversion and the use of it in relation to foreign intelligence. With due deference to my hon. Friend, therefore, I do not believe that his definition succeeds in achieving that objective.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. and learned Friend is saying that he will not incorporate in this statute the Maxwell Fyfe directive. Is he, therefore, implying that he is in certain circumstances prepared to issue warrants in circumstances that are not covered by the Maxwell Fyfe directive?

7.45 pm

Mr. Brittan: The Maxwell Fife directive related to the work of the security service. My hon. Friend will be aware that the directive to the security service was in no sense comprehensive as far as foreign and defence matters are concerned because that is not primarily the role of the security service. If my hon. Friend looks at the 1985 White Paper he will find that the explanation for that is more readily apparent.

Mr. Winnick: Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman saying that the Government are not departing in any way from the definition of subversion given by Lord Harris in February 1975? If that is the case, does he not recognise — I am referring to internal matters in the United Kingdom — that that will inevitably, because it is so loosely worded, give rise to the sort of abuses that we have been hearing about in the last few months?

Mr. Brittan: I was coming to the question of subversion. The very fact that Lord Harris's definition was given in a debate—but I can assure the Committee that it was a considered definition and was not simply prepared for the purposes of some trivial debate—indicates that it would not be right to enshrine a particular definition of that kind in the statute, even though it is our intention to adhere to that definition as far as subversion goes, which is one limb of the work of the security service. Indeed, I gave evidence to the Home Affairs Select Committee

explaining in some detail the operation of that provision, which is of two limbs. For activities to be subversive they have both to threaten the safety or well-being of the state and to be intended to undermine or overthrow parliamentary democracy by political, industrial or violent means. It is not sufficient for one limb of the argument to be met; both have to be met.

So, although of course I shall consider what the right hon. Member for Gorton said about the provision of tighter definitions, it would be wrong for me to hold out the hope that they are likely to be obtainable. We addressed that prospect in all good faith and were successful in providing the amendment, which I commend to the Committee, relating to serious crime, but we have not been successful in finding a comprehensive, effective definition likely to stand the test of time as far as the other limbs are concerned. I can assure the Committee once again that we have no intention of going in any way beyond the practices of Governments in the past and that the extra safeguards provided by a scrutiny both by the commissioner of the general practices and by the tribunal in relation to particular appeals are, I believe, valuable additions to this Bill.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I cannot conceal from my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary that I am disappointed that he has not felt able to accept the amendment I have put forward. The Committee has heard the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) say that the Labour party has it in mind to vote on amendment No. 16. I think it would be for the convenience of the Committee if that were to happen. Amendment No. 16 is remarkably close to amendment No. 12, which I put down, and I urge those of my hon. Friends who have been persuaded by the arguments put forward to support amendment No. 16. So that there should be only one Division, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Amendment proposed: No. 16, in page 2, leave out lines 19 to 23 and insert—

'*(a)* for the defence of the realm;

(b) for the detection or prevention of a major subversive, terrorist or espionage activity that is likely to injure the national interest; or

(c) for the purpose of preventing or detecting a grave offence; and unless the following conditions apply—

(i) normal methods of investigation must have been tried and failed, or must from the nature of things be unlikely to succeed if tried; and

(ii) there must be a good reason to think that an interception would be likely to lead to an arrest and a conviction, or, in the case of warrants for interception on behalf of the security service, the material likely to be obtained by interception must be of direct use in compiling the information that is necessary to the security service in carrying out the tasks laid upon it by any directive given by the Secretary of State to its Director General.'.—*[Mr. Kaufman.]*

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 183, Noes 243.

Division No. 178] **[7.50 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Tony
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cowans, Harry
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Dubs, Alfred
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, John
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Central Fife)*
Hardy, Peter
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McGuire, Michael
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
Mackenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Neillist, David
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, M.
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rooker, J. W.
Rowlands, Ted
Ryman, John
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R.*(W'hampt'n NE)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Strang, Gavin
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wainwright, R.
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert

Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Robin Corbett and
Mr. John McWilliam.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Buck, Sir Antony
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Critchley, Julian
Dickens, Geoffrey
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gorst, John
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, E. *(B'y St Edm'ds)*
Grist, Ian
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hannam, John
Harris, David
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(SW N'folk)*
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heddle, John
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Hordern, Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Kilfedder, James A.
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Mrs Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Major, John
Malone, Gerald
Mather, Carol
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, John
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Rhodes James, Robert
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spence, John
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(W Dorset)*
Squire, Robin
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(N Hertf'dshire)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, J.
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tony Durant and
Mr. Ian Lang.

Question accordingly negatived.

8 pm

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): I beg to move amendment No. 19, in page 2, line 27, at end insert—

'(4) A warrant shall not extend to data as defined by the Data Protection Act 1984.'.

The Temporary Chairman (Mr. John Forrester): With this it will be convenient to discuss amendment No. 54, in clause 6, page 5, line 23, at end add—

'(3) The requirements of this subsection are satisfied in relation to personal data as defined by the Data Protection Act 1984 if—

(a) the personal data intercepted relate only to the person specified or described in the warrant;

(b) any other personal data are destroyed.'.

Mr. Cohen: The amendments deal with personal information in computers. The issue will be of increasing importance. The Government have paid scant attention to the problem in the Bill and in general policy.

The Bill covers all forms of communications, whatever their nature, passing through the system, such as letters,

telephone calls, telex messages, telegrams and other forms of electronic transmission such as computer data or facsimili.

On 26 February I asked the Home Secretary

"whether his current arrangements for interception of communications extend to the surveillance of data stored on, and transmitted to and from, computers; and if he will make a statement."

He said:

"My powers to authorise under warrant the interception of communications extend only to the postal and public telecommunications systems but cover any form of communication in those systems, including the transmission through them of computer data. I have no such powers to authorise data stored on computers or to other forms of data base." — [*Official Report*, 26 February 1985; Vol. 74, c. 97.]

He was trying to say that he had no power to authorise access to computer data. That might be all right on the surface, but the Secretary of State will have access to communications through the public telecommunications system.

Many computers are linked through the telecommunications system. The trend is increasing. We are talking about a massive new area to which the security services will have access.

An article in *The Scotsman* on 9 March entitled "Still in the Dark" stated that the most fundamental weakness of the Government's proposals is that they do not provide

"for the proven capacity of new technology to produce all kinds of sophisticated methods of surveillance. Nothing in the Government's proposals will check their growth or control their use."

That article said that the Government have no control over the sophisticated equipment which is now available to the security services and that there is no control over access to data.

The new trend gives scope for the collection of vast amounts of data, much of it personal. The scope goes way beyond that of warrants issued in respect of certain individuals. Information can be accumulated on vast numbers of individuals for whom a particular warrant is not intended.

My amendment would ensure that irrelevant data were destroyed and discarded. Without such an amendment those data could be put on a person's file, even though the original warrant was not intended to cover that person. If such records are not destroyed, files on vast numbers of people could be created and Big Brother could operate in a big way. Political control over the issuing of warrants could become more of a sham than it is already.

Amendment No. 19 is a probing amendment. Why is access to data included in the Bill? Should that subject be considered separately on its own merits? Perhaps the Government have not worked out all the implications.

Intercepting a telephone call and intercepting communications between computers involves two different activities. Many data intercepted from a computer will not be relevant or related to a warrant. A warrant provides a means of facilitating the surveillance of many innocent individuals, organisations and companies. What is the scale of present activity, and what is it estimated to be?

International data will also be capable of interception. We remember what happened at GCHQ and the American listening post in Britain. How will the Bill apply to such computer data? Many of the data obtained will be irrelevant. What will happen to them? Will not the warrant be ineffective in terms of political control?

Communications between computers are increasing. the interception of transmissions between computers will also increase. It would be wrong to allow the rules of surveillance to be decided without proper consideration.

What will be on the warrant which relates to interceptions of computer data? Interceptions must not be allowed to get out of hand. I cannot imagine a security officer telling the Minister that he has a warrant which is capable of intercepting 50,000 records. What will appear on a warrant? Safeguards are a key principle of the amendments. It is certainly a key principle in amendment No. 54. That is the substance of the amendment. In a sense, it is a minimal amendment as it is not related to all data. It refers only to non-applicable personal data of the sort to which I have referred, which are the sort of data that should be destroyed. Any personal data that are intercepted and kept should relate only to the individual who is named on the warrant.

What is the safeguard if personal records are not destroyed? If they are not destroyed, the warrant system is open to massive abuse. If the security services want information on individuals other than the person named in the warrant, they should not obtain it by any back-door means. They should obtain other warrants that contain the names of those on whom they want information. The security services should not have the right generally to capture information and then to browse through it for purposes that are unconnected with the original warrant. I submit that the safeguards that I propose are necessary and that they should be made statutory.

If we leave it to the security services to administer safeguards in their own way, problems and abuses will inevitably arise. The Cathy Massiter case was an example of that. On Second Reading I referred to a chief constable who was interviewed and asked who he would consider to be subversive and who should be tapped. Included in his list was anyone decrying marriage, homosexuals, those who advocate less severe penalties in the courts and those who support indiscipline in our schools. That is an example of the abuse that will stem from the use of computer data. The Lindop report refers to the security services being, in the worst sense, a closed shop. It describes them as "hermetic". They are open to the public view and to public criticism, but there is no guarantee that they do not stray beyond their allotted functions.

It is important that the safeguards of which I have spoken are put into law and administered under legal control. Do the Government recognise that the interception of computer data should not be considered the same as the interception of a telephone call? The Bill suggests that they do not have that recognition. Do they recognise also that the collection of a vast amount of data is a dangerous new development? Data that are not specific to individual warrants relating to specific individuals should be destroyed. If that does not happen, a warrant that applies to an individual could be used to tap everyone who uses the telephone exchange in that individual neighbourhood. Satisfactory answers must be given to my questions before we embark on any expansion of tapping into computer data.

Mr. Waddington: At the beginning of his remarks, I thought that the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) was suggesting that the Government had done nothing about data protection. In the previous Session I laboured long

[Mr. Waddington]

with the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) on that issue, so no one can tell me that the Government have done nothing on that score.

It is clear that the hon. Member for Leyton has raised some important issues, but it is apparent that he is harbouring some misconceptions. The first stage in the process that we are considering is the issue of the warrant. A warrant can be issued only in the circumstances that are set out in clause 2 or, in respect of particular persons or addresses, in clause 3. We are talking about the interception of communications passing through the public telecommunications system. Once a warrant has been obtained, no one knows what will be picked up as a result of it. We must discuss whether it is possible to exclude data from material that might be collected as a result of an interception. When that is considered, it is clear that is is impossible to do so.

8.15 pm

The Bill deals with interception of communications in the public system. This embraces all forms of telecommunications, such as voice telephony, telegrams, telex and data. Equally, the post covers communications in whatever form, written or electronic. The interception of computer data that are transmitted along telephone wires or sent through the post would be an offence under the Bill, unless there had been a warrant. The amendment takes one type of communication and seeks to put it in a special category so that it cannot be intercepted under a warrant. As I have said, that is impractical. Computer data travel down ordinary telephone wires, and it is only when the interception takes place that it can be determined whether computer data have been intercepted and whether they are personal data as defined in current legislation or another form of data. Only when a package is intercepted and opened can we determine the form of communication within it.

The amendment would place those carrying out authorised interception in an impossible position. Any one of the communications that they intercept could contain personal data as defined and thus be outside the authority of the warrant.

Mr. McWilliam: Does the Minister accept that it is no longer "the" public telephone network? We have several public telephone networks. Secondly, does he accept that postal packages do not need to be opened to have their contents intercepted? It is wrong to make the statements that he is making.

Mr. Waddington: The hon. Gentleman is wrong. Clause 1 states:

> "A person who intentionally intercepts a communication in the course of its transmission by post or by means of a public telecommunications system shall be guilty of an offence".

It refers specifically to "a public telecommunications system".

Mr. McWilliam: I am sorry if I was unclear. The Minister was talking about "the public telecommunications system". That does not exist. The Bill talks about "a public telecommunications system," because there are now several.

Mr. Waddington: The hon Gentleman is merely playing with words. If he wants to take up the time of the committee to discuss whether I should have said "a public telecommunications system" or "the public telecommunications system," I suggest that he is not making a very profitable intervention.

Mr. McWilliam: I am not playing with words. There is a great difference between "the public telecommunications system" when it is a state monopoly that is operated by civil and public servants and the position in which the Government have landed us. It is a much more serious matter to grant a warrant for the present system to be intercepted than it was in the past. I was not being facetious. Indeed, I was being quite deliberate. The Minister talked about "the public telecommunications system," and we no longer have only one system. I am not making a play on words. I am concerned about the fact that we have a dispersed telecommunications system rather than a specific system.

Mr. Waddington: The hon. Gentleman has made his point, but he is still wrong. Clause 10(1) defines a public telecommunication service as

> "a telecommunication service provided by means of a public telecommunication system".

It is, therefore, proper for me to refer to the public telecommunication service, to which we all refer and to which clause 1 refers. Having said that, we would do better to proceed.

If one intercepts a communication going through the post, one does not know until one has intercepted it whether it contains one type of material or another. It could contain data within the definition of the Data Protection Act 1984. We are examining the powers that should be given to the Secretary of State to issue a warrant in the first place, not trying to deal with the entirely artificial question whether, having issued the warrant, the Secretary of State should be prevented from dealing with particular types of material that come into his hands because of the proper use of that warrant. That is the misconception in the mind of the hon. Member for Blaydon (Mr. McWilliam).

If the warrant is necessary for one of the purposes defined in the Bill, that is a full and sufficient justification for the interception to be carried out under it. If personal data happen to be intercepted and are found to be relevant to any investigation into, say, terrorism, it is right that use should be made of that information, just as, under the Data Protection Act, there are exceptions from the non-disclosure provisions for crime and national security. If the intercepted material—be it personal data or something else—is found not to be relevant to any of the purposes, clause 6 contains comprehensive safeguards to ensure that it is destroyed as soon as that becomes clear.

The amendment to clause 6 is unnecessary. Clause 6 already contains comprehensive safeguards to ensure that intercepted material is copied, retained and disclosed only so far as that is strictly necessary for one of the purposes set out in clause 2. The amendment is also undesirable, because it would mean that intercepted personal data relating to someone other than the person specified in the warrant would have to be destroyed. Clearly, if an intercepted communication, including or consisting of personal data, has no relevance to any of the clause 2 purposes, it must be destroyed, as required by clause 6, regardless of whether the personal data relate to the subject of the warrant or to someone else. If such a communication contained information relevant to one of the purposes, it would be absurd to say that it had to be destroyed. The

piece of information in question might be the vital clue that would lead to the apprehension of a terrorist or major criminal. The only relevant test—it is a strict one—is whether the intercepted material, whatever it might consist of, is relevant for one of the purposes of clause 2. The introduction of extraneous considerations is not only irrelevant but harmful.

Mr. Cohen: Clause 6 does not specifically say that non-relevant data should be destroyed. I should be grateful if the Minister would point out where in the legislation it says that such data should be destroyed. The hon. and learned Gentleman's point about terrorists should be considered seriously. I believe that that aspect could be dealt with by the issue of a separate warrant. We are in danger of a vast amount of data being collected—then set against the names of those on whom the security services have files—and automatically inserted in files. That is a Big Brother technique.

Mr. Waddington: I direct the hon. Gentleman to clause 6(2), which states;

"The requirements of this subsection are satisfied in relation to any intercepted material if each of the following, namely"—*(a)*, *(b)*, *(c)*, *(d)*, and *(e)*—

"is limited to the minimum that is necessary as mentioned in section 2(2) above."

If the material cannot be held justifiably, because it is not covered by any of the purposes in clause 2, it cannot be kept at all. Therefore, clause 6 deals with this matter.

I am glad that the hon. Gentleman has raised that interesting point. I hope that, in view of my explanation, he will feel that it is possible to withdraw his amendment.

Mr. Cohen: I shall study the Minister's statement with interest when it appears in *Hansard* and, if necessary, bring the amendment back at a later stage. I thank the Minister for his comments.

I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 2 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 3

SCOPE OF WARRANTS

Mr. Cohen: I beg to move amendment No. 21, in page 2, line 32, leave out from 'from' to end of line 35.

The Temporary Chairman: With this it will be convenient to take the following amendments: No. 22, in page 2, line 36, leave out 'person' and insert 'individual'.

No. 23, in page 2, line 37, leave out from 'warrant' to 'and' in line 39.

No. 24, in page 2, line 39, leave out from 'described' to end of line 42.

No. 41, in clause 5, page 4, leave out lines 15 to 17.

No. 43, in clause 5, page 4, line 21, leave out subsection (2).

No. 77, in clause 7, page 6, line 27, leave out from 'warrant' to end of line 37.

Mr. Cohen: Clause 3 is too broad. Tighter control is needed to stop the invasion of privacy and abuses that could develop. This cluster of amendments seeks to do that. The amendments are concerned with the scope and modifications of warrants. Amendment No. 77 deals with what the tribunal can examine in relation to a "relevant" warrant.

The central theme of the amendments is the need to ensure that warrants relate specifically to one person. If there is not one warrant for one individual, there will not be proper political control. If there is not proper accountability, the system is open to abuse.

The Home Secretary has been asked about the number of warrants he has signed. Often the figure looks small —about 500—but, in fact, the conversations of a vast number of people are tapped. Hon. Members are given no indication of the true number. If there were one warrant for one individual, a much clearer picture of the extent of tapping would be available. That would be a better system.

The Government are trying to apply warrants to many addresses. That is wrong, because it is a means of obtaining spurious and irrelevant data.

8.30 pm

Mr. Bermingham: Does my hon. Friend agree that if, for example, the person being tapped and against whom the warrant is issued is a limited company, it may well have hundreds, if not thousands, of employees? There should be a right of remedy for those employees who are caught in the tapping morass as a result of the single warrant.

Mr. Cohen: I agree. It brings me to amendment No. 22. It seems a little absurd to say

"leave out 'person' and insert 'individual'."

A person can be a legal person or a corporate body or partnership or something of that nature. We should make the point clear and say that the warrant relates to an individual.

Amendment No. 23 relates to the tapping of premises. The warrant should relate to individuals. There should not be a warrant for a number of addresses because that is how surplus, irrelevant material is obtained. That provision provides blanket coverage. The provision could apply to the offices of the National Council for Civil Liberties—perhaps that is what it has been applied to in the past—the CND, NUM headquarters, Labour party headquarters or even to the telephones in the House. The Government might have a legitimate reason to tap the telephone of a Member. They would then have the right to issue a warrant to tap the telephones of the House. Warrants should be addressed to individuals, not to premises. The provision is open to abuse. People's privacy would be invaded without any remedy being provided.

Clause 3 refers to "other communications" as well as the main communications being tapped according to the warrant, "as it is necessary". That is too broad. It takes the power away from the Secretary of State. It becomes an administrative power. Someone can implement a tap on a person "as it is necessary". That is not as the Secretary of State deems necessary in his signed warrant. It is an administrative decision. That is inappropriate and creates too much opportunity for abuse.

Amendments Nos. 41 and 42 relate to modifications. The Secretary of State can modify a warrant by adding an address or taking some away. Warrants should not be addresses to premises. They should relate to individuals. There is a danger that by adding an address to an existing warrant there could be an "after-the-event" cover-up. That is inappropriate.

Amendment No. 77 relates to the tribunal's consideration of a warrant and of complaints about the issue of a warrant and compensation arrangements. That

[Mr. Cohen]

is important. Clause 7(9) is important. It defines a "relevant warrant" that can have the tribunal's consideration. It should be sufficient to specify the applicant in the warrant. That is the purpose of the amendment. The specified person should be allowed to complain to the tribunal. A person's address or an address with which he might be associated should not come into the question whether that person has a right to complain to the tribunal and whether the tribunal can consider the complaint.

Mr. Waddington: Amendment No. 21 has the effect of leaving out from the warrant addresses likely to be used by the person named in the warrant. Paragraph 10 of the White Paper issued in April 1980 made it clear that where a target of interception used or operated from more than one address or telephone number all the addresses or telephone numbers might be covered in one warrant. That has been the long-standing practice of successive Governments to which clause 3(1) *(a)* gives effect. The Government are not therefore seeking more powers than they and their predecessors have exercised in the past. We are following the previous practice precisely.

Once the Secretary of State has decided that it is necessary that a person should be targeted, it would be odd if one warrant did not cover more than one telephone. If there are two telephones in the same room that the target is expected to use, it is obviously appropriate that one warrant should apply to both. It would be extremely curious if that were not the result. The telephones may be different, but the considerations leading to the warrant and the use of the telephones are part and parcel of the same matter.

The provision which the amendment seeks to remove does not allow the Secretary of State any improper degree of flexibility. The address specified on the warrant, whether or not there is more than one, has to be

"likely to be used for the transmission of communications to or from"

the target.

There is a further serious objection to the amendment. It leaves the form of the clause 3(1) warrant open and the address is at large. A warrant is a requirement to intercept. As such, it must be precise in its effect. It is not something that the recipient can decide to obey in part or about which he can be left in any doubt as to what is to be done.

The warrant provides protection from the offence. Its extent must be carefully defined. It is difficult to see how it could be carefully defined if there was not included in the warrant the address to which the person to whom the warrant was addressed had to address his attention. There are a great many addresses there.

The Post Office and public telecommunication operators are fully entitled to know where they stand. If the amendment were carried, that position would be lost. The warrant would then name, for example, John Brown —whoever he may be—but no more. How on earth can the recipient translate that into action? Which telephone? Which address? Does it mean any telephone that John Brown happens to use or might use one day? The position would be nonsensical. For those reasons, I could not recommend the acceptance of the amendment to the Committee.

Amendment No. 22 substitutes in clause 3 "individual" for "person". The Government have repeatedly made it clear that they seek no powers other than those which have been previously exercised. That principle applies in respect of the provisions which are the subject of this amendment, as it does elsewhere. Paragraph 10 of the 1980 White Paper made it clear that a warrant might be directed against a person or an organisation and hence the definition of "person" in clause 10. That is essential in the interests of national security and the fight against serious crime.

I shall give an example, which I do not believe is fanciful. A group of terrorists might be known to be operating and to be planning a major attack. It would be essential to take urgent steps to prevent that attack and the serious loss of life which could result. It could be that, although the group of terrorists had a name, its members were unknown. It would be manifestly absurd if it was impossible to undertake an interception of the group's communications simply because it had not yet been possible to put names to the members. Such considerations have also to be borne in mind.

The effect of amendment No. 23 would be to prevent the targeting of premises as distinct from the targeting of persons. In the Government's view, it is vital to retain that second capacity to target premises. A clause 3(1) warrant would——

Mr. Bermingham: Perhaps the Minister can help to reassure some of us who are worried about the targeting of premises, because it is a broad concept. We would be reassured if the Government or the Secretary of State said that, where targeting of a premises or complex was necessary, even greater care would be taken to limit the area to be targeted within the confines and parameters of national security.

Mr. Waddington: It is not possible to talk in terms of greater care. Of course, the machinery can never come into motion unless the Secretary of State has satisfied himself that it is necessary to target premises. Therefore, as a result of the restrictions that the Bill places on the circumstances in which he can issue a warrant in the first place, he must have regard to all those considerations and be satisfied that it is really necessary to issue a warrant targeting premises.

Naturally, a clause 3(1) warrant would normally be directed against a known person. It might be someone engaged in serious crime or a threat to national security, but sometimes the name or identity of the suspected person might not be known. That would be rare but it could happen. When it did, the successful pursuit of investigations might be of paramount importance.

Let me give an example which, again, I do not think is entirely fanciful. Information might be received that a terrorist as yet unidentified was in the country and preparing to assassinate a public figure. It might be known that he had arranged to receive communications at a particular place, but that might be all that was known. It could be that the interception of those communications was the only means of establishing precisely who the terrorist was, and the only means of identifying his associates and ensuring that the attack was prevented.

In those circumstances, the direction of a warrant against the premises in question would be the only means to achieve those ends. A warrant should certainly not be directed gratuitously against, for example, the person who happened to be the landlord of the premises. Therefore,

the effect of the amendment is to remove a vital capacity from those whose task it is to respond to such threats. The capacity to direct a warrant in that way is not new, but has been used by successive Governments in appropriate circumstances. It does not in any way represent a loosening of controls in the Bill. The Secretary of State must still consider that the interception is necessary on one of the specified statutory criteria. All the other conditions governing the warrant and all the safeguards apply with equal force.

Amendment No. 24 would remove clause 3(1)*(b)*. One purpose of the warrant is to give protection to those who execute it and who, but for it, would commit the offence of interception. In the Government's view, there must be absolutely no doubt about that protection. Nobody can be asked to do something that could in any circumstances place him in jeopardy of committing the serious criminal offence that is established in clause 1.

Amendments Nos. 41, 43 and 77 are all consequential amendments; I do not think that I need trouble the Committee with them. They deal with the provisions of clause 5, as the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) said, and the modification of warrants by the insertion or deletion of any address. However, we will be able to debate the power of modification later. At this stage we are dealing only with the issue whether there should be individuals or persons and whether there should be addresses. Therefore, I hope that the hon. Gentleman does not think that I am discourteous if I treat the amendments as consequential.

In those circumstances, I cannot recommend any of the amendments to the Committee.

Mr. Cohen: I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave withdrawn.

8.45 pm

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): I beg to move amendment No. 26 in page 3, line 1, leave out subsections (2) to (5).

The Temporary Chairman: With this it will be convenient to take amendment No. 71, in clause 7, page 6, line 7, leave out from 'material' to end of line 8.

Mr. Soley: In a way, this is an exploratory amendment. We are puzzled by the fact that in clause 3(1) there is a fairly clear definition of the circumstances in which the interception will gain a warrant, but when we come to subsections (2) and (3), there seems to be a much more open, catch-all provision. Amendment No. 26 seeks to limit that power.

I am puzzled as to why subsections (2) to (5) are in the Bill unless they are directed entirely at terrorism. I have looked at the notes on clauses helpfully provided by the Government. I notice that a clause 3(2) warrant

"cannot be used for the purpose of intercepting communications to or from a particular address in the British Islands, except where 3(3)*(a)* applies."

Clause 3(3)*(a)* relates to terrorism. I can envisage situations in which it may be necessary to intercept communications outside the United Kingdom or indeed to an address in the United Kingdom if, for example, there was an attempt to purchase arms to be used for a paramilitary activity within the United Kingdom. I can understand that. However, I am not sure why the provision has been drafted so widely. Clause 3(2)*(a)* (ii) contains the phrase

"such other communications (if any) as it is necessary to intercept".

I am troubled by that wording. What are we talking about when we say "other communications (if any)"? That seems to be a wide interpretation, which I do not quite understand. At this stage, I am asking the Government to explain why, having defined things fairly tightly in clause 3(1), they go on to open the whole thing up.

If I am right in assuming that the concept of terrorism and espionage is very much in the Government's mind, I should like to ask them to bear in mind that clause 3(3)*(a)* would relate only to detection of acts of terrorism. To the best of my knowledge an act of terrorism is still defined only in the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act. As we all know, that Act is supposed to be temporary. I wonder whether it would be assumed that the provision would come out of the Bill, when it became an Act, when the Prevention of Terrorism Act lapsed. Would that also imply that the whole of subsections (2) and (3) would come out? That is why I am having difficulty in understanding what the Government are trying to achieve. Perhaps they have a wider purpose in mind, such as espionage. However, I suspect that the main concept in the Government's mind is terrorism. I can understand that, but we should like the Government's purpose spelled out. I understand the notes on clauses provided by the Minister, but they do not fully explain why the Government have chosen to include subsections (2) and (3), which open up the area that has been fairly tightly defined in clause 3(1).

Mr. McWilliam: I make no complaint about the grouping of amendment No. 71 with amendment No. 26, but there is a different point to be made.

Amendment No. 71 relates specifically to the material intercepted. There seems to be a non sequitur in this respect. Clause 7 (5) (*b*) refers to

"the destruction of copies of the intercepted material or, as the case may be, so much of it as is certified by the relevant certificate".

It seems strange that there is power to direct the destruction only of the material certified in the certificate and not of material not so specified. In other words, material relating to crime, subversion or whatever, must be destroyed, but innocuous material can apparently be kept for ever. Amendment No. 71 seeks to ensure that whatever else is destroyed the innocuous material is destroyed as well. I am sure that the position that I have described was not intended, but I see no other possible interpretation of the Bill as drafted.

Amendment No. 26 causes me some concern. Earlier I declared an interest as a sponsored Member for the National Communications Union. As an elected representative speaking in the Mother of Parliaments — in the bosom of representative Western democracy — it gives me no pleasure to consider the consequences of that provision. One can imagine a totalitarian regime intercepting all overseas communications as a matter of course.

Mr. Bermingham: The Americans do it too.

Mr. McWilliam: I have news for my hon. Friend. The Americans not only do it but process the material so intercepted. The idea of that happening here gives me no

[Mr. McWilliam]

pleasure. Such fishing expeditions are despicable. One might expect such practices to emanate from the Kremlin or from the worst type of South American dictatorship but they have no place in a free Western democracy.

I challenge the Secretary of State to come to the Dispatch Box and explain why, as a matter of course, the Government wish to do this.

Nor do I absolve previous Governments, as the agreement with the Americans was made years ago. American National Security Agency computers actually analyse most of the raw material obtained from these fishing expeditions. I challenge the Home Secretary to tell us how the democracy of which we are so proud can exist when all citizens, innocent or otherwise, can be spied upon in this way if they dare to make an international telephone call to or from this country. The Home Secretary has a serious point to answer.

I do not wish to do anything that will interfere with our ability to detect international terrorism, but there is a matter of principle involved. Democratic Governments do not spy on their citizens as a matter of course. Authoritarian Governments do. It is up to the Home Secretary to tell us today whether he intends to stop the systematic interception of international communications once and for all and to show that this is a free democracy, where interception is directed only against individuals or premises when there is reasonable cause to believe that this is necessary. Will he do that, or will he try to dodge the issue and thus deny the freedom and democracy that we expect from British Governments of whatever political colour? I do not condone what has happened in the past. I accept that previous Labour and Conservative Governments have indulged in the same practice, but I find it entirely distasteful and it is time that it was stopped.

Mr. Maclennan: I tabled an amendment in exactly the same terms as amendment No. 26, as I was unaware at the time that that amendment had been tabled, for reasons very similar to those adduced by the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley).

The Temporary Chairman: It is not quite the same. The hon. Gentleman's amendment did not go quite so far.

Mr. Maclennan: Its purpose was broadly similar—to elucidate the intentions behind subsections (2) to (5) of clause 3. This is an extremely opaque series of subsections. I am not sure whether that is deliberate. At any rate, this debate gives the Secretary of State the opportunity to explain the purpose of what on the face of it seems to be an all-embracing power which largely nullifies the restrictions in subsection (1).

It seems clear that the certificate procedure is not intended to be used in all circumstances. If it were, there would be no need for subsection (1). At this stage, I merely wish to show my interest in the Minister's explanation so that he will not be taken by surprise if I find it necessary to intervene again, should his comments not be sufficiently clear. I am sure, however, that he will provide a clear explanation.

9 pm

Mr. Brittan: I will do my best to respond to that challenge to clarity. The amendment was tabled in order to seek elucidation of the purpose of subsections (2) to (5) of clause 3. It is true that the subsections derive historically from provisions that have been on the statute book and used for some time. However, as in the case of a number of other provisions in the Bill, the provisions narrow down and provide safeguards against the abuse of a power that is, I concede, wide when compared with anything that has previously existed. The provisions introduced important new safeguards into the interception of external communications. They represent a significant improvement.

Special arrangements have existed for many years governing the interception of international telecommunications. Section 4 of the Official Secrets Act 1920 provides for the Secretary of State power to require production of overseas telegrams sent to or from the United Kingdom if it appears to him that such a course is "expedient in the public interest".

We believe that that power is cast in an unnecessarily wide form for today's conditions. It is fair to say, if one considers the history of the matter, that the Radcliffe report stated in 1967 that the powers under the 1920 Act had been regularly exercised since they came into force. I know that the hon. Member for Blaydon (Mr. McWilliam) will understand that I can neither confirm nor deny the manner in which the powers have been exercised over the years. It is significant that, in the White Paper presented to Parliament in June 1967, the then Prime Minister, Lord Wilson of Rievaulx, said in referring to the powers that the activities involved no element of prying into the private affairs of citizens. Such activities are in fact carefully controlled and confined. Lord Wilson refuted any notion that the Government might use the powers improperly.

In spite of that, the Government think that the language of section 4 of the 1920 Act is too wide, and that is why we have limited it in this legislation.

Mr. McWilliam: It may help the right hon. and learned Gentleman if I state categorically that the powers granted under the 1920 Act and other legislation have meant that as a matter of course all international telegrams, telexes and telephonic communications have been intercepted since that time. If the Home Secretary is telling us that the clause as drafted will curb that systematic interception, I for one will be heartily pleased.

Mr. Brittan: I do not propose to comment on the hon. Gentleman's statement in terms of fact, but I shall happily explain what the Bill does.

There are significant differences between the real safeguards surrounding interception in the present Bill and the wide powers granted under the 1920 Act. I will explain them. Through clause 11(5) of the Bill, section 4 of the 1920 Act is repealed. The Government believe that the interception of external communications should be subject to the same rigorous standards as other interception authorised under the terms of the Bill, and it is the purpose of clause 3(2) to (5) to achieve this aim.

Some provision is necessary. External threats to our society have greatly increased both in scope and in sophistication. It is widely and correctly understood that threats such as terrorism and espionage are organised at the international level. So is drug trafficking. Intercepting communications into and out of our country may offer the only means of identifying those involverd. The powers under the 1920 Act have helped to offer protection against

such people and have produced secret intelligence necessary to defend our national security at the international level.

I believe that in a suitable form the powers are as necessary now as they have been in the past. The proposal therefore is a carefully formulated provision subject to all the safeguards in the Bill so that the interception of external telecommunications for limited purposes may continue in a fashion which is appropriate.

The effect of clause 3(2) is to secure the personal control of the Secretary of State over the interception of external telecommunications in a detailed fashion. This must be done differently from how it is done in the case of individual warrants. In addition to the warrants—this is the key to it—the Secretary of State must issue a certificate under his own hand which sets out the description of intercepted material which he considers necessary for one or more of the purposes set out in clause 2(2). In other words, whereas in the 1920 Act all that was necessary was that it had to appear to him to be expedient in the public interest—and not even necessary in the public interest—under this Bill the Secretary of State has to issue a certificate in addition to the warrant, certifying the descriptions of intercepted material, the examination of which he considers necessary. It is the warrant that permits the interception and the certificate that gives the descriptions of the intercepted material which he considers it necessary to examine. The criteria are those in clause 2(2).

Therefore, in all senses the test is much more stringent than that in the 1920 Act.

It is a further important safeguard provided by clause 3(3) that the Secretary of State may not specify

"an address in the British Islands"

in his certificate, although there is one exception. In other words, under the powers to intercept external communications, which are exercised by the warrant, there has to be, accompanying the warrant, a description of the intercepted material, the examination of which is necessary. But one limitation is that there cannot be a specific address, except in the circumstances of clause 3(3), which is, of course, the exception in the case of terrorism.

Terrorism poses very special dangers and the great sophistication and degree of organisation of those involved in it means that those responsible for preventing and detecting such outrages must be able to use reasonable means in order to do so. Therefore, there is a distinction. Clause 3(1) says that for domestic matters, the individual warrant under subsection (1) is the appropriate one. Clause 3(2) prescribes for the interception of external communications, buttressing the warrant that is not individually targeted, except where that may happen under the provisions of clause 3(3), with the certificate that the Secretary of State has to issue certifying the descriptions of material that has to be examined.

I hope, having explained the working of clause 3, that the aim of amendment No. 71 will be more apparent.

Mr. Soley: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Brittan: Perhaps I could first finish my explanation, which is related to the point made by the hon. Member for Blaydon (Mr. McWilliam). I think that I can clear that up. Clause 7 deals with the powers of the tribunal. If one thinks of it first in relation to an ordinary domestic warrant issued, say, for crime purposes, one of the powers that the tribunal has is to direct the destruction of copies of the intercepted material. It should be remembered that the situation envisaged is that the tribunal finds that a warrant has been improperly issued or, in other words, that the interception has been lawful but that the Secretary of State should not have issued the warrant. It is in those circumstances that the tribunal can direct the destruction of copies of the intercepted material, which is to say the material that has been intercepted pursuant to a warrant.

When one is talking about the exercise of the power in relation to external communications, one has to consider a situation in which there is both a warrant and a certificate and the material that is actually examined, as opposed to intercepted, is only that of a character described in the certificate. That may be less than that covered by the warrant. That is why there is reference to "so much of it" —that is, the intercepted material—

"as is certified by the relevant certificate".

It is only the material that is certified by the relevant certificate that has been lawfully intercepted. The warrant and the certificate go hand in hand.

The job of the tribunal is to make orders in relation to lawful interception, but interception which it finds to be improper in the sense of not having been reasonably ordered by the Secretary of State. If we refer to material that has been examined which is not covered by the certificate, that is not an area for the tribunal to consider. It will not be material that is covered by clause 3(2). It will have the warrant but not the certificate applied to it.

I hope that that explains the ambit and rationale of clause 3. If the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) thinks it is wrong that a power which has been exercised by successive Governments since 1920 should exist, I cannot pretend that the Bill will remove it. If, however, he favours a more restrictive use of the power, limited and confined in a way that it has not been limited and confined since 1920, and supervised both by the commissioner, in terms of the general exercise of the power, and by the tribunal in dealing with particular complaints against abuse of the power, I think that as a fair-minded person he will agree that the measure we have introduced provides a limitation which no Government since 1920 have thought it proper to provide.

Mr. Maclennan: The powers of exposition of the Home Secretary are considerable. He has thrown some light on the meaning of subsections (2) to (5), but I remain a little puzzled. Part of the difficulty I have in comprehending this clause flows from what I believe he described as the fact that the certificate and the warrant go hand in hand. The certificate must describe what is called intercepted material. I find this confusing. The power to intercept requires the issuance of a warrant and at the same time the issuance of a certificate. If so, I do not see how the material can be referred to in the past participle as "intercepted". It is possible that a drafting improvement can be made. If I have misunderstood the point, I shall be only too delighted to be corrected. If the Secretary of State issues a warrant accompanied by a certificate, is it also the case that he must know what material it is that he is requiring to be examined? Is it in some way a fishing expedition? Subsection (2)*(b)* refers to

"a certificate certifying the descriptions of intercepted material, the examination of which he considers necessary."

[Mr. Maclennan]

It appears from that wording that the material is already in some way in his possession. How can that be so if the warrant and the certificate have to be issued at the same time?

Mr. Bermingham: If I have understood the Home Secretary correctly, a great limitation has been placed upon the role of section 4 of the Official Secrets Act 1920. It was a catch-all section which enabled everything to be intercepted and used. There was no limitation or regulation. If I understood the Home Secretary correctly, he said that the warrant will still exist and that international calls will still be trawled but that a limitation will be placed upon the use of interception. If it is to be used, a certificate will have to be granted setting out the nature of terrorist and other criminal activities that need to be investigated. That will be the only area in this vast field of material that it will be possible to look at. If that is so, it is a significant retreat from the 1920 position, which I and many of my hon. Friends would welcome.

9.15 pm

Mr. Brittan: Again, the Committee will understand why I can neither confirm nor deny anything that is said about what has or has not been done in the past. Let me put it this way. The concept that the hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) had in mind is broadly correct. One is talking in terms of a warrant which is limited in that it has to be covered by the criteria in clause 2(2) which may be a broad ambit. It is not unlimited. It must be a warrant that can properly be issued having regard to clause 2(2).

The question then is that not all that material—it is perhaps easiest to think of it in terms of telegrams—need to be examined. The material, the examination of which is considered necessary, must be certified. It may be that for the purposes of issuing a warrant one can only properly specify a larger group than the narrower group that it is considered, and ought to be considered, should be examined. I hope that that explains the situation. There is no doubt that that is a tighter control than the wide one of the 1920 Act, but I would not want the hon. Gentleman to think that it removes the power to intercept external communications on a substantial scale as defined by the sub-paragraphs.

Mr. Soley: This has been a useful if short debate. I noted the Home Secretary's comments earlier when he drew attention to the restriction on what had previously been in the 1920 Act relating to the word "expedient". I have never liked the word "expedient" in such Acts, so I welcome that.

We shall have to look carefully at the record of this debate. There are important implications in respect of the 1920 Act which we shall need to think through.

There are two areas which the Home Secretary did not clear up. He may wish to say a little more now or come back to the matter on Report when we have read his comments in *Hansard*. I am still not clear about clause 3(2)*(a)* (ii) and the comment:

"such other communications (if any)".

The other point that I raised concerns the temporary nature of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act. If the Home Secretary accepts that clause 3(2)*(a)* applies only to the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act, because that is how it is defined, there is something to be said for putting in that subsection, as defined by the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act, which is the only definition that we have on the statute book. That would almost automatically imply that that part of the Bill would fall when the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act was finally repealed or lapsed.

Mr. Brittan: I am grateful to the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) for reminding me that I failed to deal with those two particular points. Subsection (2)*(a)*(ii) is simply the counterpart of the external communications warrant of subsection (1)*(b)*.

If the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act were to be found to be no longer necessary and it were to be repealed, it would be perfectly possible to retain the definition of terrorism for the purposes of that Act as being that which applies in the case of this Act which would remain on the statute book. I do not think that there would be any great difficulty in doing that if it were necessary, but that does not arise at the moment. It would simply be a question of appropriate drafting if that is what was wanted.

Mr. Soley: My understanding is that the only definition on the statute book is that contained in the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act. If that Act lapses, one would still have on the statute book the reference to the prevention of terrorism as provided in this Bill. The definition used would thus be much wider than that presently contained in the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act.

Mr. Brittan: If that anxiety proved to be real, it would be possible not just to allow the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act to lapse, but to enact repeal legislation which would retain the definition for the purpose of terrorism under this Bill if that is what some future Parliament wished to do. I do not say that that is what one would do. I say merely that it is a course that readily occurs to one as being possible.

Mr. Soley: We will consider carefully the report of the debate, including the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Blaydon (Mr. McWilliam), who made a powerful speech, and will come back if necessary on Report.

I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 3 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 4

ISSUE AND DURATION OF WARRANTS

Mr. Bermingham: I beg to move amendment No. 29, in page 3, line 33, leave out 'the Secretary of State' and insert 'a Secretary of State designated by the Prime Minister'.

The Temporary Chairman: With this it will be convenient to take the following amendments: No. 30, in page 3, line 33, leave out from 'State' to end of line 37.

Government amendments Nos. 31 and 45.

No. 46, in page 4, line 32, leave out from 'State' to end of line 38.

Government amendment No. 47.

Mr. Bermingham: In moving amendment No. 29, I ask the Committee to consider the Government amendments which go part of the way to meet the point that we sought to raise in amendments Nos. 29, 30 and 46.

The amendments would eliminate the possibility of civil servants authorising or modifying warrants for interception. This would prevent civil servants from having to make what might appear to be political decisions. This situation arises when a Government changes and there is an interregnum state. The Secretary of State as the person authorised is a continuing creature, in that Secretaries of State never die but hand over to each other, but Governments do change, so we have sought to cover the intervening period. I am in the happy position of noting the Government amendments included for consideration in this group of amendments. The wording of amendment No. 45 is slightly different from that of amendment No. 31. Amendment No. 31 fortunately takes us almost all the way down the road that our amendment sought to follow. In amendment No. 31 provision is made whereby

"the Secretary of State has expressly authorised its issue and a statement of that fact is endorsed thereon, under the hand of an official of his department of or above the rank of Assistant Under Secretary of State".

I suggest that that is a high enough rank, and I do not wish to see it percolating any lower down. I am sure that many of my hon. Friends will be satisfied with the amendment.

I wish to raise one small point on amendment No. 45. Government amendment No. 45 is similar to Government amendment No. 31, except that the former includes the words:

"under the hand of a person holding office under the Crown".

Those are words that we are seeking to delete from clause 4. In other words, whereas we are seeking to remove confusion, the Government—though I concede that they are going part of the way with us in our attempt to clarify the situation and to avoid civil servants being put in the position of appearing to take political decisions—are muddying the waters again by the wording of amendment No. 45. I hope that between now and a later stage of the Bill the Minister will consider my comments, especially about the way in which amendment No. 45 appears to reinstate in clause 5 that which we are seeking to remove from clause 4.

Mr. Waddington: The White Paper published on 7 February 1985 explained which Secretaries of State were responsible for the issue of warrants, namely, the Home and Foreign Secretaries and the Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Northern Ireland. Those responsible for issue are, of course, responsible for everything else to do with warrants, such as their renewal and the oversight of all associated arrangements.

It has been made clear that no Secretaries of State other than those referred to in the White Paper carry out those responsibilities, and it is not the intention of the Government, any more than of their predecessors, that any Minister holding the office of Secretary of State should have the same responsibilities as the four Secretaries of State named.

The designation of Secretaries of State, as the amendment proposes, is therefore unnecessary. Nor would it have any precise effect. The designation in terms of the amendment would be at the discretion of the Prime Minister. If it were the Government's intention—which it is not—to involve a wider circle of Secretaries of State in matters to do with warrants, the Prime Minister could freely designate whichever such Ministers were thought appropriate. In other words, designation in itself does nothing to limit the number of Secretaries of State.

I hope that Government amendments Nos. 31, 45 and 47 meet the concerns that have been expressed about emergency provisions. No. 31 retains the principle of an urgency procedure. This is essential, and, for that reason, we could not accept amendment No. 30. Occasions may arise when it is vital for effect to be given to an interception warrant at short notice. It would not be appropriate to give examples of where that has happened, but hon. Members may be assured that it does happen.

Information might be obtained on a Saturday night pointing to the need to intercept to prevent a terrorist attack the next day. It would be absurd if the police were deprived of the opportunity of preventing the crime simply because it was a Saturday night and because the time taken to open an office, prepare a warrant and take it to the Secretary of State would be too lengthy. The Government believe without the slightest qualification that in circumstances such as these it must be possible to issue a warrant at short notice. Indeed, it would be irresponsible not to provide for this situation, for which, as the 1980 White Paper indicates, there has long been provision.

The Government equally accept that there must be no derogation from the principle that it is the Secretary of State and the Secretary of State alone who takes the decision. In no circumstances whatsoever should this vital decision be capable of delegation to anybody else, be it another Minister in the same Department or an official. Personal control by the Secretary of State is at the heart of the whole statutory scheme.

The principle behind the urgency procedure in the present clause 4(1)*(b)*, and also behind that provision as it would be changed by this amendment, is to reconcile these two requirements. This is achieved by requiring that the Secretary of State himself take the decision and that in an urgent case, having taken it, he can expressly authorise an official who can quickly gain access to the office to sign the warrant. The amendment will have this effect. There will remain an urgency procedure. The Secretary of State will be required personally to take the decision. Where he has done so, an official of the rank of at least Assistant Under-Secretary in his own Department will be able to sign the warrant but will be required to endorse on it the fact that the Secretary of State has authorised its issue. In this way the whole process is not merely associated with the Secretary of State but is kept in the hands of a very senior official. The Government entirely accept that this additional limitation is appropriate.

It is important to understand this provision against the provision in clause 4(6)*(b)*. The effect of this is that a warrant issued under the urgency procedure lasts for only two working days following the day on which it is issued. If it is not then renewed by the Secretary of State over his own hand, there being no delegation of signature to an official in the case of renewal, the warrant lapses. This is a further very tight control on the urgency procedure which the Government believe meets the proper expectation of high standards and also sensibly allows for the submission of a proper application to the Secretary of State, who might, for example, have been out of London on Government business.

[Mr. Waddington]

There are then similar urgency provisions as far as modification of warrants is concerned. Modification—this meets the point made by the hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) — does not mean changing the person or the set of premises against which the warrant is directed; it deals only with the insertion or deletion of a particular address. Modification is therefore different from issue in that it is concerned with giving precise practical effect to a substantive decision which has already been taken to issue a warrant.

The arrangements in clause 5 reflect this difference and the need to include new addresses in a warrant at short notice as, for instance, track is kept of the movements of a suspected terrorist and he reveals his plans as to where he might next make a call.

Amendment No. 45 now seeks to introduce into clause 5 an equivalent provision to that which Government amendment No. 31 has introduced into clause 4. Where there is need for a very urgent modification of a warrant in respect of which the Secretary of State has given no authorisation as set out in the present clause 5(4)*(b)*—5(4)*(a)* in the amendment—then application must be made to him personally. Just as with issue, that decision may need to be taken at a time when the Secretary of State is absent from London and the office is closed. If the Secretary of State agrees to the modification, the amendment requires an official in his Department of at least Assistant Under-Secretary rank to make the modification.

It is in those circumstances that I commend Government amendments Nos. 31, 45 and 47 to the Committee. I hope that the Opposition will think it right to withdraw amendments Nos. 29 and 30.

Mr. Bermingham: I tend to agree with the Minister that the necessary procedures need to be there in order to modify and to issue warrants in emergencies, when it is not always possible to get the Secretary of State himself. I believe that the safeguards now being built into the Act are necessary.

In the light of that, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Amendment made: No. 31, in page 3, line 34, leave out from 'case' to end of line 37 and insert

'where the Secretary of State has expressly authorised its issue and a statement of that fact is endorsed thereon, under the hand of an official of his department of or above the rank of Assistant Under Secretary of State'.—*[Mr. Waddington.]*

Mr. Soley: I beg to move amendment No. 35, in page 3, line 42, at end insert—

'(4) It shall be the duty of the Secretary of State to review whether a warrant continues to be necessary as mentioned in section 2(2) above before the expiry of one month from the issue of that warrant.'.

The Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Harold Walker): With this we may discuss the following amendments: No. 36, in page 3, line 42, at end insert—

'(3A) The renewal of a warrant shall be for a period not greater than the period for which it was originally issued.'.

No. 38, in page 4, line 8, leave out 'six' and insert 'two'.

No. 39, in page 4, line 8, leave out 'six' and insert 'three'.

Mr. Soley: To satisfy my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett), who is about to leave the Chamber, I shall break with tradition and stand up to move this amendment.

We come now to the important matter of the issue and duration of warrants. Following some constructive discussion betweem my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), myself and the Home Secretary, I hope that the Minister will feel able to go some way towards meeting the amendment.

We seek to restrict the time that the warrant may last from the proposed six months to two months, which would bring it into line with the guidance in the 1980 White Paper. It is an important matter. As the Minister said earlier, it is important not least because, unlike search warrants, warrants to intercept are a covert activity—one does not necessarily know that one has been tapped, even after the event. Therefore, the duration of a warrant is extremely important. We are anxious to keep the duration under tight control. If the Minister agrees to replace the six months' provision with two months, that will be welcomed by all.

Amendment No. 35 seeks to restore one of the safeguards of the 1980 White Paper, which is to have an obligatory monthly review of existing warrants.

Amendment No. 36 would ensure that the Secretary of State could not renew a warrant for longer than the period for which it was originally issued. That is a self-evident safeguard that appears to have been omitted from the Bill.

Mr. Waddington: The Government have made it clear from the beginning that they were not seeking either powers or practices that were not already available and exercised by them or their predecessors. That principle has underpinned the formulation of the Bill. The intention of the provision in clause 4(6)*(a)* is to establish a sensible framework within which existing practices might continue. The six months' duration of a warrant is a maximum—a warrant does not have to last that long. The Secretary of State can revoke or renew it at any stage during its validity, but six months is the longest period that a warrant may last, as will be seen from the 1980 White Paper.

It has not been the Government's intention that all warrants automatically should last for that period, irrespective of existing practices or the circumstances of individual cases. However, the Government accept that, as drafted, the Bill confers the theoretical power to allow some warrants to last longer than they currently last. The Government accept that that position may give rise to misunderstanding, so they will table an amendment to incorporate the 1980 White Paper arrangement in a way appropriate for application in the Bill.

In those circumstances the Government, while bound to resist the amendments, hope that they will be withdrawn.

The 1980 White Paper arrangements were framed in terms of the authority from whom the application came. That is not appropriate to put on the face of the Bill. The Government's proposed amendment will, therefore, specify that, as in 1980, all warrants on first issue should be valid for a period not exceeding two months. Thereafter, warrants issued for the prevention or detection of serious crime will fall to be renewed every month. Warrants issued on either of the two other criteria—

national security and the country's economic well-being — will fall to be renewed every six months. This arrangement is consistent with the scheme described in 1980 and reflects the fact that investigations relating to serious crime are, by their nature, related to particular events and that it is right to reassess the situation at relatively short intervals.

Warrants related to national security are likely to be of longer standing — for example, because of the acute difficulties of obtaining vital intelligence about terrorist groups. The Government cannot, therefore, accept the proposition in amendment No. 36.

If after two months the Secretary of State has established a real and continuing need for the interception in question, he should be able to place it in future, as he has in the past, on a suitable basis and to have to renew it every six months. He should not have to undertake a perfunctory renewal at more frequent intervals than the circumstances make appropriate. The requirement will, of course, remain that he must cancel a warrant if he considers that it is no longer necessary.

Mr. Maclennan: The Minister has made a helpful speech which must satisfy all those hon. Members who tabled amendments suggesting an alteration to the protracted period suggested in the Bill, which does not match the White Paper's recommendations. There was no obvious explanation for that length of time. I look forward to the Government's amendment and I shall not press mine.

Mr. Soley: The Government have made a significant and important concession to the Opposition. We have worked hard on our amendments. I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 4, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 5

MODIFICATION OF WARRANTS ETC.

Amendments made: No. 45, in page 4, leave out lines 32 to 38 and insert

'under the hand of the Secretary of State or, in an urgent case—

(a) under the hand of a person holding office under the Crown who is expressly authorised by the warrant or certificate to modify it on the Secretary of State's behalf; or

(b) where the Secretary of State has expressly authorised the modification and a statement of that fact is endorsed on the instrument, under the hand of such an officer as is mentioned in section 4(1)*(b)* above.'.

No. 47, in page 4, line 39, after '(4)', insert '*(a)* or'.

—[*Mr. Waddington.*]

Clause 5, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 6

SAFEGUARDS

Mr. Bermingham: I beg to move amendment No. 51, in page 5, line 7, leave out paragraph *(b)* and insert—

'*(b)* that intercepted material relating to a privileged communication or not relating to the individual named in the warrent is destroyed.'.

The Chairman: With this it will be convenient to discuss the following amendments: No. 53, in page 5, line 23, at end add

'and any material which proves to be irrelevant to the investigation for the purposes of which the warrant is issued is destroyed forthwith'.

No. 114, in clause 10, page 9, line 11, at end insert—

'"privileged communication" means a communication concerning an individual which is:

(a) subject to legal privilege; or

(b) relates to medical treatment; or

(c) relates to an individual's physical or mental health; or

(d) to spiritual counselling or assistance given to him; or

(e) to counselling or assistance given to him for the purposes of his personal welfare by a voluntary organisation or individual who

(i) by reason of his office or occupation has responsibilities for his personal welfare; or

(ii) by reason of an order of the court has responsibilities for his supervision.

(f) relates to journalistic material which a person holds in confidence.'.

Mr. Bermingham: The amendments deal with privileged material. The official Opposition originally tabled amendments to deal with the subject. Amendment No. 51 inserts a new paragraph to ensure

"that intercepted material relating to a privileged communication or not relating to the individual named in the warrant is destroyed."

I ask the Committee to cast its mind back to a debate earlier this evening, when we discussed international interceptions. It became apparent that in any trawl exercise and in any interception, especially if it was taking place in a block of properties or at a place where there was more than one form of telecommunication instrument and more than one source of information, it was more than feasible that among the information obtained would be much material that would not be relevant to the person named in the warrant, to the matter which was the subject of the interception or to the warrant itself.

9.45 pm

The term "privileged communication" would include conversations between a man and his lawyer, for example, or conversations between a man or woman and his or her doctor. There will be occasions when the interception will gather conversations of this character. These conversations are subject to what is known as legal privilege. Also included in this category is medical treatment, an individual's physical or mental health, spiritual counselling or assistance that is given when someone telephones a clergyman. That sort of material is not usable, because it is privileged.

In the circumstances that I have outlined, as in the other circumstances that are set out in amendments Nos. 53 and 114, I am seeking to write into the Bill a provision that ensures that when privileged material is collected it is destroyed. This material will have no material, evidential or probative value. I am seeking to amend the Bill so that it provides that such material will be destroyed.

I recognise that interception is necessary in dealing with large-scale crime, especially that involving the drugs trade and terrorism. Many other major investigations have to take place in the interests of domestic security and international security. Material will be gathered in the course of these investigations which will not relate to the person or corporate body who or which is directly concerned. I know of cases in which the "person" who was at the centre of the criminality was a limited company or a partnership. In such circumstances, I accept that the trawl and gleaning of information will gather information which is extraneous to that "person". I am merely asking

[Mr. Bermingham]

in the amendment that that material will be destroyed. I am not asking for it to be given to anyone else. I am merely asking for it to be destroyed and for a relevant provision to be written into the Bill.

I recognise that the Minister may not like the wording of my amendment. However, if he takes on board the concept that lies behind it, which is that extraneous material or privileged material should be destroyed, and says that it should be redrawn, I shall not mind in the slightest. I am always happy to have my amendments redrawn if they are accepted in spirit.

Mr. Maclennan: I shall address myself to amendment No. 53. It deals with warrants which are issued by mistake against the wrong person or address, or those which name the correct person but where material has been intercepted which is irrelevant. In those circumstances, there is no obligation on the authorities to destroy any material or copies of it. The tribunal may order the destruction of copies only if contravention has been proved under clause 7(5)*(b)*. The purpose of the amendment is to incorporate into ordinary warrants the same safeguards that apply to certified material in clause 6(1)*(b)*.

Mr. Waddington: Clause 6 requires the Secretary of State to establish comprehensive arrangements for safeguarding intercepted material. The purposes that these arrangements have to secure are listed in subsection 2. They mean that only relevant portions of intercepted material may be disclosed or copied, that such material as is disclosed may go only to the minimum necessary number of people, that only the minimum necessary number of copies may be made of those portions that are disclosed, and that the material may be kept only for the minimum necessary period. These requirements must be read together. They impose a comprehensive limitation on what may be done with intercepted material.

The question is, therefore, about the relevance of amendment No. 53, given these comprehensive arrangements. It is clear from the terms of these arrangements —the review of which is expressly made one of the tasks of the commissioner—that gratuitous information touching on privileged communications, in the sense defined in amendment No. 114 to clause 10, would not normally fall to be disclosed, copied or retained — in other words, the arrangements already address the issue in a different way.

It was made clear in, for example, the 1980 White Paper, and subsequently in Lord Diplock's first report as monitor, that irrelevant material is not used. This irrelevant material goes much wider than the aspects covered under the term "privileged". Clearly, while intercepting the telephone line of a serious criminal, there will be no means of avoiding the interception of irrelevant and personal calls made on the line by members of his family. That point is accepted, and reference was made to it as an unavoidable consequence as long ago as the Birkett report. The clause 6 arrangements ensure that this type of material, just as with so-called privileged material, is not used. In that sense, the amendment is unnecessary.

The amendment also contains an element of unreality which, in rare cases, means that its incorporation in the Bill would have serious adverse consequences for national security or the investigation of crime. I shall illustrate that by giving a few examples. Few, if any, telephone conversations are exclusively about one subject. Things are not like that. Although it is entirely accepted and understood that legally privileged material must be properly safeguarded, there is no means of disentangling what is privileged from what is not.

Let us suppose that a suspected terrorist whose telephone was being properly intercepted, telephones his lawyer to discuss a case. What if the suspected terrorist declined an invitation to a meeting the following day on the ground that he was seeing some friends in some named foreign city? That might be the vital clue for which officers were waiting and might enable the whole gang to be arrested. Yet that information emerged during discussion about legal proceedings. Clearly it would be irresponsible not to act on it.

What if a journalist were telephoned by a terrorist whose line was tapped and he were told that something big would happen the next morning at a specified place which the journalist would like to see? It might be hoped that the journalist would pass such a clue to the police. If, for whatever reason, the journalist failed to do so, that telephone conversation — undoubtedly caught by the definition — would be the vital clue that could save lives. It would be patently absurd to require the destruction of that information.

Equally unrealistic is the suggestion that information not related to the individual named in the warrant should be destroyed. What if a warrant were directed towards one bank robber called Smith who was telephoned by his friend, a jewel thief called Jones, who revealed that he would be committing a crime unconnected with Smith and banks? Clearly the police should not have to throw away that information simply because Smith was the name on the warrant.

We agree with the spirit of amendment No. 53, which was supported by the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan). One aspect, however, makes the amendment unacceptable. This point is similar to one I made earlier. During an interception to prevent a major robbery, information could be obtained about an unconnected crime. It would be strange if that information had to be immediately destroyed. That is clearly an unacceptable consequence. Warrants are rightly directed to a purpose, but clearly information thereby gained which could save lives or prevent injury should not be thrown away, as would have to be the case if the amendment were accepted. In those circumstances, I invite the hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) to withdraw amendment No. 51; otherwise, I must invite the Committee to reject it.

Mr. Bermingham: I have listened carefully to what the Minister said. If I understand him correctly—if he nods I shall know that I do—if we do not use the material we destroy it. I fully understand the examples given. In the course of a telephone conversation other matters may be mentioned, some of which may be privileged and some of which may be clues as to where the next "job" or crime will be committed. I fully understand why such information is kept. I should be horrified if it were not. If the vast amount of irrelevant or privileged material gleaned in the course of an interception is disposed of and not used, I am content to beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Mr. Maclennan: I was grateful to the Minister for agreeing——

Mr. Kaufman: On a point of order, Mr. Walker. May I ask for your guidance? If my hon. Friend the Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) seeks leave to withdraw the amendment and the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) then speaks, does it not vitiate my hon. Friend's right to withdraw?

The Chairman: In Committee if any hon. Member seeks to address the Committee he has the right to do so.

Mr. Maclennan *rose*——

Mr. Bermingham: Further to that point of order, Mr. Walker. I always understood that in Committee once a Member moving an amendment sought leave to withdraw it, his application to withdraw was then taken and refused or accepted. If it is accepted, the subject is closed. If it is refused, the debate continues open-ended and the matter has to be put to the vote.

The Chairman: The hon. Member is wrong. If, that hon. Member having sought leave to withdraw the amendment, another hon. Member wishes to speak, he has the right to do so if there is an objection to the withdrawal of the amendment.

Mr. Maclennan: I wish to advert to the Minister's comments about amendment No. 53. If the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) was seeking to muzzle me he would not be performing a useful service to the Committee. It is necessary to clarify the Minister's response to amendment No. 53. He said that he accepted the spirit in which the amendment was moved and agreed with its purpose. He considered that it was defectively drafted in that it required the irrelevant material to be destroyed forthwith which might preclude the possible use of material which could prove to be of some value. If he takes exception to the immediate destruction of material which is irrelevant for the purpose for which the warrant is issued, will he reconsider the matter to see whether it would be possible to bring forward words which incorporate the spirit to which he assented?

Mr. Waddington: Perhaps I spoke too quickly. Let me put the position absolutely plainly. If one looks at clause 6, one finds that the requirements that have to be satisfied in relation to any intercepted material are set out, and, of course, the most important matter is contained in the very last few words of the clause. One cannot keep copies; one cannot do any of the things set out in clause 6(2) except "the minimum that is necessary as mentioned in section 2(2)".

Therefore, if one collects information as a result of the proper execution of a warrant, that material has to be dealt with as a result of the Home Secretary making arrangements under clause 6, but the trouble with the amendment is that it refers to material——

It being Ten o'clock, The CHAIRMAN *left the Chair to report Progress and ask leave to sit again.*

Committee report Progress.

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Interception of Communications Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Archie Hamilton.]*

Bill again considered in Committee.

Question again proposed, That the amendment be made.

Mr. Waddington: The trouble with the amendment supported by the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) is that it refers to "material which proves to be irrelevant to the investigation for the purposes for which the warrant is issued".

The difficulty is that one might have a perfectly properly executed warrant, and as a result of the execution of that warrant material is collected which is in fact perfectly relevant information, although it is not information that bears on the investigation for the purposes of which the warrant was issued.

I gave the example of the warrant against the bank robber. When it is executed, there is a telephone conversation, which is tapped, between the bank robber and the jewel thief. It would be absurd if, in those circumstances, there had to be immediate destruction of information given by the jewel thief to the effect that he was going to break into a jeweller's shop the following morning.

Amendment negatived.

Clause 6 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 7

THE TRIBUNAL

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): I beg to move amendment No. 57, in page 5, line 33, at end insert—

'*(a)* whether interception has taken place.'.

The Chairman: With this it will be convenient to take the following amendments: No. 58, in page 5, line 38, leave out '2' and insert '1'.

No. 59, in page 5, line 38, leave out '5' and insert '6'.

No. 62, in page 5, line 40, leave out '2' and insert '1'.

No. 55, in page 5, line 40, leave out from '5' to 'they' in line 41.

No. 63, in page 5, line 41, after 'certificate', insert

'or that there is evidence that an offence under section 1 above has been committed'.

No. 67, in page 6, line 2, at end insert—

'(4A) If on an investigation the Tribunal concludes that there was no relevant warrant or certificate and it appears to them that an offence under section 1 above may have been committed, they shall—

(a) give notice to the applicant stating that conclusion; and

(b) make a report to the Secretary of State.'.

No. 72, in page 6, line 17, after 'been', insert 'no interception and'.

No. 73, in page 6, line 18, leave out '2' and insert '1'.

No. 74, in page 6, line 18, leave out '5' and insert '6'.

No. 75, in page 6, line 19, at end insert

'or that there is no evidence of any offence under section 1 having been committed as the case may be'.

Mr. Barron: I should like to draw attention to a bad flaw in the Bill. The amendment would oblige the tribunal to investigate whether an applicant had suffered interception. At present, the Bill makes the tribunal investigate only the Secretary of State's compliance with the bureaucratic procedures that are required for interception, and fails to deal with the possibility of unauthorised interception. I am moving amendment No. 57 because my hon. Friends and I believe that the protection of the individual's civil liberties should be implicit in the Bill.

Amendment Nos. 62 and 73 are consequential. The idea is to bring in clause 1 so that the tribunal can inform an applicant who applies to the tribunal for investigation whether he has been the victim of improper interception.

If the amendments are passed, the tribunal will have to tell the applicant either that there has been a contravention

[Mr. Barron]

of clause 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5 or that there has been no contravention. In the former case, it must mean that the applicant was intercepted when he should not have been —in other words, that the interception was unauthorised or should not have been authorised. In the latter case, the position is ambiguous. Either the applicant was never intercepted at all, which is the most likely explanation, or the interception was carried out under a properly authorised warrant. Thus, the suspected criminal or terrorist could not use the tribunal to check whether he was under interception.

I feel strongly that people should not have to be told when they are being properly intercepted, but the Bill should provide protection for individuals who are improperly intercepted. At present, there is insufficient protection. Amendment No. 57 and the consequential amendments are therefore necessary to protect the rights of the individual.

Mr. Alex Carlile: I wish to draw attention to amendments Nos. 58, 59, 67 and 74.

With regard to amendments Nos. 59 and 74, when the tribunal considers whether there has been a contravention, it should be able to examine the extent to which the safeguards in clause 6 have been observed. In the debate on 12 March, the Home Secretary gave an assurance that the tribunal would

"determine whether the Secretary of State contravened the provisions of the Act". —[*Official Report*, 12 March 1985; Volume 75, c. 163.]

That should include consideration of compliance with clause 6. My point is as simple and straightforward as that.

As for amendment No. 67, it seems extraordinary that the tribunal can tell the applicant only if a warrant has been excercised in breach of the rules, but if no warrant was issued for the interception the applicant cannot be informed of that breach. I hope that the Government will recognise that obvious lacuna and undertake to amend the Bill accordingly.

Mr. Mark Carlisle: Having listened to the hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron), one has some sympathy with the person who believes that his telephone has been tapped when there is in fact no basis or justification for that claim. The hon. Gentleman's amendment, however, would allow to circumvent the effect of the tap on his affairs simply by making an inquiry. If there is no reply, he will know that his telephone has been tapped. Sadly, therefore, I do not believe tht it is possible for the tribunal to inquire into the situation described by the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Waddington: The tribunal exists to provide a remedy in the case of wrongfully authorised interception. For the first time, it gives people a means of redress if the Secretary of State acts improperly in exercising his power to issue a warrant.

The question whether there has been unlawful interception, as distinct from improperly authorised interception, is a matter for the police and the prosecuting authorities. It is to them that people should go if they believe that there is evidence of an offence, and it is they who will investigate the allegation. It is wrong in principle for a quasi-judicial body such as the tribunal to trespass where others are responsible. The tribunal is not, and could not be, equipped to undertake the work of the police in establishing whether an unlawful interception has taken place. The tribunal is a specially constituted body of five qualified people competent to review the exercise of the Secretary of State's functions. There is a world of difference between carrying out such a review and carrying out an investigation into whether a crime has been committed.

If, while carrying out its review, the tribunal suspected an offence, it would be in the same position as any responsible person. Whether it should advise the applicant that he could approach the police if he believed that there had been an offence, or should inform the prosecuting authorities or the police direct, would be a matter for the tribunal to decide.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Does the hon. and learned Gentleman agree that, if it transpired during the tribunal's inquiries that no warrant whatsoever had been issued and that an unauthorised interception had taken place, that would be a serious breach of the law? Does he agree that the one person who certainly should be informed would be the victim of that unauthorised interception? It is all very well to talk about reporting the matter to the police, but if the Director of Public Prosecutions decided for some reason not to prosecute the person who had suffered would never be told that an interception had taken place. How can the hon. and learned Gentleman justify that?

Mr. Waddington: I do not say for a moment that the person concerned would never be told. It would indeed be an important matter if it came to the notice of the tribunal that there had been an unlawful interception. I said that the tribunal would act like any responsible person. It would be for the tribunal, as a responsible body, to decide whether in the circumstances it was right to inform the person direct or to inform the prosecuting authorities.

One need not tell a body such as the tribunal what it should do in such circumstances as might well arise. It would behave like any other responsible public body that might, during the course of its work, come across information suggesting that a criminal offence had been committed. It is obvious that only rarely would the tribunal know that there had been a criminal offence. If information came to its attention that tended to show that there might have been such an offence, it would behave like any other responsible public body.

Mr. Alex Carlile: In what circumstances would the tribunal be justified in not telling someone whose phone had been tapped without a warrant that that had occurred?

10.15 pm

Mr. Waddington: The hon. and learned Gentleman is closing his mind to the function of the tribunal. It will not embark on some great investigation to find out whether there has been unlawful interception. It will be activated when someone tells it that he believes that the Secretary of State has not properly exercised his powers.

The hon. and learned Gentleman jumps to the conclusion that, having been activated in that way, the tribunal will come to the conclusion that a criminal offence has been committed. In that eventuality—which is not a very likely one—the tribunal would no doubt behave like a responsible body.

The tribunal is already required under amendment No. 67 to report to the Secretary of State, but I must remind the Committee that the Secretary of State is not concerned

with the investigation of alleged criminal offences. He cannot interfere in the proper investigation of offences by the police, and if he received reports that it was suspected that an offence had been committed, there is little that he could do with them.

The amendments referred to by the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) seek to extend the tribunal's remit to the clause 6 safeguards. But clause 6 deals not with the act of interception itself or with the execution of the warrant but with what happens after interception. At the heart of the clause lies not a series of decisions by a particular person but an administrative system containing arrangements that the Secretary of State has either made or inherited.

The tribunal has been created to provide a remedy where a decision has been wrongly taken under the legislation. It has the job of looking into a particular decision. But this would not be the case if there was an application under clause 6. I think that the amendments reflect a misunderstanding of the respective roles of the tribunal and the commissioner. The tribunal concerns itself with the individual decisions of the Secretary of State, and does so on receipt of an application from an individual who may have been affected. The commissioner, on the other hand, undertakes a continuing review on his own initiative, and that review must involve clause 6 arrangements. That seems to be the right way of going about these matters.

In those circumstances, I cannot recommend the amendments to the Committee.

Mr. Barron: I thought for a minute that the Minister would accept amendment No. 57. At one stage I thought that he saw nothing wrong with it. I cannot for the life of me understand why he should say that the tribunal is a responsible body that would obviously tell someone if he was the victim of a wrongful interception, yet not want to accept the amendment. Why is the amendment unacceptable? If the Minister is worried about the wording, he could return to the House with better drafting at a later stage.

The Minister's remarks were very contradictory, and I can do nothing other than ask hon. Members to vote for the amendment.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 169, Noes 247.

Division No. 179] **[10.15 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Tony
Bermingham, Gerald
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Concannon, Rt Hon J. D.
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Cowans, Harry
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Dubs, Alfred
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Central Fife)*
Hardy, Peter
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Haynes, Frank
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McGuire, Michael
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
Mackenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Park, George
Parris, Matthew
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, M.
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R. *(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'kl'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Strang, Gavin
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Wigley, Dafydd
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sean Hughes and
Mr. Robin Corbett.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia

Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Buck, Sir Antony
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Gorst, John
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Gregory, Conal
Grist, Ian
Gummer, John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Hordern, Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Kilfedder, James A.
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Mrs Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Marlow, Antony
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, John
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Rhodes James, Robert
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spence, John
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(W Dorset)*
Squire, Robin
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, J.
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones and
Mr. Michael Neubert.

Question accordingly negatived.

Amendment made: No. 60, in page 5, line 39, after 'Tribunal', insert

', applying the principles applicable on an application for judicial review,'.—*[Mr. Brittan.]*

To report progress and ask leave to sit again.—*[Mr. Boscawen.]*

Committee report progress; to sit again tomorrow.

Supplementary Benefit

10.30 pm

The Minister for Social Security (Mr. Tony Newton): I beg to move:

That the draft Supplementary Benefit (Requirements and Resources) Miscellaneous Provisions Regulations 1985, which were laid before this House on 26th March, be approved.

I understand that it will be for the convenience of the House if we discuss at the same time the following motion:

That the draft Supplementary Benefit (Resources) Amendment Regulations 1985, which were laid before this House on 21st March, be approved.

Since I imagine that the main interest is in the first set of regulations concerned with board and lodging, it may be sensible for me to say a few words about the second set of regulations before turning to the board and lodging issue.

The second set of regulations concerns the relationship between statutory sick pay and supplementary benefit. The position here is simple. When statutory sick pay was introduced in April 1983 to replace national insurance sickness benefit for the first eight weeks of sickness in most cases, other than the unemployed and the self-employed, it was intended that it should be treated for supplementary benefit purposes in exactly the same way as the benefit it replaced, that is, fully taken into account. It was believed that that was what the law established, and it is on that basis that claims to supplementary benefit from those on statutory sick pay have been treated.

Recently, however, a social security commissioner's decision has called this into question by holding that statutory sick pay should be subject to the same £4 disregard as earnings for supplementary benefit purposes. The chief adjudication officer is to seek leave to appeal from this decision; so, to that extent, the precise state of the law may be subject to further clarification. Meanwhile, however, we have thought it right to bring forward this regulation to put the position beyond doubt for the future.

In my view, it is not merely contrary to policy and intention, but as a general rule also contrary to common sense that one income maintenance benefit whose costs are entirely met by the state should be partly disregarded for the purposes of assessing another income maintenance benefit whose costs are also entirely met by the state. In this case, the absurdity is magnified by the fact that national insurance sickness benefit continues to be taken into account in full, so that on the commissioner's ruling there would be two different applications of the supplementary benefit rules to people who are sick. I hope, therefore, that these regulations will command the support of both sides of the House.

If I have carried the House with me on that, it would, I think, be optimistic to expect the same degree of assent on the Government's proposals for board and lodging, to which I now turn. I hope, however, that there will be general agreement on the unsatisfactory working of the existing rules in recent years, and on the need for them to have been reviewed. I think the House is familiar with the expenditure figures. The total of expenditure on supplementary benefit on board and lodging has risen from around £60 million in 1979 to something approaching £600 million in 1984, both in the residential care sector and in the sector of ordinary board and lodging. The number of people in receipt of these payments has risen in a somewhat comparable, though not precisely comparable, fashion.

The effects of this situation have been disturbing hon. Members on both sides and many people outside the House. There is clear evidence of a considerable degree of abuse and exploitation of the rules—of cartel-type activities driving up charges, of establishments catering exclusively for DHSS claimants because of the guaranteed occupancy levels and payments that they bring, of higher charges for people on benefit than for those who are not on benefit, of kickback payments from landlords to claimants and of charges set — this includes the residential care sector—solely by reference to limits and not on a normal financial basis.

Anyone who doubts the scale of the abuse in the ordinary board and lodging sector need only look at the flood of advertisements in the newspapers in some parts of the country. I have with me one from the *Thanet Times* — it is one of a dozen or more that I could quote — saying:

"Accommodation at spacious home with all conveniences. DHSS fees arranged. All bedrooms have central heating, colour TV and tea-making facilities."

As I say, I could multiply that many times. But just as bad as the abuse and exploitation that have been going on is the fact that we have ended up with many tens of thousands of young people trapped in accommodation which they could not possibly afford if they were in work, and they are thus in a peculiar version of the unemployment trap. That, as I have said on many occasions, is doing no service to them or to the rest of the community.

Mrs. Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): I am sure that my hon. Friend will carry the House with him because of the depth of evidence of abuse that exists. Will he, however, comment on the serious situation facing the elderly chronic sick, many of them in private nursing homes, who cannot be accommodated in local authority homes? There is widespread concern about the plight of those people. What plans does my hon. Friend have for them?

Mr. Newton: I shall deal with the residential care and nursing home sectors, which raise some different issues, in due course.

It was in response to the growing evidence of this increasingly unsatisfactory situation that the Government acted last year to freeze the limits then in operation and subsequently to put to the Social Security Advisory Committee the proposals which, substantially modified in the light of the advice of that committee, have led to the regulations that the House is debating tonight.

Many hon. Members wish to speak in the debate and, with the leave of the House, I will respond as fully as I can at the end. Meanwhile, I shall not make the conventional ministerial speech, attempting to go into every detail of the regulations, but confine myself to the basic structure of what we propose.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): The Minister says that the proposals have been substantially modified as a result of the SSAC response, but will he nevertheless confirm that that committee has said that the current proposals are unacceptable?

Mr. Newton: That is an exaggeration by a long chalk of what the SSAC has said. It has made a number of

[Mr. Newton]

important points which we shall continue to take into account in monitoring the progress of charges under the regulations. The SSAC clearly acknowledged the need for something to be done about the problems that I have described. It made a number of suggestions and welcomed many of the changes that the Government have made in response to those suggestions and, as I said, we shall continue to take account of the committee's comments in monitoring progress.

The main element in what we are proposing is to lay down firm limits, set by Ministers, for particular kinds of accommodation, in some cases varied according to different parts of the country, and to substitute those firm limits for the existing thoroughly unsatisfactory position in which the local limits for board and lodging vary from £40 a week in some places to £110 in others; those for residential care homes vary from £55 a week in some cases to £220 in others; and those for nursing homes vary from £80 a week to £295. Those variations cannot be defended, and there are some other perverse effects in some cases, such as nursing home limits being lower than residential care limits.

We shall set limits, in the case of ordinary board and lodging, for each area at one of six standard rates ranging from £45 to £70 per week. Most will be set between £50 and £60. For this purpose, DHSS officers will be grouped to take account of Department of Employment travel-to-work areas so as to reflect as far as possible established accommodation, employment and travelling patterns.

Subject to those limits, there will be no further restrictions on anyone aged 26 or over, but for those aged 25 or under, unless they are in an exempt category, each of those areas will have a limit of two, four or eight weeks as a boarder, after which the non-householder rate will normally apply. For those 25 or under there will be exemptions from those time limits which will include anyone with a dependent child or in other defined categories, such as living in a hostel, being pregnant, sick, mentally or physically handicapped, having been in residence in the same accommodation for six months while employed or placed there under the guidance of a public authority.

I want to re-emphasise that, as I have already implied, there are special provisions for hostels, to which the Government attach very great importance. They are treated as a separate category—previously they came within the ordinary board and lodging definition—and will have a limit set at £70 nationally. There will be no restrictions on stay for people in hostels.

Coming to the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Mrs. Knight) concerning residential care and nursing homes, here we have set limits at a level which we believe will allow reasonable charges to be made in homes meeting the new registration arrangements under the Registered Homes Act 1984. Those limits, which I outlined to the House a couple of weeks ago but will repeat now, are as follows: residental care homes for the elderly, £110 a week; residential care homes for the mentally ill, £120 a week; residential care homes for drug and alcohol misuse, £120 a week; residential care homes for the mentally handicapped, £140 a week; and residential care homes for those who became physically disabled below pension age, £170 a week.

A sum equivalent to the higher rate of attendance, which is at present £28·60, will be added to the limit for nursing homes. In line with the Social Security Advisory Committee's recommendation, we are introducing an additional category for hospices catering for the terminally ill, with a maximum limit of £198·60 a week.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): Will the Minister not recognise that there is a potentially dangerous anomaly arising from the fact that the attendance allowance cannot be given as an addition to the £110 for residential care homes for the elderly? If elderly people who deserve and get any attendance allowance have gone into hospitals, there will be a tendency for those residential care homes not to want them to come back and there will be growing pressure on the hospitals with geriatric beds?

Mr. Newton: I am not quite sure that I follow the point that the hon. Gentleman is making, because attendance allowance is not payable in any event to those in hospital. Nor has it been payable to those in local authority homes, but only to those in private and voluntary homes. It has been widely recognised that that is anomalous. Indeed, this is one of the proposals that was quite clearly and plainly welcomed by the SSAC. If we have got the limits right—and I recognise that this is the point that my hon. Friend the Member for Edgbaston is making—it is obviously ridiculous to set limits that are designed to take account of the care that is provided in a particular home and then to pay an attendance allowance which is designed to pay for care on top. I think that that is generally accepted.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): Having served in local government for some time and on the social services committee, I wonder if my hon. Friend could explain how he has reached the figure of £110 per week for residential care homes for the elderly when the economic rate charged to those who have a very modest income and capital is far in excess of that figure already? If the economic rate is more than £110 a week in a part III residential home, why have the Government pitched the figure which they are prepared to meet at below what is the economic figure and has been for some time in the local authority sector?

Mr. Newton: I will gladly look at any additional information which my hon. Friend—and indeed my hon. Friend the Member for Edgbaston—can give me on this subject. We recognise the difficulties in deciding precisely what the right figures are in this difficult area. We have taken the best information available to us, including information about the actual costs of local authority homes, setting these limits. But, as I have emphasised throughout this argument on a number of occasions and want to emphasise again tonight, we are very conscious of the need to monitor these provisions, because we accept the difficulties that lie in deciding precisely what the right figures are in this area and are entirely prepared to review the decisions we have made in the light of the further evidence or experience that may be brought forward.

Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory (Wells): How has the nursing home charge of £138·60 per week been calculated? It is only £28·60 higher than the amount available for patients in ordinary residential care homes.

We must bear in mind the fact that the standard of care, the staffing level and the nursing care are very much higher in a nursing home.

Mr. Newton: Quite simply, we felt that the most sensible proxy to take for the additional costs of nursing care in addition to residential care was the rate of main social security benefit paid for care purposes—namely, the attendance allowance. We took, therefore, the higher rate of attendance allowance at £28·60.

I am conscious that a number of those concerned with nursing homes and other institutions have questioned whether that figure is sufficient. What we do not have is sufficient evidence to judge whether they are right in believing that the figure should be somewhat higher, or, if so, in deciding precisely what that figure should be. It is one of the matters to which, in our monitoring, we shall be paying particular attention. Indeed, we shall actively seek further information to improve our knowledge about the additional costs of nursing care over and above residential care. Should that information show that £28·60 is too low, we shall be willing to revise that figure.

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): I cannot understand the Minister's reply to his hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) that he will take more evidence. The average number of people giving evidence to the Social Security Advisory Committee has been exceeded six or seven times. Indeed, the number of people giving evidence on this matter is four times more than the previous highest total. How much more evidence does the Minister want? He has all the evidence in a booklet produced by the Social Security Advisory Committee, but he has ignored almost every one of its recommendations.

Mr. Newton: I accept that we are not short of evidence in the sense of claims about the consequences of certain sets of proposals and about the desirability of higher limits —mostly from those who have an interest in the matter. However, we are short of sufficient objective data to go beyond the best assessment that we have been able to make in the figures that we have set out in the regulations. I really cannot go further tonight than to re-emphasise that these regulations and figures are not set in concrete. The Government are approaching this matter in the spirit of being willing to listen to further representations and, above all, to consider further detailed information that would enable us to refine the proposals. That is the sensible way in which to proceed.

Sir Kenneth Lewis (Stamford and Spalding): I am sure that what my hon. Friend has said about keeping the matter under review is a fair offer. He also said that these figures were not set in concrete. What would he have to do if he decided, after four or five months, that there was need for adjustment? Would we need another set of regulations or does he have the power to raise the figure slightly if that is required?

Mr. Newton: The Secretary of State simply has to set different figures. One of the advantages of the way in which we are proceeding is that we have the flexibility to respond to the concerns that hon. Members are expressing tonight. That is sensible.

Some anxieties will be relieved by the knowledge that for a home registered under more than one category the limit will reflect the care category of the individual claimant. When a home is registered for the care of the mentally ill as well as for the elderly, the mentally ill limit, which is slightly higher than the residential care limit, will apply.

We accept the need for transitional arrangements and for additional protection for some existing claimants. People over pension age in residential care or nursing homes can continue for life to have the charge met at the existing level or until payment under the new limits becomes more favourable.

People under pension age in residential care or nursing homes can continue for a year to have their charges met at the current level. The same applies to hostels when residents remain in existing accommodation. For ordinary board and lodging cases, protection will be for between four and 13 weeks, depending on precise circumstances. People with special circumstances who receive the additional amount of up to £16·15 a week in ordinary board and lodging—mainly elderly and disabled people —will receive one year's protection.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): Will price protection include an element of inflation, or will a flat rate obtain throughout?

Mr. Newton: We never intended that an element of inflation-proofing should be included. The existing payment should be continued until it is overtaken by any subsequent rise in the limit which applies to a particular home.

This is a difficult and complex part of the supplementary benefit system. It is necessary to try to strike a reasonable balance between many considerations. We shall monitor the changes carefully, seek to improve the information available to us and be prepared to consider whether further changes should be made in the light of experience.

These proposals are not set in concrete for all time. We believe that they are essential to ensure a better use of resources to meet genuine social needs while checking waste and abuse. I commend the regulations to the House in that spirit.

10.52 pm

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): The regulations should be set in concrete and thrown into the Thames so that they are never seen again.

The first set of regulations follow the usual pattern. The Minister explains why the law is not what he thought it to be, not what he said that it was a few months or years ago, and that therefore he is forced to change the regulations.

The second set of regulations are more unusual. Even before the resolution is carried, the Minister says that the regulations are faulty and unsatisfactory, that there is not enough evidence or data, and that they will be reviewed.

The Minister had said that the Government intended to review the figures in November 1986. Now they intend to review them in April 1986, despite the fact that the Social Security Advisory Committee said that the denial of an uplift and review in November 1985 seemed "punitive", so unsatisfactory did the Committee consider the figures in the document to be. Now the Government plan to delay the review by six months, unless Government Members influence Ministers.

We should all recognise that we are dealing with the consequences of Government policy in a number of areas.

[Mrs. Margaret Beckett]

We are not dealing with something that happened as a result of an unpredicted long-term trend. It is one of the Government's characteristics that they appear to be incapable of realising that the actions that they take separately in several different areas impinge one on another.

It was probably quite sensible that about a year ago the Minister raised the restrictions placed on offices on the claims that they should meet. The restrictions then operating did not meet the real needs of claimants and the real sums that they were being forced to pay. There was much criticism of the system at that time and the Minister relaxed it. He was not aware that while he was taking that action—as I have said, it was probably quite sensible in the context in which he took it—some of his colleagues were urging the privatisation of everything that the Government could get their hands on and the making of money out of any sort of human misery or need for which they could provide a service.

I accept that there are some who wish genuinely to care for the elderly, who have done so over many years and who now find themselves being hammered by a Government whom nearly all of them support. However, another group has sprung up. The members of it are usually admired by Conservative Members, and they are the so-called entrepreneurs. They have discovered overnight their concern for the elderly. In many instances, this realisation has come rather late in life. There is little doubt that the publicity that was given to the moves made by the Minister to allow a more relaxed attitude towards payments made those involved in the running of residential homes and board-and-lodging accommodation aware that there was a demand which could be exploited. There is little doubt that this has led to payments being made on a scale and in circumstances which were not originally intended.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: The hon. Lady has cast an unfortunate slur upon many who have decided to provide private accommodation for the elderly, the mentally infirm, the mentally ill and others who cannot be accommodated in hospital. Will she admit that it is clear from the statistics in her possession that many of these entrepreneurs, as she calls them, have been social workers, nurses or psychiatric nurses who have spent their working lives looking after those who need help and who see a need for accommodation in the private sector? The slur that she has cast upon them is entirely unjustified.

Mrs. Beckett: The hon. Gentleman referred a short while ago to his local authority experience. He should consult his ex-local authority colleagues on their experience now. He would find that in almost every authority throughout the country there is worry about a new breed which is setting up homes to exploit the payments to which the Minister referred. Local authorities are not worried about those to whom the hon. Gentleman has referred, who have often spent a lifetime looking after those who are in care.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Does the hon. Lady know that the nursing-home charges that are proposed will still be only a fraction of the cost of looking after patients in a geriatric wing of an NHS hospital?

Mrs. Beckett: Does the hon. Gentleman recognise that there are a number of homes where the cost of providing care is very cheap because their standards are so low? We have already had examples of serious abuses, and this is concerning local authorities, including many which are Conservative controlled, throughout the country. If Conservative Members cannot distinguish between a decent person providing a proper service at a proper charge, who is being hammered by the Government, and those who are seeking to exploit the elderly, their information is defective, to say the least.

Charges have been increased for board and lodging. The Minister did not say much about that tonight. Indeed, he chose to stay away from board and lodging to some extent. We have heard a good deal from other sources about increased expenditure in this area, which has been due mostly to the increased number of young people who have been forced into board-and-lodging accommodation.

The Government seem to be astonished that hundreds of thousands of young people on the dole with no prospect of an independent life, let alone one financed by a decent job, should start to drift away from their homes, often in circumstances of family dispute. The Government seem to be even more astonished that sometimes those who have no jobs leave home at a time when the Government have imposed non-dependant deductions on families already sufficiently poor to receive housing benefit, with almost £9 a week extra to be paid for by the young person in work.

The Government ask why so many young people are going into board and lodging. It is because the vast number of young people—almost 50,000—who go into this board and lodging accommodation which is often expensive and even more often squalid, have no real choice. The Government have so tied the hands of local authorities that, even in the face of rising need, they cannot provide sufficient places for the elderly, whether in residential care or in places for the mentally ill. The Government have presided over a catastrophic slump in housing. It is complacent twaddle for the Secretary of State to refer in his report to the ready availability of housing. He said:

"there continue to be large numbers of unocuppied local authority dwellings".

That was the right hon. Gentleman's reply to the Social Security Advisory Committee.

It is a pity that before the Secretary of State put that reply in the hands of the House in March 1985, he did not read a report in February 1983 from his colleague the Secretary of State for the Environment. That survey of local authority dwellings stated:

"According to the best assumptions available, there is a shortfall of public sector dwellings for rent to meet both special and general housing needs, which cannot be satisfied by other means."

The report continued:

"The majority of empties owned by the 30 authorities, and almost all those vacant over a year, are those undergoing or awaiting rehabilitation, or demolition."

They are awaiting rehabilitation because the Government have cut the money that the local authorities are able to spend on rehabilitating those dwellings.

In 1977, it was predicted that we would need 300,000 houses a year to meet the growth in new households. For the past four years, there have been fewer than 200,000 completions a year. The shortfall has been especially dramatic in the public sector, to which one would hope that most of the type of youngsters who go into this

accommodation would turn. It was estimated that 120,000 houses would be needed, but for the past three years, there have been fewer than 50,000 completions a year. Over the past six years, public sector authorities have provided nearly 300,000 fewer houses than were thought necessary. It is no wonder, with such a shortage of public sector houses, that youngsters are forced into board and lodging.

In the same section of the report in which the Secretary of State for the Environment referred to empty houses, he said that there was an overall surplus of housing. More careful account should be taken of where housing is available, of the needs of those in overcrowded conditions, and so on. There is a net shortage in real terms of 800,000 homes, according to Shelter's estimates.

The money that is spent on providing housing is decreasing all the time. In 1985-86, gross capital expenditure by the public sector will be 40 per cent. lower, gross local authority capital expenditure will be 45 per cent. lower and net local authority capital expenditure will be 79 per cent. lower than in 1979-80, reflecting the reduction in the Government's contribution to housing.

These are the root causes of the problem, as the Social Security Advisory Committee identified in its report. The committee pointed out that the regulations

"do nothing to resolve the underlying difficulties."

Referring to the proposes, the committee stated:

"We doubt, however, whether any satisfactory control can be imposed on the use of supplementary benefit board and lodging accommodation until these issues are faced and dealt with . . . In our view, it is because they tackle the symptoms rather than the causes of growth in costs and numbers, that they are unlikely to provide a long-term solution."

Even during the past couple of days, hon. Members have received telephone calls and letters from the many agencies and groups involved in dealing with those who will be affected by the regulations. Those groups would normally, if not always, be wholly sympathetic to the Government. They certainly seek to be non-partisan and non-party political. *[Laughter.]* An hon. Member laughs. Does he call the Royal National Institute for the Blind partisan and party political? Perhaps he does if he does not agree with his Government. The RNIB points out, as did the hon. Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Mrs. Knight), the disadvantages and problems caused by the limits set by the Government for those in its homes. It draws attention to the difference between the limit for physically disabled people who become disabled before retirement, at £170 a week, and that for those who become disabled after retirement, at £110 a week.

I follow the logic of the Government's argument, but in that case, as in so many others, they are mistaken. The RNIB draws attention to one group about whom they are mistaken. It points out—I do not think that the Minister will be able to disagree—that people who become blind after the age of 65 find greater difficulty in adjusting to their circumstances. They need more care and assistance, which costs more. It draws attention to the fact that most people who go blind go blind later in life.

Age Concern says that, despite strong representations to the Government — the Social Security Advisory Committee supported this claim—there is no category for the elderly mentally infirm, although it identifies them as people who face increased costs.

The British Refugee Council draws attention to the unsatisfactory natufe of the proposals for hostels. It says that the people with whom it deals have the greatest need for security and the avoidance of conflict with authority, yet they face the greatest problem. With the costs for its hostels in central London, which it cannot reduce, it will have substantial difficulties and may be forced to close some of the hostels.

The Church of Scotland draws attention to the fact that, in its 41 homes that it runs for the elderly, the rates offered by the Government are below the rates it needs to charge to run the homes. It complains that local authorities are not allowed to top up the payments made for such homes. That brings me back to the point that I was debating with the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton), because the Church of Scotland says that there is great anxiety about homes which are exploitative and not properly run. If local authorities were allowed to top up payments to the level which might meet some of the cases that I suspect Conservative Members will mention later, it might offer an opportunity for a greater exercise of interest and control.

The SSAC report calls repeatedly and throughout for more research. The Minister said that there was not much evidence for the figures. The SSAC says that there is little evidence to support the proposals that are being put forward. It regrets the fact that transitional protection for board and lodging is confined to the level rather than the period in the area.

I come to board and lodging. The SSAC mentions the strong possibility—this is perhaps the most dangerous part of the Government's proposals — that the Government are on the verge of creating

"a class of homeless and rootless young person who is unable to return to the parental home, for whatever reason, and who cannot remain long enough in any one location to find permanent accommodation or a job."

The Government suggest—

"other acceptable accommodation is available to these young people if they choose to seek it—a proposition which we doubt"

Ironically, the current proposals may actually hamper young people from moving into more settled housing by preventing them

"from establishing the continuous residence qualification required both for local authority accommodation and for housing associations property."

The Minister said that young people in that category will have, depending upon their good fortune and circumstances, anything from four to six weeks to find themselves somewhere else to live. If they are under 26, they may have been living in the accommodation for two or three years without the opportunity to find a job. They will suddenly find themselves effectively out on their ear, without a real opportunity to re-establish themselves in a stable way of life. The pressure on them to move and move again or to lose their benefit is creating a group of new nomads, created by the Government.

One reads the Government's proposals first with incredulity and then with mounting anger as one realises the effects on, as is usually the case, some of the most vulnerable sections of the population. Realistically, four weeks is just not enough time to find a job for anybody who has the slightest difficulty. I notice that in his statement the Secretary of State says that 25 per cent. of young people find a job in under four weeks. That means that 75 per cent. of young people do not. In many parts of the country, after four weeks they will have to move on.

My hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) drew the Minister's attention to criticisms of

[Mrs. Beckett]

the proposals. The Minister said that he thought that my hon. Friend was harsh about what the SSAC said, so let me remind the Minister of what it said:

"the proposed changes seem to us to have serious defects."

They are so serious that

"we recommend that the changes are seen overtly as temporary changes . . . We think this is particularly the case with the proposals for ordinary board and lodging."

One of the worst aspects—although it appears to be the most minor—of the board and lodging proposals is the proposal that a couple with a child under 11 will be allowed only the rate for one and three quarter people rather than for two people, irrespective of the fact that the rate for two people is probably charged where they live. Despite the scathing comments of the SSAC about anecdotal evidence not being a sufficient basis for legislation, it did not seem to be able to discourage the Government from legislating on that basis.

Let me offer the Minister a different anecdote. Only yesterday I heard of a couple in west London who are fortunate enough to be paying £7·50 a night each for their lodging. They will lose £25·90 from the payments to which they are entitled, not because of the limits, although the limits are lower than what they are paying, but because of the one and three quarters effect. That young couple are in quite reasonable accommodation, but they have experienced worse circumstances. Two years ago they were living in accommodation so squalid that there was a terrible fire there. They were fortunate enough to escape, although some people who lived in the house were burnt to death. That is what they are going back to when the regulations come into effect. I find their anecdotal evidence much more important than the squeals that we heard from Conservative Members when the temporary regulations were debated, about the people living in pleasant seaside resorts who did not like seeing unemployed young people from Liverpool in their resorts during the summer. That is a little less important than the danger in which the Government's proposals will put so many young people.

I shall finish with just one other quote from the SSAC about all the people who want, the Government appear to think, to go and live in this board and lodging:

"In some cases . . . claimants were enduring substantial domestic and other stress before moving into accommodation. The conditions . . . are often of an extremely low standard, and may involve sharing rooms with strangers, having to vacate rooms during the day, dirty and unsafe accommoation, and inadequate meals of poor quality. This is far from the luxurious lifestyle which it is sometimes implied that board and lodging claimants follow."

That option cannot be the foundation of a workable benefits policy.

The regulations are possibly the biggest shambles that the Government have put before the House so far on supplementary benefit. I hope that I am not pre-empting the Fowler reviews in saying that. They are more than a shambles; they are a disgrace. I say to the Minister and his colleagues that not only his Government and his party but the whole country will ultimately suffer from the systematic, step-by-step removal of dignity and hope from thousands of the most vulnerable young people in the country.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. I remind the House that the debte must end at one minute past midnight, and many hon. Members wish to take part.

11.14 pm

Mr. Gerrard Neale (Cornwall, North): To the people of north Cornwall the provisions are not a disgrace or a shambles. On the contrary, they are widely welcomed and people find them most reassuring.

The hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) said that 50,000 people were affected by the provisions. If her figures are correct, 4·5 per cent. of those people are in Newquay and north Cornwall. The hon. Lady seemed to imply that the coastal problem did not matter very much, but I can tell her straight that it matters a great deal to people in areas such as mine and those of many of my hon. Friends who feel equally strongly about this.

We greatly welcome the fact that my hon. Friend the Minister listened so carefully and diligently to the representations made to him in the consultation period and that he has put a freeze on the payments. I especially welcome the area structure that he has imposed, which will greatly improve the situation in Newquay and in areas such as Thanet which have the same problem. We also welcome the imposition of a limit on the length of time for which the large number of people coming into these areas can enjoy not the squalid condditions the the hon. Member for Derby, South described but conditions in which many of my low-paid constituents could never afford to spend a holiday. I believe that the action taken by my hon. Friend the Minister will go a long way towards solving the problem.

Mr. Robin Squire (Hornchurch): To be fair, when the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) mentioned squalor and so on she was quoting directly from the social security advisory committee report.

Mr. Neale: The hon. Lady suggested that Government policy had forced young people into this kind of situation, but there is no evidence that any of the young people coming from Scotland and the north-west to areas such as Newquay were driven by anything other than the greater benefits to be gained from so doing. As I have said before, throughout last summer there were more than 100 jobs available in Newquay, but more than 2,000 youngsters came in from outside the area and remained on the unemployed list for the entire summer.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): The hon. Gentleman makes an important point, but should not the Minister meet it by proposing that in areas where jobs are alleged to be available benefits should be directly linked with people taking the jobs rather than by introducing blanket provisions which affect everyone irrespective of whether jobs are available?

Mr. Neale: I will return to that point later.

I should make it clear to the Opposition that the indignation about the board and lodging payments made to young people coming into areas such as ours comes not from the wealthy or the traditional retired Conservative party supporters but from the low-paid and their families and even the unemployed who live in rented accommodation themselves. Those people greatly welcome the steps taken by my hon. Friend the Minister to cure the problem.

In areas such as mine it is recognised that provisions of this kind are temporary and designed for people in

particular circumstances. Some may come to regard them as permanent arrangements, but that is not how they should be seen and I understand that that is not how my hon. Friend the Minister sees them. The line that he is taking is most welcome and I support him fully.

However, as I said when the statement was made, I feel that during the course of the review which is to be continued, and which is very welcome, while my hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security considers how the operation of the system may be unfair on some people —we would all wish him to look at that—he should also consider whether when someone moves from one area of unemployment to another—even on the basis of a two-week, four-week or eight-week claim—he should not be moving in pursuance of a job for which he has an interview. He should have some proof that he has a reason for going to that area.

There is 30 per cent. male unemployment in my constituency. It is preposterous to suggest that someone from Glasgow on the north-west stands a reasonable chance of getting work there. My hon. Friend must look at that problem, in the fullness of time. However, I congratulate him on what he has done. It will do much to improve the situation.

11.22 pm

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): First, of course a review was necessary. It would be irresponsible of any hon. Member on either side of the House to say that some of the costs falling on the Minister's budget were not beginning to get out of control. The hon. Member for Cornwall, North (Mr. Neale), to whom I listened with interest, is right to say that it is absurd to send youngsters looking for work to seaside resorts such as Newquay which suffer from quite high levels of unemployment, although personally I do not blame youngsters from Liverpool and Glasgow for going to such places if the system allows them to do so.

However, the review was premature. We are awaiting the imminent production of the Government's response to a much longer-term and, one hopes, much more fundamental and enlightened review of the whole housing benefit system, and I would have preferred these proposals to have formed part of that.

The hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) talked about treating the symptoms rather than the cause. I share that view. For some of these 16, 17, and 18-year-olds, the education system is breaking down; and the youth employment situation in this country is as it is. That being so, it is inevitable that some casualties will be thrown onto the social services and onto our housing facilities, and the social services and housing facilities cannot measure up to the extent of the problem. Inevitably, the hon. Gentleman's Department gets it in the neck. He has to pick up the tab for the casualties of the education, employment, housing and social services systems.

If the Minister thinks that he can turn off the tap by screwing the money down, he is wrong. He will only push the problem further down the line into the hospitals and the prisons. That is what will happen if youngsters are thrown out of hostels and board and lodging accommodation.

We must consider the strategic issues. On 26 March, *The Guardian* wrote that

"This Government's housing policy has now reached the stage of economic as well as social madness. Bed and breakfast hotels in London are netting over £1 million a month in social security and ratepayers' money to accommodate homeless families . . . who could be accommodated more cheaply in council houses if only the Government would allow any to be built."

That is the level at which we should start to consider the problem. There are important aspects of social work and housing to be considered. We should spend more money on council housing and there should be greater opportunities in the private rented sector. I would be prepared to look at any proposals in that area that the Government brought forward. We should have hostels with proper standards to which the young people could go.

The limits are too low. I take the Minister at his word. He says that he will review the limits. My hon. Friends and I will watch carefully the way in which the proposals work and by November 1986—or much earlier if necessary—we will ask him to do something about them.

What is to happen to young people aged between 16 and 25 who are not in the exempted categories? I cannot answer the question put to me by some of the social work professionals in my constituency. What are these youngsters expected to do? Some of the people that I have spoken to think that these proposals are a precursor to supplementary benefit being completely withdrawn from 16 to 17-year-olds. I warn the Minister that, if he includes that in the package, he will get short shrift from us. The attitude displayed towards young people seems to be wholly against the Government's declared policy of labour mobility. That serious point should be considered.

Unfortunately, the hon. Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Mrs. Knight) has now left the Chamber, but she made an important point about the problems of senile dementia. There are real problems about the staffing commitments for the elderly and mentally infirm, but the regulations do not cover that. If the Government categorise types of homes, the homes but not the residents will be registered. No method has apparently been put forward for matching the needs of the residents with the provision of homes. There is a possible element of abuse there, which the Minister should consider.

It is unfair to set flat limits across the country for residential and nursing homes, according to the category of the home. That is too inflexible. If the Minister is prepared to have geographical differences for board and lodging payments, he should be equally flexible about the limits for residential and nursing homes. The level and limit for charges is too low. As I told him when he made a statement in the House on 26 March, some good and proper homes may have to close because in some areas the limits will be set too low.

I recognise the problem, but the Government have not handled it properly. I shall recommend that my right hon. and hon. Friends vote against the regulations. They are premature, and too complicated, centralised and superficial. They are also designed to save money and are a body blow to youngsters and to elderly people who are least able to look after themselves.

11.26 pm

Mr. Humphrey Malins (Croydon, North-West): I wish to concentrate on DHSS payments to bed and breakfast hotels for the homeless. I broadly welcome the regulations. There have been some tremendous abuses in the bed and breakfast world. However, there is one area in which the Government have not so far acted.

[Mr. Humphrey Malins]

In my constituency in Croydon I have come across some appalling cases. Sometimes husbands and wives, with two or three children, are condemned to live in 12 ft or 14 ft square rooms for months on end in conditions of the utmost squalor. Sometimes landlords charge about £100 a week to let one room. If that figure is multiplied by 10 for the number of rooms in the same hotel, the amount of abuse, hardship and sadness caused to those families can be understood. They certainly do not deserve the fate that they have met.

The Government are right to act by cutting the payments that can be made. But there are two customers for any service. Although the taxpayer is one, the other must be the family on the homeless end of the chain. As things stand, when the DHSS makes board and lodging payments for hotels, bed and breakfast establishments and so on, there is no obligation on it to inspect the premises in order to check that they are satisfactory. In addition, there is no legal obligation on the housing authority to enforce any minimum standards of accommodation. There are powers, but no duties.

If we say that we will cut the payments made, we must go further and say that when payments for such accommodation are made we must be sure that both sets of customers obtain good value. In future we do not want families to be crowded into one room for weeks and sometimes months on end. Those who live, sadly, in board and lodging accommodation should be given basic decent standards. At present that is often not so.

I support the Government's introduction of the regulations from a financial standpoint, but I must urge them to take action in the not-too-distant future so that minimum standards of accommodation can be enforced. That is in the interests of those at the sharp end of the homeless problem.

11.30 pm

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): When what the hon. Member for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Malins) has described happens to families who live in deplorable conditions in Croydon, it reflects a failed housing policy, economic madness because of the lack of investment in our housing infrastructure and failed social policies. One certain effect of the regulations is that, because the returns to landlords will be decreased, landlords will be tempted to squeeze, and will in fact squeeze, more people into limited and inadequate space, There will therefore be an increase in human misery of the kind which the hon. Member has described. That increase in human misery will not be monitored by local authorities because no obligations are placed upon them to monitor the deterioration in the nature of the accommodation which results from the Government's policies.

My hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) was correct to place these proposals in the wider context of the failure of the Government's housing policy. Demand is increasing for demographic reasons and for a whole range of social reasons as households increase, young people leave home and the divorce rate increases. At the same time as the demand increases, the supply is decreased because of the Government's housing policy. The inevitable result is the army of young gipsies who look around for accommodation which they cannot find.

If the Minister wants other than anecdotal evidence, I can tell him that even during the last week four bed and breakfast accommodation places in Swansea have said in anticipation of these new regulations that they will no longer accept claimants. Therefore, the supply of accommodation, however unsuitable, will decrease more and more. The Government are concerned about the symptoms, not about the underlying causes. They view it narrowly as a supplementary benefit problem, as escalating costs with a Treasury perspective, rather than in the perspective of social need and the social effects of their policies. The Minister should be ashamed. He is bound to increase the human sadness and despair of those who are working with the homeless.

The Minister mentioned that the Social Security Advisory Committee had said that some concessions had been made by him in response to the points which it had made. I refer him to paragraphs 100, 101 and 102 where the SSAC say in terms that these proposals are radically flawed.

There is no appeals procedure in respect of the new ceilings and there is no statutory obligation to review. As for the position of the 26 year-olds, among the exemptions outlined by the Minister there is an exemption for those who are subject to a programme of rehabilitation and resettlement, but they will benefit only during the first month. May I ask the Minister to look again at those in this category who make a second or subsequent move during the period of rehabilitation.

I believe that this is a shameful response to a real human need. The result will be a reduction in expenditure but at the cost of increasing homelessness and misery. Would it not have been better for the Government to carry out proper research, as the SSAC recommended, and consider the fire hazards, the effect of the denial of funiture grants and, therefore, of independent housing for young people, and for them to look at the case for specialised housing and the need for adequate provision across the board, as recommended by the SSAC, instead of punishing the victims of the Government's own policies?

11.35 pm

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): The hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) made two points in her speech, both of which were taken from press releases. I wish to cull from real experience and suggest to my hon. Friend the Minister that the points made by the Royal National Institute for the Blind, one of whose excellent homes is in Westgate-on-sea in my constituency, are valid; those homes provide special and affectionate care. I urge my hon. Friend to pay attention not to what the hon. Lady read from a press release but to what those who wrote the paper said. Age Concern suggested that there is a category missing from provision for the elderly mentally infirm. From my experience of the good nursing homes for the elderly in my constituency, I know that there is a category missing. I urge my hon. Friend to pay special attention to those two submissions.

The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) said that he believed the review was premature. The hon. Member for Derby, South said that youngsters were being forced to move away from home, and the suggestion is that this is a new problem. I am glad that my friend and adversary the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) is here tonight, because he and I served on the governing body of a small primary school

in Holborn and St. Pancras about 12 years ago. He will know that the children who attended that school were, to a large extent, the children of those who had come south from the north, even then looking for work. Sadly, the position in Camden in those 12 years has not improved; it has become much worse. The area round Argyle square, which he will know only too well, has become a shameful red light district, populated in the main by young ladies from the north who come to London looking for work, and have certainly found it.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras) *rose*——

Mr. Gale: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will find his own way and his own time to reply to that remark. He knows it to be true.

I have made radio programmes on this subject, and I have had the depressing necessity to trawl the platforms of Euston station late at night while making a documentary on Centre Point. I found there the young people—I am talking about 10 years ago, when the Opposition were in power—who were enticed from the north in the fond belief that the streets of London are paved with the gold that they certainly were not then and are not now paved with.

One need only go a mile from here to the arcades in Piccadilly to find the rent boys who have moved out of the bed and breakfast accommodation that Opposition Members apparently believe they should be invited to move into from the north. Those young men and women are on the streets of London, plying whatever trade they can. The limit for young people will now be eight weeks. I would not want a child of mine to live for eight days in one of the hotels in Holborn and St. Pancras, never mind eight weeks.

I wish to mention the problem that has become known as dole-on-sea. It is no kindness to entice young people from other parts of the country to areas such as Margate, where there is higher unemployment now than there is on Wearside. This point was made on a Radio 1 programme the other night. The producer in her wisdom invited 20 young people from the Soho project with their handler, and wheeled them into Margate. She then trawled the hotels of Margate for DHSS claimants who were put into the audience and inflamed with a young singer by the name of Bragg who, I understand, is a particular friend of the Leader of the Opposition. One point came out of that: "Would you like to be left at the end of the week with £9 in your pocket?". There are elderly people in my constituency who, having paid their bills, having bought their food and having paid their mortgages, would dearly love to have £9 a week left in their pockets.

The other point that came out of the programme was a reference to what the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) called "gipsies." I do not believe that it is the Conservative party, the Government and these regulations that are likely to breed a generation of gipsies. I believe that the generation of gipsies, in so far as it exists, was bred by those who sought to entice young people away from their homes into the squalid accommodation and squalid circumstances that we have been discussing tonight.

Indignation is not the prerogative of the Opposition. Care for young people is not the prerogative of the Opposition. There are Conservative Members, of whom I am one, who spend a great deal of time working with young people. We firmly believe that the young deserve some dignity. We believe that they will be better off in their own home environment, that they will be safer among their friends, the young people with whom they went to school and the parents of those young people, even if they are unemployed in their own town, than they are likely to be if they are enticed away from home to live in accommodation where circumstances are less than ideal. I think of circumstances where, for example, the owner of the property has to go round the corner to the local pub in the middle of the night to ask whether he can borrow a barrel of beer because his own supply has run out. These young people will be better off in their own environment than in the kind of accommodation where the proprietor chauffeur drives his young people to the DHSS office to make sure that they claim their money to put into his pocket. They will be better off in their own environment than in the kind of property where the proprietor says, "Don't worry, you are on DHSS. Come and work for me and the black economy, and do not bother about a real job".

The Conservative party has done a great deal to introduce training measures for young people to endeavour to ensure that the sense of dignity to which I have referred is preserved so that young people have a real future and a real opportunity to look forward to.

The regulations support the principle of good hostel accommodation which is infinitely preferable, because in the main it is caring, as opposed to the kind of accommodation that Opposition Members have been talking about tonight.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: I am interested in the emotion that my hon. Friend is displaying and also perhaps the knowledge that he has. However, how would he explain the fact that in the north-west region, for instance—and he comes from a seaside resort—the number of households accepted as homeless has risen from 4,250 in the second half of 1982 to 4,850 in the first half of 1984? Does this not indicate that there is a problem? It is not necessarily the problem of which my hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security spoke so well in opening the debate, but it is the policy of the Government to restrict specialist accommodation for the single people in the country by a reduction in the amount of their capital receipts that local authorities can spend.

Mr. Gale: We have had the debate upon the expenditure of capital receipts. My hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) and I went through the same lobby on the first vote. The difference between us is that on the second vote, having heard the assurances given by my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) to the effect that he was permitting 100 per cent. of capital receipts to be made available for low-cost housing built specifically for sale, and having secured a further concession in which my hon. Friend agreed to look at the same principle——

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): The hon. Gentleman's vote came cheap.

Mr. Gale: The hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) was not present in the debate. If he wishes to interrupt not from a sedentary position but on his feet, I will gladly give way to him.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I was hoping that the hon. Gentleman had finished. Is he giving way to an intervention or has he finished?

Mr. Gale: I was hoping to give way to the hon. Member for Perry Barr, who apparently prefers to intervene from a sedentary position than on his feet.

The profit levels in the accommodation to which the regulations apply are unacceptable to hon. Members on both sides of the House. The regulations, which have my full support, will go a long way towards solving not only the problem of the exploitation of the social services and social security system, but the problem of the exploitation of the young people.

11.46 pm

Mr. Hugh Brown (Glasgow, Provan): I agree with the hon. Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) that there is a problem, and none of my hon. Friends has tried to deny the existence of that problem. The hon. Gentleman described it, however, in somewhat lurid and exaggerated terms.

The hon. Member for Cornwall, North (Mr. Neale) may not be aware that this has not been a good week for Scotland in general and Glasgow in particular. The Prime Minister seemed to say that the capital city was not capable of coping with 50,000 football supporters — most of them friendly—from Scotland.

Tonight the hon. Member for Cornwall, North made another attack on Scotland. He spoke of youngsters in his constituency complaining about 1,000 young people new to the area not taking jobs that were available. Is there not machinery within the existing structure for dealing with people who will not take work? If the indigenous young people of his area will not take jobs that he says are available, there must be a social problem behind the influx of people in the area.

Mr. Neale: The figure is 2,000 and evidence can be produced to show that some have come from Glasgow, to name but one city. The level of payment to the young people who are coming in is more, by far in some cases, than the pay that they can get for the jobs available in the area. There is an incentive for them to come to the area, but a total disincentive for them to work.

Mr. Brown: I will not delay the House by dealing with the matter at length. The hon. Gentleman demonstrates that he knows nothing about the problem.

Without wishing to be patronising, I thought that the Minister introduced the regulations with his usual competence, though I thought that he lacked his usual conviction. Indeed, I got the distinct impression that he was unhappy with the regulations because he knew that they would not solve any problems and that he would soon have to revise them.

In that connection, does the Minister concede the point made by the advisory committee that a review will be needed long before 1986? Will he confirm that the various scales can be uprated before that date? He said that a further instrument would not be needed to uprate them. May we be assured that the problems which will arise, certainly in the short term, will be closely monitored?

Mr. Newton: We have said in response to the SSAC that we shall review them within a year of their coming into operation.

Mr. Brown: It may have to be done sooner than that. I hear what the hon. Gentleman says about the scales being monitored. It is to be hoped that they are reviewed soon.

The regulations represent a further attack on 16 and 17-year-olds in particular and on those under 25 in general. My constituency, by all standards of deprivation, is one of the worst in the country. It contains virtually no accommodation other than council houses. There are no board and lodging racketeers there because the sort of establishments that they run do not exist in the area.

There are genuine reasons why many young people leave home. This is one of the discriminatory elements in the regulations, because the young people are going to be forced to go to other parts of the city or the country when that is not what they want to do. So I hope that some sympathy will be shown and that, if these regulations are proving to be unsatisfactory and a lot of young people are likely to become rootless as well as homeless, the Ministers will give urgent consideration to changing the conditions so far as they affect young people.

11.50 pm

Mr. Robin Squire (Hornchurch): It is perfectly possible to wish to crack down on the sort of abuses which my hon. Friends have mentioned and still to be very concerned about aspects of the regulations. In particular, it seems to me that to be contemplating reducing ceilings on weekly payments by, in places, as much as £30 a week at a time when there is a national shortage of housing, particularly in the city areas, at the same time removing the right of appeal to the Secretary of State, can only cause what is essentially a housing rather than a social security problem to worsen.

The hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) said, quite rightly, that one of the consequences would clearly be that landlords of such houses would merely increase the amount they charge in order to maintain their profits. I am sure that he would also accept—because he understands these things — that in many areas, because landlords can obtain higher figures from tourists, those who are currently in the houses will lose their option and take second place to tourists. We have to recognise that there are market forces at work.

Mr. Neale: Would my hon. Friend also accept that there is a very clear indication as well that some of the landlords will switch back to putting proper catering facilities in the rooms and then allowing the people to come back within the housing benefit provisions, so that they will be covered that way?

Mr. Squire: I very much hope that my hon. Friend is right. He is speaking, and rightly so, of the position in a tourist coastal town. I am concerned, perhaps inevitably, about the problems in the big cities, particularly London, and the regulations cause me great concern.

Those who imply that there is the option of going back to a safe, warm home must understand that for many people under 25 that simply is not an option. If they returned home they would face physical violence, sexual harassment or God knows what else. That is not to say that there are not some who could return, but we must not delude ourselves into believing that a large number come into that category. They do not come from the sort of safe and protected home that many hon. Members come from.

We forget that at our peril. The Social Security Advisory Committee report spells out very clearly this absence of alternatives.

I wanted to make the point about housing generally because, although it is self-evident, it needs to be put on the record.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Squire: I think that in fairness I should not. Normally I would not anticipate what my hon. Friend was going to say, but if he was going to suggest that there were faults, because of the absence of sufficient private accommodation, on the part of the Government, the legislation or whatever, I might be inclined to agree with him, but if that is the case, that is the problem we should tackle rather than what we are discussing tonight.

My other concern has to do with the board and lodging restrictions as regards those under 25. I feel genuinely concerned about this and believe that to some extent it is going against what we are rightly urging people to do. We want them to travel around and make themselves available for employment, yet we are instituting a system which economically at least, gives them every incentive to move on. We can all pull figures out of the air, of course, but the Government's own estimate is that anything up to 50,000 people under the age of 25 may be involved.

There will be three options. They will stay with friends or relatives — but if they do they will receive the reduced rate; they will sleep rough—there is sufficient evidence of that around London, and that cannot be reduced by what we are now discussing; or they will move to another area — which may cause difficulties with employment. It certainly will not ease their position if they are forced to move when they are trying to establish themselves. After six months, they may return to their original area.

We must remember the additional administrative costs to the DHSS of the considerable amount of mobility that must follow as a direct consequence of the regulations.

11.56 pm

Mr. Gordon Wilson (Dundee, East): I shall be brief because of the limited time available. Hon. Members may wish to hear comments from the Minister in reply to the debate.

There is great concern in Scotland about the effect of the regulations, especially because of the young Scots who may be involved. Rather than put the argument that I orginally intended to put, I shall refer to only two points. First, the position of 16 and 17-year-olds in Scotland is different from that of those in England and Wales because a child becomes an adult in Scotland at the age of 16. There is no social work protection or provision thereafter.

If the parents cannot afford to keep a child—perhaps because of housing benefit — or where other factors drive a child from home, difficulties will arise. I hope that the Minister will address that point.

Secondly, in Dundee the liaison committee for the homeless had intended to establish a hostel to deal with young people, but because of the limit placed on the charges it can no longer do so.

11.57 pm

Mr. Newton: I can respond to only a few points, but as a number of hon. Members have made significant and important points I shall ensure that they are considered and, if necessary, I shall write to hon. Members where that might be helpful.

I re-emphasise what I said about our willingness to consider further representations and evidence and what I said to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Provan (Mr. Brown) about our undertaking to review the limits within a year. He said that we may wish to do that earlier. If we reach that conclusion, we shall do so because that is the spirit in which we are approaching this matter.

A number of hon. Members have referred to representations from the Royal National Institute for the Blind, which have also come directly to me from Ian Bruce during the last couple of days; it was only today that I saw the representations of the British Refugee Council, and I have also seen those that Age Concern made about the elderly, senile, and mentally infirm.

It is entirely within the spirit of what I have already said when I say that I shall look carefully at what has been said, especially concerning the disabled and the blind. The blind may represent a special problem, and I shall approach the issue in that light.

As our response to the Social Security Advisory Committee indicated, we shall look carefully at its proposal for the elderly, senile and mentally infirm. However, it is quite simply a problem of defining who can be categorised in that area. If that problem can be overcome, I should wish to consider again whether there could be a separate limit.

I must say a few words about the broader issues that have been raised, especially in relation to young people. The point that appears to have been missed by most of those who have been most critical in the debate is the extent to which the problem is not, on any reasonable analysis, the result of the unhappy problem of unemployment among young people or of any other of the social problems to which reference has been made. The problem has been created mainly by the regulations which we now seek to change.

The number of young people of 25 years of age and under in board and lodging accommodation rose by 60 per cent. in 1983. It is expected to have risen by 51 per cent. in 1984 and is forecast to rise by 52 per cent. in 1985. That cannot be the result of problems to which hon. Members have referred. It is the result of a system which has given young people excessive encouragement to leave home. they have been trapped so that they cannot afford to take work. That does no service to young people.

I hope that those hon. Members who have spoken strongly in the debate will recognise that part of our responsibility is to ensure that we do not continue to build up the problem. The regulations are not a perfect answer and we shall continue to try to improve them. However, they are an essential step in tackling a problem.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 227, Noes 168.

Division No. 180] **[12.01 am**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan	Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Alexander, Richard	Baldry, Tony
Amess, David	Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Ancram, Michael	Batiste, Spencer
Arnold, Tom	Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Ashby, David	Bendall, Vivian
Aspinwall, Jack	Benyon, William
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*	Best, Keith

Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Buck, Sir Antony
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Forman, Nigel
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gorst, John
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Grist, Ian
Gummer, John Selwyn
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heddle, John
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jackson, Robert
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Mrs Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Marlow, Antony
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, John
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Rhodes James, Robert
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spence, John
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(W Dorset)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(N Hertf'dshire)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, J.
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trotter, Neville
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Archie Hamilton and
Mr. Michael Neubert.

NOES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Tony
Bermingham, Gerald
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'rmline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Concannon, Rt Hon J. D.
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cowans, Harry
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Dubs, Alfred
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman
Gould, Bryan
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hardy, Peter
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfedder, James A.
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*

Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McGuire, Michael
McKelvey, William
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Martin, Michael
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, M.
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rooker, J. W.
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R.*(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'kl'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Strang, Gavin
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Tinn, James
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Alan McKay.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Supplementary Benefit (Requirements and Resources) Miscellaneous Provisions Regulations 1985, which were laid before this House on 26th March, be approved.

Resolved,

That the draft Supplementary Benefit (Resources) Amendment Regulations 1985, which were laid before this House on 21st March, be approved.—*[Mr. Newton.]*

PETITIONS

Transport Services

12.10 am

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): I beg to ask leave to present two petitions on behalf of the citizens of the constituency of Jarrow. It is appropriate that these petitions should be presented today when there has been a massive demonstration by many old-age pensioners who are concerned about the threat to their concessionary passes, many people from rural areas who are concerned about their evening and weekend bus services, many men in the transport industry who are worried about staff conditions, pensions and jobs and many people who are concerned with public transport, which is threatened by the Transport Bill being considered by Standing Committee A.

One of the petitions was presented by the chief executive of the south Tyneside district council on behalf of many citizens who went to the town hall to sign the forms. The other petition was presented to me by the Secretary of the Transport and General Workers Union at the Jarrow depot of the National Bus Company. The petition reads:

To the Honourable the Commons of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Parliament assembled.

The Humble Petition of the citizens of the Jarrow Constituency.

Sheweth That the proposals contained in the White Paper on Buses will have a detrimental effect on the residents of the Jarrow Constituency who use Public Transport, will put in jeopardy the Tyne and Wear integrated Transport System known as one of the best Transport Systems in the World, will put under threat the concessionary Bus passes used by the pensioners, disabled, unemployed and school children, and will cause further loss of jobs in the Transport industry in an area of already high unemployment and will have damaging effects on the wages and working conditions for those who are left in the Transport industry.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House urges the Secretary of State for Transport not to put into effect the proposals of the White Paper on Buses.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will every pray.

To lie upon the Table.

Mr. Lawrence Cunliffe (Leigh): I wish to present a petition which reads:

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled. The Humble Petition of Wigan borough council sheweth:

That the Wigan Borough Council have examined the White Paper on "Buses" and the Transport Bill.

That they fear that, if implemented, the White Paper will mean:—

(a) concessionary fares for elderly, disabled and other people in special need, including schoolchildren, could disappear

(b) that the strict safety standards needed for public service vehicles will not be upheld

(c) that continuity, reliability and stability of services will end

(d) many bus and rail services will vanish

(e) the few services that are left will no longer link and services will become less frequent

(f) passengers will not know which services should run at what times, or what fares are to be charged

(g) operators will compete with old, unsuitable buses and coaches

(h) neither Users nor Ratepayers will have any say about their local public transport services

That there are wider aspects to the proposals. The ratepayers' considerable investments in the Metropolitan Counties on bus and rail facilities and improvements will be thrown away. Fewer

[Mr. Lawrence Cunliffe]

new buses will be bought. This will mean more unemployment in the bus building industry. Socially needed transport services will be put under pressure. Highway costs, road accidents and congestion will increase. Business and the community as a whole will suffer.

That . . . Public Transport is needed as a social service. The proposals of the White Paper would destroy both.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your honourable House reject any legislation to implement the proposals of the White Paper on buses.

And your Petitioners will ever pray etc.

To lie upon the Table.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): I wish to present a petition under the common seal of the council of the borough of Chesterfield signed by the mayor and the acting town clerk about the Transport Bill and the White Paper on buses. I do it with some feeling because today there has been a complete stoppage of the Chesterfield bus service to draw attention to the consequences of the policy, and a large number of my constituents came to London to give emphasis to this petition which shows that the borough council has examined the White Paper on buses and the Transport Bill. They fear, in my opinion with grounds, that if implemented the Bill will mean a threat to the concessionary passes for the disabled, the elderly and other people in need, including schoolchildren.

The strict safety standards needed for public service vehicles that have been maintained under the present system, and their drivers, may not be maintained.

The Petition continues:

(c) that continuity, reliability and stability of services may end;

(d) many bus and rail services may vanish, particularly those to rural areas and on unprofitable routes;

(e) there may not be a co-ordinated network of services and services may well become less frewquent, prticularly at off-peak times;

(f) there may not be available a comprehensive timetable of services and confusion may arise;

(g) some new operators may compete with old, unsuitable buses and coaches;

Neither users nor ratepayers who will be required to invest in the services will have any say whatever about their local public transport services as they do at present, and there may, as a result of these and other factors, be more road accidents as a result of congestion in busy town centres.

The petition continues:

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your honourable House reject any legislation to implement the proposals of the White Paper on buses and the Transport Bill.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray etc.

To lie upon the Table.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): I should like to present a petition to the House from Central Regional council to the effect that Central Regional council has examined the White Paper on buses and the Transport Bill. It states:

That they fear that, if implemented, the White Paper will mean:

(a) concessionary fares for elderly, disabled and other people in special need, including schoolchildren, could disappear.

(b) that the strict safety standards needed for public service vehicles will not be upheld

(c) that continuity, reliability and stability of services will end

(d) many bus and rail services will vanish

(e) the few services that are left will no longer link and services will become less frequent

(f) country and suburban routes will disappear as they will not be cross-subsidised

(g) passengers will not know which services should run at what times, or what fares are to be charged

(h) operators will compete with old, and/or unsuitable buses and coaches

(i) neither Users nor Ratepayers will have any say about their local public transport services.

That there are wider aspects to the proposals. The ratepayers' considerable investments in Central Region on bus and rail facilities and improvements will be thrown away. Fewer new buses will be bought. This will mean more unemployment in the bus building industry. Socially needed transport services will be put under pressure. Highway costs, road accidents and congestion will increase. Business and the community as a whole will suffer.

That Public Transport is needed as a social service.

The proposals of the White Paper would destroy both.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your honourable House reject any legislation to implement the proposals of the White Paper on Buses and the Transport Bill.

And your Petitioners as in duty bound will ever pray etc.

To lie upon the Table.

I also have a petition in similar terms from the Strathclyde National and Local Government Officers Association, SPTE sub-branch.

I wholeheartedly support the terms of both petitions because of the detrimental effect that the Transport Bill will have on passengers and employees in public transport, and on the workers in the bus building industry in companies such as Walter Alexander's, one of the few manufacturing bases left in my constituency, where since the Government took power, the work force has been reduced by over 50 per cent., from over 1,000 workers to about 500.

I am grateful for the opportunity of presenting both petitions and adding my wholehearted support to them.

To lie upon the Table.

Mr. James Lamond (Oldham, Central and Royton): I, too, wish to present a petition along similar lines to those that we have already heard. I do so gladly because of the strong support that I give to the statements that are made in the petition.

This one comes from the East advisory committee for public passenger transport in Greater Manchester. The petition states:

the Advisory Committee representing bus and rail users in its area, with advice from local groups ranging from the local Chambers of Commerce and Industry and Trades Councils to Age Concern and disabled people's organisations, as well as Townswomen's Guilds and the National Association of Women's Clubs in the Eastern area of the Greater Manchester County have examined the White Paper on "Buses".

That they fear that, if implemented, the White Paper will mean:—

(a) concessionary fares for elderly, disabled and other people in special need, including schoolchildren, could disappear.

(b) that the strict safety standards needed for public service vehicles will not be upheld.

(c) that continuity, reliability and stability of services will end.

(d) many bus and rail services will vanish.

(e) the few services that are left will no longer link and services will become less frequent.

(f) passengers will not know which services should run at what times, or what fares are to be charged.

(g) operators will compete with old, unsuitable buses and coaches.

(h) neither Users nor Ratepayers will have any say about their local public transport services.

That there are wider aspects to the proposals. The ratepayers' considerable investments in the Metropolitan Counties on bus and rail facilities and improvements will be thrown away. Fewer

new buses will be bought. This will mean more unemployment in the bus building industry. Socially needed transport services will be put under pressure. Highway costs, road accidents and congestion will increase. Business and the community as a whole will suffer.

That the Advisory Committee believe Public Transport is needed as a social service. The proposals of the White Paper would destroy both.

As I have mentioned, I strongly support every aspect of the petition. In particular, I am concerned about employment in the north-west of England, where firms are dependent on orders for new buses for their continued employment. The East advisory committee for public passenger transport in the Greater Manchester area has demonstrated its concern for every user and provider of bus services in the area, and concludes by saying:

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your honourable House reject any legislation to implement the proposals of the White Paper on buses.

And your Petitioners will ever pray &c.

To lie upon the Table.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): I beg leave to present a petition drawn up by constituents in Liverpool, West Derby, a constituency in which about 50 per cent. and in some areas 75 per cent. of the inhabitants do not have the use of private cars. They believe that the Transport Bill is iniquitous and contrary to their interests and they call upon the Government to withdraw it.

The petition reads as follows:

To the Honourable the Commons of United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament Assembled The Humble Petition of the Residents of Liverpool West Derby Sheweth that the Bill proposing to deregulate bus services and the breaking up and selling off the National Bus Company, will mean a serious reduction in the quality of service available to the West Derby travelling public and increased fares. Furthermore, the loss of Integrated services that seem to be favoured for the London Regional Transport, but not the North of England, by the Honourable Member Mr. Ridley MP Secretary of State for Transport.

Wherefore your petitioners Pray that the Bill proposing to Deregulate and Privatise the National Bus Company, PTE and Municipal Transport be withdrawn and your Petitioners as in duty bound will ever pray.

To lie upon the Table.

Mr. Harry Cowans (Tyne Bridge): I rise with some sadness to present this petition because when I first came to the House I firmly believed that it was the Mother of Parliaments and of democracy. Sadly, so much rubbish has been put upon the Chairman of the Select Committee on Transport during the proceedings on the Transport Bill that I must put it on record that I speak as the Member of Parliament for Tyne Bridge and not as the Chairman of the Select Committee. Far from any answer to the arguments on the Bill, there has been a blatant attack on an individual Member and that must be placed on record.

I present this petition on behalf of Gateshead borough council. It has been claimed that only vested interests are against the Bill, but the councillors of Gateshead speak from no vested interest. They represent the people of the area — old-age pensioners, people who run buses, businesses and the community—and they have discussed the Bill at great length. They greatly fear that if the Bill is implemented without amendment

the Government's proposals might mean a short term improvement of services on the more profitable routes but would result in . . . destruction of the integrated public transport system in Tyne and Wear, which has been built up over many years and has been tried and proved, and a waste of national resources by duplication of buses on profitable routes; a loss to a large degree of cross subsidy which at present allows more rural areas to enjoy a reasonable service; added congestion on the already congested road network in central areas—particularly over the Tyne bridges. There will be additional administration for annual tendering on subsidised routes . . . difficulties in assessing payments to various operators because of concessionary fares.

That is a real problem. It is no good for the Government to argue that concessionary fares will be available. There is a real fear that the added administration on concessionary fares will take away from the elderly money that should go to them.

The proposals will result in the need to enforce conditions relating to safety and routing applied to a variety of operators.

That is a matter of real concern. Where there is only one operator, or two, the administrative cost is small. With a multitude of operators, the cost becomes very large.

My constituents plead that if, unfortunately, the legislation is implemented

Tyne and Wear should be excluded on the grounds that it has achieved all the objectives set by the Secretary of State for London Regional Transport.

Tyne and Wear has achieved all the targets set by the Secretary of State for LRT. It is an anomaly — a nonsense — to destroy Tyne and Wear when it has achieved those targets. Gateshead borough council has made an assessment right across the board.

The petition concludes in the same way as all the other petitions, but the petitioners' voices will not be heard. They say:

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your honourable House reject any legislation to implement the proposals of the White Paper on buses and the Transport Bill.

Democracy is being negated. The petitioners' voices will not be heard; the voice of the people will not be heard. This nonsensical legislation will be passed.

To lie upon the Table.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): I wish to present a petition from the West Yorkshire metropolitan county council concerning the Transport Bill. It has been signed by more than 100,000 residents of the West Yorkshire county council area, and more than 1 million more signatures were presented to the Prime Minister earlier today. The county council, having examined the White Paper and the Transport Bill, allege that:

concessionary fares for elderly, disabled and other people in special need, including schoolchildren, could disappear . . . that the strict safety standards needed for public service vehicles will not be upheld . . . that continuity, reliability and stability of services will end . . . many bus and rail services will vanish . . . the few services that are left will no longer link and . . . will become less frequent . . . passengers will not know which services should run at what times, or what fares are to be charged . . . operators will compete with old, unsuitable buses and coaches . . . neither Users nor Ratepayers will have any say about their local public transport services.

The petitioners further allege:

The Ratepayers' considerable investments in the Metropolitan Counties on bus and rail facilities and improvements will be thrown away. Fewer new buses will be bought. This will mean more unemployment in the bus-building industry. Socially needed transport services will be put under pressure. Highway costs, road accidents and congestion will increase. Business and the community as a whole will suffer.

Those are the main points to which the petitioners draw attention. It is clear from today's lobby of the House and the magnificent demonstration in London that these views are widely supported and that the Bill is deeply unpopular. The petitions urge the Government to withdraw the unnecessary and unwanted legislation as quickly as possible.

To lie upon the Table.

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): I beg leave to present a petition on behalf of the city council of Derby, which is signed by the city secretary and affixed with the common seal of that city. It formally protests on behalf of the people of Derby at the proposals in the Transport Bill.

The petition has tremendous all-party support and cross-community support throughout the whole county of Derbyshire. The Secretary of State for Transport seems to have a rather unfortunate track record in such matters. I have rarely known such a breadth and depth of opposition to the proposals of any Government. That opposition comes from a tremendous variety of groups. Like most hon. Members I have been inundated not with fairly standard letters, as is often the case in matters of great public interest, but with closely argued well-documented cases. They have come from a wide range of groups, each looking at the White Paper from their individual viewpoints, and all finding it wanting.

As the petition shows, they are all worried that strict safety standards will not be maintained, and that the reliability and stability of services will end. They are also worried about concessionary fares and all the other items that have already been well documented, and which are named again in the petition of the city council of Derby as matters that cause concern in many parts of the country.

All those who are concerned about safe and reliable public services, geared to need and run to provide value for money, are concerned at the proposals in the Bill. The council believes that the

proposals of the White Paper would destroy public passenger transport both as a transport system and as a social service.

The Government's proposals have met with almost universal condemnation and they certainly meet with universal condemnation in the city of Derby. As the city council says in the petition:

And your Petitioners as in duty bound will ever pray.

To lie upon the Table.

Mr. Gordon Brown (Dunfermline, East): I beg leave to present a further important petition about the Government's bus policy. It comes from Fife regional council, and is signed by the chief executive, the convenor and the leader of the administration. It was prepared after a conference involving community organisations from five constituencies in the county of Fife.

The petition expresses concern at the deterioration in the quantity and quality of bus services, in the regularity and reliability of services, and in the stability and safety of services that will result from the Bill. It also expresses concern at the threat to concessionary fares and at the risk to employment as a result of the Transport Bill. That threat to employment comes in an area which, as the petition points out, already has more than 21,000 unemployed people. Indeed, 4,000 more people are at risk of losing their jobs in the mining industry. About half the population do not have private cars and depend wholly on public transport.

The petition concludes:

the Council is therefore totally opposed to the Government's proposals for deregulation and privatising local bus transport as contained in the Transport Bill.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House reject any legislation to implement the provisions of the Transport Bill.

I commend this excellent petition to the House.

To lie upon the Table.

Schoolchildren (Employment)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

12.38 am

Mr. Alfred Dubs (Battersea): This Adjournment debate is about the employment of children, by which I mean young people of school age. One of the main benefits of having such a debate is that it is possible to see which of the three Government Departments responsible has put up a Minister to answer it. Responsibility for this subject is divided between the Department of Health and Social Security, the Department of Education and Science, and the Department of Employment. I believe that there has been little Government activity or willingness to accept responsibility for the problem because that responsibility has been divided between the three Departments.

I should make it clear that I am not concerned in any way with the ordinary pocket-money earning activities of school children. That has been going on for many years and there is no reason why it should not continue. I am concerned about when it ceases to be merely a matter of small jobs for pocket money and becomes a major employment activity.

The facts are hard to come by, because no hard statistics are kept. However, the estimate is that about one in four children of the ages 13, 14 and 15 have some sort of a job. The survey excludes informal jobs like baby-sitting and running errands. About 600,000 or more children are employed in other than informal jobs. The known facts indicate that children below the age of 13 also work.

We are indebted to the studies carried out by or on behalf of the Low Pay Unit, which provide the most accurate and revealing information on the subject. Surveys were carried out for the Low Pay Unit in a number of areas, including London. The London survey covered, at least in part, the borough of Wandsworth where my constituency is located. It showed that 35 per cent. of the children interviewed were working and that 26 per cent. of those children were under the legal age, while 28 per cent. of them were in jobs that were illegal and 65 per cent. were working illegal hours. This meant that in London overall about 83 per cent. of the children working were somehow in breach of the law — or, rather, their employers were in breach of the law. The corresponding figure for the Wandsworth sample was 65 per cent., although the sample was too small to be statistically reliable.

There is clearly, and understandably, a conspiracy of silence on the subject. Employees who are employing young people illegally have a vested interest in not talking about it and, for understandable reasons, the children do not particularly want to talk about it. Therefore, we are doubly indebted to the Low Pay Unit for providing this information. Of course I understand that if parents are out of work and their children are able to earn some money, pressure will be put upon them to make a significant contribution to the household income.

What types of jobs are carried out? In the Wandsworth survey, delivering newspapers, doing milk rounds and shop work were three of the largest categories, but cleaning offices, building construction and decoration,

working at a garage or petrol station, or in a pub or off-licence—indeed, even farming, gardening and washing cars—were all jobs that featured in the survey. There were many others.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. John Patten): Can it be right that farming was found to be an occupation in Wandsworth?

Mr. Dubs: The category was farming or gardening. The same questions were also asked of young people living outside London. However, I assume that in Wandsworth the category would have been gardening rather than farming.

Mr. Patten: There are not many farms in Wandsworth.

Mr. Dubs: The Minister is right, but there is at least one. Outside London, children find work in manufacturing industries, although the survey does not cover manufacturing.

Why is there so much concern? The first reason relates to the hours of work. The London survey showed that 20 per cent. of the boys worked for 16 or more hours a week. One boy covered by the survey worked for 47 hours a week in his own family's take-away restaurant.

It is not only in London that there is concern. I have received a letter from a retired teacher who referred to the fact that, when he was teaching, a pupil of his, then aged 13, started work each day at 4.30 in the morning at a local dairy and that other pupils of his worked regularly in supermarkets from 5.30 to 8 o'clock in the evening. He also talked about pupils studying for O and A-levels who worked for more than two and a half hours on three or four nights a week, and made the further comment that those youngsters had no protection from their trade union.

The second concern is low earnings; 64 per cent. of boys in London were earning less than £1 an hour. There is evidence that many young people are being seriously exploited in terms of low pay. It is also doubtful whether those employers adequately cover the youngsters for national insurance purposes. Then there is the question of illegal employment, where the children are under-age, working illegal hours, or doing jobs that they should not be doing.

There is also a problem of safety and accidents at work. For example, there are health and safety provisions regarding the lifting of weights, the sort of machinery operated and minimum rest periods. The figures for deaths and accidents at work are not clear, because the Department of Employment does not collect figures in a way that would be useful for this purpose. It includes figures for 16-year-olds who are at work, as well as under-16-year-olds, and it includes figures for working children even if the deaths or accidents did not occur at work. That is a difficulty, because the bald figures suggest that, in 1983, there were six deaths involving children; as for accidents, for which the figures are in doubt, there were nearly 400 major accidents at work and many more lesser accidents. There is also anxiety about the lack of safety measures, such as no protective clothing and children working when they are tired. The consequences are that children fall asleep at school and do not perform adequately in examinations.

There is legislation for this, including the Employment of Women, Young Persons, and Children Act 1920, which prohibited certain employment for children aged under 14, especially with regard to industrial, manufacturing, building and construction work. The Children and Young Persons Act 1933 stipulated that children aged under 13 should not work, that they should not work before the end of school hours, before 7 am or after 7 pm, and that they should not work for more than four hours a day. It also prohibited the lifting of heavy weights. There are also local authority byelaws. There was an attempt in the Employment of Children Act 1973 to produce a uniform set of regulations that would supersede the byelaws and apply to all local authorities, but that Act was never brought into force.

As regards safety provisions, there is the factory inspectorate, but there are few convictions for breaches of the law. Indeed, in 1983, three employers were prosecuted for eight offences, and eight convictions were obtained. The figures for previous years are similarly low. There is also a wages inspectorate, working under the wages councils, and there are education welfare officers, but few prosecutions are brought under any of these measures.

What is to be done? First, we must recognise that this is a serious problem. If only the Government would say, "Yes, this is a serious problem", and emphasise the fact, that itself would have a salutary effect. Secondly, we must enforce the law. It is clear that there have been major breaches of the law, but the number of prosecutions suggest that there are either too few inspectors or an unwillingness to bring illegal employers to book, or a combination of the two.

Thirdly, we should not have to depend upon the Low Pay Unit and its surveys to provide the bulk of the information on this subject. The Government have a responsibility to collect information about the problem. Fourthly, we must implement the 1973 Act. Fifthly, we must then consider whether further measures are necessary.

We have a responsibility as a society to alter Victorian attitudes to this problem. It is not good enough to say that children are enterprising and should therefore be allowed to do it. The fact is that their health and sometimes their lives are at risk. Much of the work is illegal. It affects their schooling, and it is wrong. Moreover, it may deprive school leavers of jobs.

For all those reasons, I hope that the Minister will respond by saying that the Government recognise the problem and are willing to take action.

12.49 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. John Patten): It is characteristic of the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs) to address this problem with even-handedness and level-headedness. He has raised some important points. I should like to try to respond in the fashion in which he has asked of me, because I appreciate that his interest in this matter is genuine and longstanding. Indeed, he has been pursuing it vigorously with my Department for a number of years, he has written to me about it, and now he has been successful in raising the issue on the Adjournment of the House.

The hon. Gentleman at the beginning of his speech raised the issue of who might be replying on behalf of the Government. It does not strike me as odd or unusual in Government that more than one Department should have a legitimate interest in a particular area. To take by

[Mr. John Patten]

analogy the problems that we have in combating drug misuse, my right hon. and hon. Friends in the Home Department, the Department of Education and Science, the territorial Ministries, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and the Overseas Development Administration all try to work together to do our bit to combat this menace. In exactly the same way, a number of Departments—the Department of Education and Science, the Department of Employment and my own Department — have a legitimate interest in children and children's welfare, particularly with regard to employment matters. My Department is in the lead to the extent that will become apparent during my response. It would be difficult to try to allocate all responsibility to one Department in this difficult area.

Of course we are concerned about allegations concerning children being illegally employed. We are well aware of the allegations made in the Low Pay Unit report on working children, which was published recently, and in the excellent BBC2 programme, Brass Tacks. It is always a matter of concern if laws to protect the welfare of children are not being properly observed, and there can be the most tragic consequences in this area and in other areas about which we read in the press from time to time. However, it is the duty of employers to obey the law, and the primary responsibility for the welfare of children rests in the first instance with their parents, foster parents or those who have a duty of care towards the children.

I think that there have been some misunderstandings, and I welcome the opportunity to try to set the record straight. But to do so, I shall have to go into some detail about the existing arrangements.

There is no doubt that working when one is a young person is a popular thing to do. A lot of people like doing it. I know that the hon. Member agrees with that and does not seek to inhibit it at all. I entirely concur with his view. But we need legislation to ensure that children are not exploited. There is a long history of such legislation. Legislation which is a combination of primary legislation and local authority byelaws allows children who are still at school to have a part-time job before or after school or both and/or during school holidays, but we need strict controls. The hon. Gentleman has alluded to the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 which prohibits from working children below the age of 13. No child may be employed before 7 in the morning or after 7 in the evening on any day, before the close of school, or for more than two hours on any day on which he has to attend school, and no child can work for more than two hours on a Sunday or lift or carry anything so heavy as to be likely to cause him injury. I suspect that the area where these legislative rules are stretched most of all is in early morning paper rounds, if my experience and that of the hon. Gentleman is anything to go by.

All local authorities operate byelaws made under the 1933 Act except, curiously enough, the Isles of Scilly. Administration and enforcement of the legislation is the responsibility of the local education authorities, which usually work through the education welfare service. In addition, the Employment of Women, Young Persons, and Children Act 1920 prohibits the employment of children in any industrial undertaking, particularly mines and quarries. I dare say that mines and quarries are as unusual in Wandsworth as are farms. In this case, the factory inspectorate of the Health and Safety Executive is the enforcing authority. I would be the first to admit that under different Acts different enforcing authorities come into play, but it has ever been thus with laws in this country which have been attacked from a number of different points of view.

The Health and Safety Executive, through the agricultural inspectorate, is also the enforcing authority for legislation relating to agriculture which prohibits the employment of children in activities such as operating circular saws. The overall guiding principle behind the children's legislation and the local authority byelaws is that the child may work only to the extent that the health, education and general welfare of the child does not suffer.

Children's welfare is a subject in which my hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security, whom I am pleased to see in the Chamber listening to the debate, is greatly interested, an interest which he fully followed when he was Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security responsible for children's issues. It is characteristic of him to take the time, even at this late hour, to attend our debate.

If a young person wishes to take a part-time job, we must then ask whether he will, as far as possible, be protected from exploitation. That is what the hon. Gentleman wished to be assured of. I support him, as do the Government, in wishing to see that there is no such exploitation. As I explained, comprehensive restrictions are set out in the legislation covering the minimum age of employment, permitted hours of work and types of occupation.

In addition, the byelaws include detailed requirements to enable local authorities to vet any proposed employment and the child's fitness to undertake that employment. The employer is required to provide details of the work and a medical certificate showing that the employment will not be detrimental to the child's health or education. The child then gets an employment card as a requirement of his employment. All authorities which have byelaws, with the exception of Cornwall and Wiltshire, operate a system such as that. Cornwall and Wiltshire have similar arrangements.

In addition to the issue of employment and exploitation, the hon. Gentleman raised the question of danger, and I share with him a fear that accidents may occur to young people, wherever they work, be it in an urban environment or in the countryside on farms, where, tragically, accidents occur all too often.

The Low Pay Unit report was interesting in that respect. It suggested that about 30 per cent. of children had suffered an accident or injury while at work. It may help to put that in context if I explain that the Low Pay Unit used a very wide definition indeed of "accident". If the position is considered on the basis that the Health and Safety Executive considers it—there is usually support for the work of the Health and Safety Executive from hon. Members on both sides of the House—a rather different picture emerges. It is not possible to provide precise figures, but in 1982, the last year for which we have up to date figures, no more than 125 accidents occurred to children in employment. We are not complacent about the situation, but that gives a different picture from that presented in the report of the Low Pay Unit.

It is illegal for children to work in industrial undertakings. In view of the number of accidents to children in agricultural undertakings—not all of which

occur while children are at work — the agricultural inspectorate of the Health and Safety Executive devotes a great deal of time and effort to reducing the accident rate by successful publicity, education and enforcement action and campaigns.

If, alas, a person under 16 is unfortunate enough to be injured in an accident at work or, even worse sometimes, contracts an industrial disease, there is provision under the industrial injuries scheme for the payment of benefit. That is not widely appreciated. This is the case although national insurance contributions are not payable by either an employer or an employee on any money paid to an employee before his or her sixteenth birthday. There can therefore be no evasion at all of the law relating to national insurance matters where an employee is under 16 whether he is legally or illegally employed. Again, this is something which is not widely appreciated.

The Low Pay Unit report suggested that schoolchildren are generally employed at low rates of pay. That cannot be a very surprising overall finding; it is exactly what most of us would expect. It suggests that on average £1 an hour or less is about the amount that is paid to children.

I should explain in this context that wages councils are already empowered to set minimum rates for young people under 17. It is true that wages council rates apply only where the employee works a minimum number of hours a week—that is, more than two hours a day or 12 hours a week overall. None the less, the wages councils have a distinct remit in cases such as that. In many cases, of course, wages councils will not have anything to say where children are working part time for fewer hours than that. Where there are no set minimum rates, it is a matter for agreement between the employer, the child and the parents.

I do not wish to turn this debate into any wide-ranging review of the role of parents and the family in these issues, but it is critically important that the parents and families of young children who work take a responsible and a caring attitude as regards the hours the children work and the conditions under which they work and have due regard to the sums of money which are paid to the children for the work they do. That critically important role of the parents cannot be handed over to anyone else.

Equally, the schools have great responsibilities. The hon. Member for Battersea quoted one or two cases of school teachers reporting that children were getting up at 4.30 in the morning, working in dairies, coming to school exhausted and performing substantially below par. That is deplorable, if it is true. In cases such as those the schools have a clear duty to act. If schools suspect that children are being exploited and that the law is being broken they can notify parents about what is and is not permissible. Or they can take the matter up with individual parents through the education welfare service. Where a child's education clearly is being adversely affected by employment, the school should report the matter to the local education authority under section 59 of the Education Act 1944—the great Butler Act. The authority has power to prohibit an employer from employing a child and it also has power to impose restrictions. One wonders whether education authorities remind themselves often enough of their duties in this context.

The hon. Gentleman will know that the Employment of Children Act 1973 provides for the Secretary of State to make national regulations to replace local authority byelaws. He has asked that, in an attempt to solve the problem, this Act should be implemented. Certainly byelaws have to be confirmed by the Secretary of State for Social Services and we have achieved a considerable measure of uniformity since 1973. Local authority associations were consulted in 1975 and again in 1977 on the implementation of this Act, but it was concluded that, because of the resource implications for local authorities, the introduction of all the Act's provisions could not then be justified.

I am afraid that I have to tell the hon. Gentleman that, for exactly the same reasons as were apparent in 1975 and 1977, it is today still considered to be inappropriate to impose these further responsibilities on local authorities. It is for local authorities to ascertain priorities within the available resources for enforcement. However, that is not to say that, because this Act has not been implemented, a great deal cannot be done. The hon. Gentleman was brief, and I welcome that because it has given me the opportunity to put on the record, in an integrated manner, the whole picture as the Government see it.

To say that simply because we cannot implement all the provisions of the 1973 Act means that nothing can be done is flying in the face of the legislation. It is also flying in the face of the responsibilities of parents and of education authorities. I hope that education authorities are considering whether they are acting as effectively as they can in this context; whether teachers are reporting children at educational risk and whether the authorities are acting crisply and quickly enough and disseminating their decisions widely in the local environment so that there is a demonstration of concern that would inhibit other employers from exploiting young children.

My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Employment has asked the Health and Safety Commission to assess the implications of the Low Pay Unit's report on aspects of its responsibilities. I suspect that the hon. Gentleman will find a most concerned response from the Government to that important report. We may not agree in every respect, but we are grateful for the report, as it has stirred a measure of public debate. It has allowed us to say to education authorities and others that not only do they have duties, they have powers to do things.

The hon. Gentleman will be most interested in these findings, as we are in Government. We continue to do what we can within a free society and within the family framework of this country to ensure that young children who work are not exploited, that their safety is looked after, that they are well paid and that they are not made use of.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at seven minutes past One o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 3 April 1985

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

SOUTH YORKSHIRE PASSENGER TRANSPORT BILL

Read the Third time, and passed.

LONDON DOCKLANDS RAILWAY (NO. 2) BILL

Ordered,

That in the case of the London Docklands Railway (No. 2) Bill, Standing Order 208 (Notice of Consideration of Lords Amendments) be suspended and that the Lords Amendments be now considered.—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Lords amendments agreed to.

Oral Answers to Questions

ENVIRONMENT

Rates

1. **Mr. Simon Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many and which county and non-metropolitan district councils have fixed their rate for the municipal year 1985-86 at *(a)* the rate for the year 1984-85 or below, *(b)* less than 5 per cent. above the rate for the year 1984-85, *(c)* between 5 per cent. and 10 per cent., *(d)* between 10 per cent. and 15 per cent. *(e)* between 15 per cent. and 20 per cent. and *(f)* over 20 per cent. above the rate for the year 1984-85.

The Minister for Local Government (Mr. Kenneth Baker): I have today placed in the Library the information currently available. Although it is too early to give a firm estimate of the increase in rates for 1985-86, it seems likely that the average increase in general rates in England will be between 7 and 7·5 per cent., and the average increase in domestic rates between 8 and 8·5 per cent.

Mr. Hughes: Is it not correct that in the shire counties the average rate rise will be more than 9 per cent., which is wildly far from the estimate given by the Secretary of State in December, when he said that he hoped that it would be in low single figures? Are not high rate rises entirely attributable to the Government's policies on rate support grant and rate capping? Does that not imply that authorities in Tory areas must cut substantially the services that they provide to stand any chance of holding the rate rises down, even to about 9 per cent?

Mr. Baker: The hon. Gentleman has got it wrong, and unwittingly scored an own goal against the Liberal party. The average rate rise in the Conservative shire counties is 6·5 per cent., whereas in the one Liberal-controlled shire county it is 8 per cent. It is the old story that where the Liberals influence events spending and rates are high.

Sir Hugh Rossi: Is my right hon. Friend aware of a document issued in the name of the Haringey joint union committee against rate capping, which has been endorsed by the London boroughs shop stewards on a Londonwide basis, calling for complete disruption of local authority services by phased action, including shutting down street lighting and traffic lights, stopping Thames water maintenance — [HON. MEMBERS: "Order."] — closing schools—[HON. MEMBERS: "Too long."]—taking over the financing of computer services of local authorities, and refusing to accept——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman should not make a speech.

Sir Hugh Rossi: —taking over power——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Has the hon. Gentleman reached his question yet?

Sir Hugh Rossi: Does my right hon. Friend agree that that is close to criminal conspiracy and incitement to unlawful action? What action will he take?

Mr. Baker: I have not seen the document to which my hon. Friend refers and, therefore, I do not know its details —whether it is silly bravado or whether it amounts to something with a more sinister intent. I shall look at it, as he has drawn it to my attention today. Clearly, if it has a more sinister intent I shall draw it to the attention of the appropriate authorities.

Mr. Redmond: What advice will the Minister give the authorities which have accepted the lower rating for this year and failed to meet their statutory obligations as a result?

Mr. Baker: I know of no local authority or any rate-capped authority which is in danger of not meeting its statutory obligations because of the rate support grant settlement this year. Regarding rate-capped authorities, there was a significant move forward this morning in that a High Court judge told Hackney that it must set a legal rate. He ruled that there were no reasonable grounds for the borough to defer making a rate. I hope that this period of illegality will end.

Mr. Hardy: Would any rate increase have been necessary, and would not the average rate demand have been at least 20 per cent. lower, had the Government maintained the same share of local authority expenditure that was provided in 1979-80? Will the Minister give the total burden placed on businesses and industry as a result of the change?

Mr. Baker: As regards the proportion of the rate support grant since 1979, I remind the hon. Gentleman that the biggest cut was under his Government, when the former Chancellor reduced it from 66 to 61 per cent. in one year. The hon. Gentleman was a member of the Government who did that. The reduction this year from 51·9 to 48·7 per cent. means that there is less grant available, but, even so, if all authorities in England had budgeted to spend at target the average rate increases would have been lower than the ones that I have just announced.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Has my right hon. Friend heard the news this very day of the stunning irresponsibility by

which the city of Birmingham, under its Labour masters, is putting up the rates by 43 per cent.? Is it not time for such authorities to stop talking about helping industry when they are going to ruin it and their citizens?

Mr. Baker: My hon. Friend is correct. There could be no greater distinction between Conservative and Labour control of Birmingham. Last year, under the Conservatives, the rates fell; this year under Labour they have gone up by 43 per cent. That is bad news for the residents of Birmingham.

Dr. Cunningham: Does the Minister accept the figures of the Rating and Valuation Association, which show that average rates will increase by more than 9 per cent. in this financial year — twice the rate of inflation? Does he recognise, as everyone outside the House and the Opposition do, that the biggest single reason for that is the consistent reduction in rate support grant? Rather than listen to his right hon. Friend berating Labour councils which are desperately trying to defend jobs and services, why do not the right hon. Gentleman and his right hon. Friend meet representatives of the Association of Metropolitan Authorities and the Association of London Authorities to negotiate a settlement of the outstanding difficulties?

Mr. Baker: My right hon. Friend and I have made it clear that negotiations with the rate-capped authorities are unacceptable because the House has approved the rate support grant order and has agreed and passed orders for the rate-capped authorities. We have said that they are therefore not negotiable. It is now up to the rate-capped authorities to do what is legal—to set the rate which has been approved by the House.

Mr. Heddle: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the Liberal-controlled Isle of Wight county council has increased its rates by 38 per cent. since 1981, and that because of the Lib-Lab pact which now controls Cheshire county council, that council has increased its rate by 48 per cent. since 1981? Is that not disgraceful, and does it not show the hypocrisy of the question of the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes)?

Mr. Baker: The figures speak for themselves, in that those who live in Labour-controlled shire counties will have an average rate of 178p this year, those in coalition-controlled county councils 156p, and those in Conservative-controlled county councils 148p. Those who live under Conservative-controlled county councils will be 30p better off than those who live under Labour and coalition-controlled councils.

Mr. Stephen Ross: Will the Minister put the record straight and confirm that the Isle of Wight county council rate increase was 7·53 per cent.? The 1p rate added by the Liberal-controlled Medina borough council reduces it to 7·1 per cent. The average ratepayer in the Isle of Wight pays £30 per head less than the average ratepayer in Chichester and £600 or £700 less than the average ratepayer in Westminster. We have stuck by targets, but the Secretary of State for the Environment gave us the worst settlement of all counties. We lost 4p, and that is why the rates went up this time by 7·53 per cent.

Mr. Baker: I think that I said 8 per cent.

Mr. Ross: Why does the right hon. Gentleman not tell the truth?

Mr. Baker: If with the district included, it is slightly less, I accept that. Even if it is 7·53 per cent., it is still substantially higher than the average for Conservative-controlled county councils.

Local Authorities (Expenditure)

2. **Mr. Fatchett** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will abolish spending targets for all local authorities.

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Patrick Jenkin): I have said that we would like to do so.

Mr. Fatchett: Does the Minister agree that we have an absurd system of local government finance — [HON. MEMBERS: "Yes."]. I shall come to that point in a moment. The Government's new so-called objective targets under the GREA are completely ignored by the Government in the vast majority of cases when they set spending targets. Are not those spending targets a sign, first, of the Government's desire to run local government and, secondly, of their complete failure to reform the rating system?

Mr. Jenkin: The purpose of the targets has been to rein back the growth of local authority current expenditure. They have succeeded in reining back that growth from over 3·5 per cent. a year above the rate of inflation to under 1 per cent. The targets have worked, and the great majority of local authorities have co-operated with them. That has been a solid gain for the country and the ratepayers.

Mr. Patrick Thompson: When my right hon. Friend is carrying out the urgently necessary review of local authority finance, will he talk to our right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science about alternative ways of funding education? That could lead to two advantages: first, the reduction of the rates burden; and, secondly, the removal of the discredited Burnham system for the negotiation of teachers' pay.

Mr. Jenkin: The second part of that question should be addressed to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science. On the first part, I have the impression from hon. Members on both sides of the House that people wish to see local decisions taken locally. That is one of the main purposes of the studies on which we have embarked. It is difficult to see how such a development could be consistent with centralising substantial areas of education spending at the Department of Education and Science.

Mr. Straw: Despite the operation of target, which was deliberately designed to hit Labour authorities more than Conservative ones, the average domestic rate bill in the shire county areas is over 40p a week higher in the Conservative-controlled shires than in the Labour-controlled shires. Does that not show that people get more for less in Labour areas?

On the future of the target system, does the right hon. Gentleman accept that the problem associated with target is the operation of penalties, and that it would be unacceptable to Conservative as well as Labour authorities if, instead of the target and penalty system, we had a penalty system based upon GREAs?

Mr. Jenkin: The hon. Gentleman makes a naive comparison. The system is intended to reflect differences in resources among authorities. It is clear that in the past

four years the average increase in rates in Labour county councils has been 62 per cent. while in Tory county councils it has been 31 per cent.—exactly half. That is the true comparison that should be made between authorities under Conservative and Labour control.

Secondly, I have made it clear that the extent to which we are able to move away from targets in the coming year will depend in part on what local authorities budget for this year, and in part on the mechanism that we may be able to put in place to exercise a restraining influence on budgets in 1986-87.

Olympic Games

3. **Mr. Canavan** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will arrange future meetings with the appropriate sports authorities to discuss the possibility of the Olympic Games being held in Britain.

The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Neil Macfarlane): I have no plans to do so. Bids for staging the games are the responsibility of the British Olympic Association and interested cities.

Mr. Canavan: Will the Minister make it clear that the Government will give every encouragement, including adequate financial support, to the sports authorities to put in a bid to stage the Olympic Games in Britain? Bearing in mind the recent Government intervention leading to the switch in the venue of the England-Scotland football international from Wembley to Hampden Park, should there not be some Government intervention to ensure that some Olympic events are staged in Scotland? We should remember the recent exemplary behaviour of Scottish sports fans, compared with that of some of the hooligan elements down here.

Mr. Macfarlane: There are many steps to be taken before anyone can plan for any eventualities in the next decade.

Sir Hector Monro: Does my hon. Friend agree that we should welcome the Olympic Games, perhaps hosted partly in England, partly in Wales, partly in Scotland and partly in Northern Ireland? Will he continue to have discussions with the British Olympic Association, and does he have any information about whether a substantial fund of private money will be available to finance the games, as was the case in America?

Mr. Macfarlane: The latter part of my hon. Friend's question is an important consideration. The most important attitudes are those of the British Olympic Association and individual cities. There is a long way to go before there can be any planning.

Mr. Heffer: I trust that the Minister will press for Britain to host the Olympic Games. Will he bear in mind the interests of Merseyside, which has several extremely good stadiums, football teams that do not get involved in punch-ups and a good sporting record? Does the Minister agree that it would be a good area in which to stage part of the Olympic Games?

Mr. Macfarlane: I am at one with the hon. Gentleman when he refers to the good behaviour of the football teams in his area. I pay tribute to them and their record. These are matters for consideration. I remain at the disposal of the British Olympic Association if it wishes to have further discussions. There is a long way to go and, as I understand it, the selection is not made by the International Olympic Committee until mid-way through next year.

Mr. Hirst: Is my hon. Friend aware that the sports promotion council in Glasgow has advanced claims to host the 1992 Olympics in that city? Given the diversity and quality of sporting facilities in Scotland, will my hon. Friend give an assurance that his Department will do everything possible to encourage the powers that be to consider Scotland as a place to host the Olympic Games?

Mr. Macfarlane: I note what my hon. Friend said. I am sure that he will be well supported by my right hon. and hon. Friends at the Scottish Office in any possible or potential bids.

Mr. Denis Howell: As the British Olympic Association says that it is the Government who have encouraged it to make a bid, what estimate have the Government made of the cost of providing a games village for upwards of 20,000 people, a 100,000-seater stadium, an international pool and similar facilities for 20 other sports? As the Government are restricting all local authorities' spending on sport, where do they expect the money to come from?

Mr. Macfarlane: I am delighted to welcome the right hon. Gentleman's new-found zest for the private sector. I assure him that the Government have just as much vision as did the post-war Labour Government in hosting the 1948 games. Many steps have to be taken before any decisions can be made.

Local Authorities (Expenditure)

4. **Mr. Allen McKay** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received in response to the reduction in the prescribed proportion of capital receipts which local authorities may spend.

The Minister for Housing and Construction (Mr. Ian Gow): My right hon. Friend and I have received a number of representations from right hon. and hon. Members and from local authorities. In response to those representations, my right hon. Friend has announced that local authorities may continue to use in full capital receipts from low-cost home ownership schemes instead of only 30 per cent. as proposed originally. He has also agreed to consider applications from local authorities which may not be able to meet their obligations under the Housing Defects Act 1984.

Mr. McKay: Does the Minister agree that it is sheer economic madness and incompetence of the highest order that, when we have a crisis in local government with education, social services and housing, local authorities are unable to spend their own money, thereby saving by doing repairs this year rather than in future when the bill for such repairs will be greater?

Mr. Gow: The hon. Gentleman will recall that the House has debated this matter fully on two occasions. The first was 27 February, when the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) was given responsibility for deploying the Opposition's case. The Government had a modest majority of 108. When, a fortnight later, on 13 March, responsibility for deploying the Opposition's case was transferred to the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), the Government had a majority of 121.

I hope that the hon. Member for Copeland will speak for the Opposition more frequently.

Mr. Latham: What urgency is my hon. Friend according to the departmental review that he announced in the latter debate? Has he instructed his officials that a new system should be in place by this time next year?

Mr. Gow: I have told the House, as I have told my hon. Friend, that the present system of control by central Government of local authority capital expenditure is the reverse of perfect. Because we recognise that truth, and because this Government are striving towards perfection, we are giving more urgency to the review to which my hon. Friend referred.

Mr. Rooker: The House is seeing more and more that the Minister does not want seriously to answer important questions put to him by both sides of the House. May I put to the Minister one question relating to the concession made by the Secretary of State in our last debate in respect of the Housing Defects Act? How many applications have been made by local authorities under that concession and, more importantly, how much money does the Secretary of State have available to make a reality of that concession?

Mr. Gow: No applications have yet been received from local authorities in response to the announcement by my right hon. Friend in the debate last month. On 27 March the Department sent a circular to local authorities, a copy of which, if it is not already in the Library, will be placed there by me. The resources to be made available will depend upon the strength of the case that local authorities are able to make. In the debate my right hon. Friend made it clear that he would consider sympathetically applications by local authorities.

Mr. Yeo: Since mobility of labour is one of the key factors in reducing unemployment, and since one consequence of the reduction in the proportion of capital expenditure that local authorities can incur will be to restrict the rate at which public sector housing is built, does my hon. Friend agree that the impelementation of this policy makes it even more urgent that we should take steps to abolish the Rent Acts so that the private housing market can be reactivated?

Mr. Gow: I hope that it will be possible before too long to make a statement about the Government's policy in this matter.

Conservation (Management Agreements)

5. **Mr. John Hunt** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many management agreements have now been concluded between farmers and local authorities since the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 came into operation.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. William Waldegrave): The Countryside Commission has been informed of 64 management agreements that have been concluded by local authorities under the provisions of the 1981 Act. Of these, 38 involve no financial consideration.

Mr. Hunt: Does that rather disappointing total not indicate that the Act still needs a few more teeth? Is my hon. Friend aware that in some cases habitats and landscapes can be destroyed before a local authority even knows about it, let alone has the chance to conclude a management agreement? Is not this an argument for some kind of notification procedure under which a local authority has to be given notice in advance of an owner's intention to carry out work on his land?

Mr. Waldegrave: I do not think that these figures necessarily represent the whole story. The provisions of the 1981 Act are only a part of the battery of powers that are available. There was a recent case in my hon. Friend's constituency where a felling licence was ignored. The result was that large fines had to be paid by those involved, which should remind people that other powers are available to deal with these matters.

Mr. Hardy: Will the Minister give further consideration to the point that his hon. Friend the Member for Ravensbourne (Mr. Hunt) has made, and at the same time commend those farmers who have taken part in management agreements and those who are involved in the farming and wildlife advisory group? Is it not clear that their increasing commitment to conservation is not matched in any sensible way by the present Administration?

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Member will not expect me to agree with the last point that he made, which I rebut strongly. However, I am delighted to join him in paying tribute to the farmers who, in many cases, under the advisory group, are doing a very good job. The survey recently carried out by the National Farmers Union shows what is being done by those farmers who have a real care for the countryside.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Since management agreements should involve an element of positive management rather than dealing with the handing over of public money for nothing in return, does my hon. Friend have any information about how many of the management agreements include such a positive element?

Mr. Waldegrave: I do not have the figures with me, but all the power is there for positive elements to be included in the management agreements. The fact that many Countryside Commission agreements do not involve the payment of money makes the point that there is much more voluntary co-operation than people often realise.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Is the Minister aware of the comments of the Prince of Wales this morning that far too often farmers are still exploiting the land for profit without respect for conservation? Would not an appropriate response be to reinstate, at the behest of the Government, a provision in the Wildlife and Countryside (Amendment) Bill putting a duty on MAFF to consider conservation as well as agricultural interests?

Mr. Waldegrave: As usual, the Liberal party is concentrating on form rather than reality. We want developments of the kind to which the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) has paid tribute and which are indeed taking place. It is not a matter of passing Acts of Parliament and feeling that we have done something clever. It is a matter of getting real voluntary co-operation, and that is what the Government are doing.

Washington, Peterlee and Aycliffe

6. **Mr. Foster** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the future of the Washington, Peterlee and Aycliffe new towns.

Mr. Jenkin: I announced on March 21 that the new town development corporations of Aycliffe, Peterlee and Washington would continue until 31 March 1988. That decision has been widely welcomed in the north-east.

Mr. Foster: Is the Secretary of State aware that that decision has been widely welcomed throughout the north-east, and especially by Labour Members? Will he confirm, however, that he is reducing the staffing and capital budgets of the Aycliffe and Peterlee development corporations from £12 million to £2 million at a time when unemployment in my constituency is 26·8 per cent.? In his reliance on private capital markets, is he aware that the development corporations were set up in the first place because of the failure of those markets?

Mr. Jenkin: The spending limits for all three authorities will be £11 million in 1986-87 and £8·5 million in 1987-88. We believe that that will give the development corporations ample opportunity to achieve the primary purpose of the extension — that is, to continue their promotional work and to complete the building work already in hand. In this context, I pay tribute to the way in which the development corporations have succeeded in attracting important investment to the north-east — notably the Nissan site, which I hope to visit in a few weeks' time.

Mr. Fallon: Is my right hon. Friend aware that his decision is generally applauded in the north-east and that at a time of industrial change it is absolutely right to retain the job-seeking functions of the corporations?

Mr. Jenkin: That is the primary purpose of extending the lives of the development corporations. I very much welcome the progress being made by Sir Ralph Carr-Ellison, who is seeking to establish a voluntary development body to perpetuate and, I hope, improve the work being done in attracting new firms to the north-east.

Mr. Boyes: Is the Secretary of State aware that his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment informed me in a written answer yesterday that 6,000 people in the borough of Sunderland have been unemployed for more than three years? In those circumstances, is it not disgraceful and absurd that a respected job-promoting agency should be closed down?

Mr. Speaker: Order. Does this have anything to do with the main question?

Mr. Boyes: Yes, Mr. Speaker. With respect, I represent the new town of Washington, which is included in the question. Will the right hon. Gentleman tell his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry that, having created chaos in the north-east by not agreeing to an extension for the new town corporation——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I thought that the Minister said that it was continuing. The hon. Gentleman talks as though it were closing down.

Mr. Boyes: For your information, Mr. Speaker, the letter from the Department of the Environment about the future of the new town of Washington states that it has an extension of 2¼ years only and that it will then be closed down. Will the Minister pass a message to the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry that, chaos having been created in the north-east by obstacles being put in the way of the extension of the new town of Washington, by limiting it to 2¼ years and not to five years, for which we asked in reply to the consultative document, he is compounding the unemployment problem in that area?

Mr. Jenkin: I am very fond of the hon. Gentleman, and we on the Conservative Benches respect him greatly, but I must say that he has got it wildly wrong. My decision to extend the life of these development corporations to 1988 has been warmly welcomed by hon. Members on both sides of the House and by the entire community of north-east London — *[Interruption.]* — England. I am only sorry that the hon. Gentleman was not able to join in the chorus of welcome for my decision.

Mr. Conway: As a former member of the board of Washington development corporation, I welcome my right hon. Friend's remarks this afternoon. Can my right hon. Friend tell the House whether the potential inward investment promotional rate of which he has been talking in respect of Washington, Peterlee and Aycliffe will apply also to other new town corporations, such as Telford, which adjoins my constituency, when they reach their winding-up dates?

Mr. Jenkin: No firm date has been set for the winding up of Telford development corporation, save that it will be towards the end of this decade. If there are promotional activities to be carried on after that, it will be for the business and local authority interests in the area to decide how best to carry that forward. It has always been recognised that the new town development corporations would have a limited life. It is to make sure that the essential functions of promotion are carried on that I have extended the life of these three in the north-east.

Mr. Dormand: Is the Secretary of State aware that I am one person on the Labour Benches who gives only a cool welcome to the extension? Having regard to the National Coal Board's statements on pit closures since the end of the miners' strike, is the right hon. Gentleman aware that, particularly in an area like mine, an extension of three years to Peterlee development corporation is simply inadequate? A minimum of five years is essential. Is he aware that he has cleverly put in blanket form the budgets for the three new towns? Is it not a fact—and will he come clean on this—that the budget for Peterlee development corporation is now less than half what it has been in the past? Will he say whether he is instructing Peterlee development corporation to reduce its staff?

Mr. Jenkin: It certainly would be appropriate that the staffing of the development corporations should match the resources that they have available. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that I recognise that it is the concern of Aycliffe and Peterlee that they should have a fair share of the expenditure cake in comparison with Washington. This will be discussed with the corporations in the usual annual review of the finances.

Mr. Cowans: Not representing any constituents in north-east London, I am not qualified to speak for them, but I am qualified to speak for the people in the north-east. Perhaps the Minister would get it right. Will he accept that, after considerable pressure on him by my hon.

Friends to make a decision, the decision that he has made is wrong and the period is not long enough? It would make more sense, if he believes in being converted to the real world, to say that what is required is that the budget should be made much bigger. Finally, I welcome the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon) into the real world. He has now left market forces. Perhaps the Minister should leave them as well.

Mr. Jenkin: I am not sure that the hon. Gentleman's question calls for a reply.

Mr. Cowans: There were three questions.

Mr. Jenkin: The hon. Gentleman has recognised that the decision has been widely welcomed in the north-east, and that this now gives time for local authorities, the TUC and industrial organisations to work with Sir Ralph in order to bring into existence the new body, which I think will carry forward this promotional activity.

Liverpool (Budget)

7. **Mr. Parry** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to meet the leaders of the Liverpool city council to discuss its budget proposals.

Mr. Patrick Jenkin: No, Sir.

Mr. Parry: Is not that an unreasonable answer from the Secretary of State, bearing in mind the special problems that Liverpool faces above all other local authorities, which the right hon. Gentleman acknowledges? Will the right hon. Gentleman now state what instructions are to be given to the district auditor concerning Liverpool? Has he made any plans to send in commissioners if the council refuses to fix a rate?

Mr. Jenkin: I have made it clear many times in the House that the responsibility for administering services, whether in Liverpool or any other area of the country, rests with the elected councillors of that area. I have no powers to put in commissioners, and I have no desire to put in commissioners. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will use his influence to persuade the Liverpool city councillors that they must now make a rate to administer their city properly.

Mr. Powley: Will my right hon. Friend remember, in his exchanges with Liverpool city council, that were he to make any concessions at all to the irresponsibilities of that local authority, that would be viewed with great concern by economic and responsible authorities such as Norfolk county council, which act in a responsible and economical way?

Mr. Jenkin: Despite the boasts of some of the Liverpool city councillors last year, it is now widely recognised in Liverpool and elsewhere that no concessions were made to Liverpool last year, and it is not intended to make any concessions to Liverpool this year. The responsibility for making a rate rests firmly upon that city council.

Mr. Wareing: Notwithstanding the answer from the Secretary of State, does he not recall his attitude following the visit which he and his hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Construction made to Liverpool last year, when he saw the deplorable housing situation in the city? He promised that he would use his best endeavours to give more assistance to housing. Despite what the hon. Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Powley) has just said about Liverpool city council, it is doing the responsible work of regenerating 17 priority areas. We welcome the new Tate in the north, but is it not a bit incongruous that the right hon. Gentleman offers largesse on the one hand for something that is hardly a priority in Liverpool, and on the other hand ignores the elected representatives of the people of Liverpool?

Mr. Jenkin: On my visit to see the housing of Liverpool the following question struck me: how did it ever get like that, and who carried the responsibility for it? Secondly, I was struck by the immense progress being made by the housing co-operatives in Liverpool. I deeply regret the fact that Liverpool city council has thought fit to strike them off its list of those who receive help from it. I hope that the council will have second thoughts and support the housing co-operatives, as they are doing extremely good work.

Dr. Cunningham: Not only is the Secretary of State's geography wrong today, but so is his history. Is he not aware that for 10 years his own party, in coalition with the Liberals, was responsible for the administration of the city of Liverpool? Does the right hon. Gentleman not recall that the Labour party has been in power for only just over a year? Is it not a fact that it has inherited an appalling mess from the right hon. Gentleman's friends? Why does he take such pleasure in being vindictive about that council's determination to help the people of Liverpool solve their problems?

Mr. Jenkin: If the word vindictive were to be used, it might be much more appropriately applied to some of the members of Liverpool city council with whom I have tried to work and by whom I have been kicked in the teeth. If the hon. Gentleman still has any shred of influence in that quarter, perhaps he will recognise that, generally, authorities which seek to co-operate with the Government on inner city policy make more progress than those which positively refuse to do so, and take pleasure in doing nothing but attack the Government at every possible opportunity.

Manchester (Rate Support Grant)

8. **Mr. Sumberg** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has received any representations from Manchester city council in connection with the rate support grant settlement for 1985-86; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: Manchester city council was one of the 26 authorities represented at a collective meeting on 4 February.

Mr. Sumberg: Is my hon. Friend aware that when Manchester set its rate on Sunday, against the advice of the hard-Left leadership, the leader of the council, Councillor Stringer, described it as something that would bring a smile to the face of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State? If my hon. Friend is in touch with Councillor Stringer, will he ask him to bring a smile to the faces of some of my constituents who live on Councillor Stringer's overspill estates in my constituency, and to concentrate not on nuclear-free zones and police monitoring units, but on keeping those properties in a decent and proper state of repair?

Mr. Waldegrave: I shall certainly do that. I noticed that Councillor Stringer also described the setting of the rate as a defeat for the Labour party. Since it was a victory for common sense, I suppose that he must be right.

Mr. Litherland: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that as well as the 112,000 signatures on a petition that was left on the Downing street doorstep, there were 10,000 people on the streets of Manchester calling for jobs, services and democracy? The Minister must recognise this, because he has given us a guarantee that he will visit Manchester. Will he give a commitment to the House today that when he comes to Manchester — unlike Ministers before him, who shed crocodile tears and then went away and did nothing—he will have an open mind?

Mr. Waldegrave: I think that many of my hon. Friends will regard the fact that Manchester received a 3·8 per cent. increase in its target and a 10 per cent. increase in its GRE as a rather generous settlement.

Quarries (Development)

9. **Mr. Eastham** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent representations he has received regarding the implications of the House of Lords decision in the Hartshead Quarry case for the control of development in the vicinity of quarries.

Mr. Macfarlane: I was sent copies of the report issued by the County Planning Officers Society on 14 November 1984 and the report issued by the Peak park joint planning board on 22 February 1985, both of which consider the implications of the Hartshead judgment. I have also received representations from the local authority associations. My hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) tabled a parliamentary question on this subject, and I have received nine letters from right hon. and hon. Members since 22 February.

Mr. Eastham: Does the Minister realise and recognise the very serious implications of this judgment for planning authorities? Has he been reminded of the fact that we now have a situation in which limestone and sand quarries, which have sometimes discontinued operations for 10 or 20 years, can decide to recommence operations and no longer require planning approval? There is often housing and other residential accommodation adjacent to those workings, creating very serious problems. Will the Minister seriously consider urgently introducing new legislation to control this?

Mr. Macfarlane: I can set the hon. Gentleman's mind at rest, because when the remaining provisions of part I of the Town and Country Planning (Minerals) Act 1981 are introduced there will be a range of powers available to authorities. It will then be for them to decide which of these is most appropriate to any individual case. Each case, of course, must be considered on its planning merits. I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) on 11 March. That sets out our intentions in parliamentary terms over the next few months.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: While I am very grateful to my hon. Friend for the additional information that he has given to the House on this important matter, and while he will appreciate, as I do, that quarrying is a vital employer in the Peak park and other such areas—and farming, too, for that matter—does he agree that there is an anomaly in the present planning legislation relating to quarrying? This does not apply to anything else. Does he not think, therefore, that legislation is required to put this right?

Mr. Macfarlane: I do not believe that any new legislation is required. I think that my answer to my hon. Friend earlier this month outlined the position. We have to accept that, following the House of Lords ruling, planning permission to extract minerals from the site remains available unless the Peak park joint planning board exercises its powers to make an order revoking that permission or that use of the land. I certainly take note of what my hon. Friend has said, but when these orders are laid later in this Session they will give the local authorities a range of powers. That was the intention of the 1981 Act. It was designed to introduce after-care and further provisos.

Gleneagles Agreement (Private Clubs)

10. **Mr. John Carlisle** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has discussed with the Association of District Councils the Gleneagles agreement and how it may affect the hiring of sports facilities to private clubs.

Mr. Macfarlane: No, Sir.

Mr. Carlisle: I am disappointed with that reply. Does my hon. Friend not think that he should discuss the matter with the Labour councils which are threatening to withdraw sports facilities from clubs just because some of their players have been to South Africa? Does he agree that the matter goes beyond the Gleneagles agreement and that if that policy were followed by Labour councils they would be at liberty to withdraw sports facilities from any team with members who are of a political colour different from their own?

Mr. Macfarlane: The issue arouses deep passion on both sides of the House. It is for local authorities to decide how they will administer their sports facilities, and for the courts to decide whether their actions are unlawful. My locus in this respect is non-existent. The Court of Appeal has upheld the local authority's action as lawful within its duties under section 71 of the Race Relations Act 1976.

Mr. Tom Clarke: In the various discussions, has the Minister's attention been drawn to the strong concern in Scotland about the rugby associations involving themselves in a world cup, despite South Africa being involved? Is the Minister not worried that the Commonwealth Games in Edinburgh might be jeopardised? Will he do more than he appears to be doing to protect the spirit of the Gleneagles agreement?

Mr. Macfarlane: The House will be aware of the action that I took last year in relation to the rugby tour of South Africa. The House understands the Government's policy. Naturally, I am anxious to do everything that I can to ensure that all sports' governing bodies recognise our external obligations under the Gleneagles agreement. The Commonwealth Games in 1986 are important, not only for Britain, but for Commonwealth sport.

Mr. John Browne: Notwithstanding the Minister's reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle), do not the Government have an absolute duty to

protect the freedom of individuals? If a local authority blatantly impinges upon the freedom of individuals because of their political beliefs, surely the Government must stand strongly behind those freedoms.

Mr. Macfarlane: I endorse my hon. Friend's initial remarks, but it is not for the House of Commons to question a decision by the Court of Appeal.

Mr. Denis Howell: Is it not time that the Rugby Union realised—as the judges have held in the case of the Leicester council and the Leicester rugby club—that public bodies are entitled to expect a more responsible attitude towards the Gleneagles agreement from people whom they finance? Since rugby received £175,000 last year from the Sports Council and public funds, what action will the Minister take to bring that home to the Rugby Union and to persuade it to act more responsibly in respect of South Africa?

Mr. Macfarlane: We must ask ourselves the important question whether we want to stop coaching and rugby at junior level merely because the governing body decides to send a side to South Africa. I do not think that we should cut off the noses of some people to spite others. The money provided to develop and enhance rugby union at grass roots is a most important dimension. To cut that off would be a spiteful move for the future of rugby. We must try to educate the Rugby Union to have a wider concern for rugby throughout the world.

Local Authorities (Tender Lists)

11. **Dr. Mawhinney** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce legislation to prevent local authorities from excluding on political grounds individual companies from tender lists for contracts for council projects.

Mr. Patrick Jenkin: The consultation paper on competition in the provision of local authority services issued on 14 February proposes legislation to nullify the imposition of such irrelevant conditions in local authority contracts or invitations to tender. Subject to the consultation, it is proposed to legislate in the next Session of Parliament.

Dr. Mawhinney: That is welcome news. Is my right hon. Friend aware that Labour and Liberal councillors on the Peterborough city council have combined to try to blackmail legal firms by threatening to prevent them contracting for city council business if they have done any work at RAF Molesworth—or even if they are willing to do such work? Is that not a disgraceful abuse of councillors' powers and counter to ratepayers' interests? Should that practice not be made illegal? How soon can we expect action?

Mr. Jenkin: I agree with my hon. Friend that such conduct is totally unacceptable. That is why we have put our proposals out for consultation. I look forward to receiving my hon. Friend's support for the legislation in the next Session.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Why do the Secretary of State and his Back-Bench colleagues always want to legislate when local politicians take a decision with which they disagree? Why do they not let local politicians defend such decisions at elections and let local electors make their choice of the policies that they support? Do the Secretary of State and his Back-Bench colleagues act in this way because local Conservatives have no confidence in their campaigning ability?

Mr. Jenkin: The hon. Gentleman's proposition is absolutely astonishing. Is the Liberal party defending what Peterborough council has done? If so, let us proclaim throughout the country that that is what we can expect if more Liberal councillors are elected next month.

Asbestos

12. **Mr. Dubs** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to the costs incurred by local authorities in removing asbestos from their buildings.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Sir George Young): The joint central and local government working party on asbestos, set up by my Department last year, is at present seeking and collating information from the local authority associations on the scale of use of asbestos materials in buildings. This includes some information relating to the costs of removal of asbestos, but no national picture or overall estimate of costs is available.

Mr. Dubs: Will the hon. Gentleman condemn Wandsworth council for taking legal action against two of my constituents, resulting in their incurring costs plus damages of nearly £9,000, when all they did was use legal action to delay for six days the demolition of Latchmere baths in my constituency because they feared that asbestos in that building would be a danger to local residents? Does the hon. Gentleman agree that such public-spirited action by my constituents—one of whom is now a local councillor—should be rewarded, rather than penalised by the threat of bankruptcy?

Sir George Young: I would be very ill-advised to do what the hon. Gentleman invites me to do. The case was taken to court. The hon. Gentleman's constituents lost and Wandsworth won, and Wandsworth was awarded costs. It is not for Ministers to comment on that decision.

Mr. Chapman: As a curtain-raiser to an important Adjournment debate tomorrow, will my hon. Friend use his good offices to encourage local authorities to adopt the recently invented process of the vitrification of asbestos waste which, apart from removing the toxicity of the waste completely and therefore preventing health hazards, has the financial merit of being able to be undertaken in some cases at half the conventional cost of bagging and dumping the waste?

Sir George Young: I am sorry to say that I shall not be participating in the Adjournment debate tomorrow. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State—the hon. Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave)—whose happy task that will be has heard my hon. Friend's remarks, and I know that his remarks will embrace the response to those proposals.

Basildon (Rates)

13. **Mr. Proctor** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from Basildon district council, following the setting by the council of a legal rate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I welcome Basildon's decision to fix a legal rate. No representations have been received consequent on that decision.

Mr. Proctor: Is my right hon. Friend aware that Basildon district council proposes to close Billericay swimming pool from 7 May and that rate capping is the reason that the council gives for its action? Is my right hon. Friend aware also that the documents leaked to me from the management team of Basildon district council —a copy of which I gave to my right hon. Friend last night—make it clear that rate capping is not involved in the decision and that the same saving of £100,000 a year would have been achieved by cancelling the contract with Union Communications to handle the public relations for the council against the Government?

Mr. Baker: I thank my hon. Friend for letting me see those documents, because they show that the council's policy——

Mr. Denis Howell *rose*——

Mr. Baker: —wait for it. They show that the council's policy is to favour the areas regarded by the present Administration as having the greatest social need. What has the council done to implement that policy? It has cut out a recreational service but has gone on paying £100,000 to an advertising firm to conduct a campaign against Government policies. I hope that Basildon residents and ratepayers will recognise the cynicism of that decision.

Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution (Recommendations)

14. **Mr. Campbell-Savours** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what recommendations of the Royal Commission on environmental pollution have been acted upon by the Government.

Mr. Waldegrave: Since 1979 the Government have published positive responses to the recommendations contained in five Royal Commission reports, and set in hand follow-up action as appropriate.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Why do the Government not stop equivocating and sign the Ottawa declaration on acid rain?

Mr. Waldegrave: In the answer to the tenth Royal Commission report, the Government have taken the trouble to set out the reasons why they did not want to do that, and I know that the hon. Gentleman is very familiar with the arguments in that response.

Mr. Gale: Will my hon. Friend confirm his opinion of the commission's findings on the efficacy of long sea outfall?

Mr. Waldegrave: As my hon. Friend is aware, the Government have also responded to that matter in their answer to the tenth Royal Commission report. I refer him to that response, over which a great deal of trouble was taken.

Dr. David Clark: As the Minister said in a television interview about Britain joining the 30 per cent. club:

"If you want my opinion, I would have taken the risk of joining the 30 per cent. club",

may I ask what is stopping him?

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman did not quote me fully. I said that that would have been an easy thing to do as a number of other countries have done it knowing perfectly well that they would do nothing about it. That is not how Britain approaches these matters, and I am proud of that.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: On a point of order arising out of Question Time, Mr. Speaker. Do you accept that the people of Manchester will be very disappointed at the limited number of supplementary questions taken on a very important series of questions when compared with——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The problem with Question Time is that although I do try to call as many hon. Members as possible, when an area has a number of Members representing it it is impossible to call all of them. Every time that Front Bench speakers rise — and they rose eight times today—it makes it more difficult for me to call Back Benchers.

Employment, Education and Training

? 31 pm

The Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Tom King): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a statement on employment and training.

Last Thursday I published the White Paper "Employment: The Challenge for the Nation". Today, in conjunction with my right hon. Friends the Secretary of State for Education and Science and the Minister without Portfolio, I am publishing a further White Paper, entitled "Education and Training for Young People".

The purpose of the first White Paper is to set out the facts and figures on the present employment situation and to describe the strategy that the Government believe offers the best prospects for employment, with the steps already taken and the further measures proposed.

There are three key elements in the Government's strategy towards employment. First, the Government must create an economic, financial and industrial climate in which enterprise can flourish. The priority is to control inflation. Without that, there is no prospect that industry and commerce will compete successfully, raise output and create jobs. Secondly, the Government can help improve the labour market by encouraging more and better training and by removing obstacles which hamper employers taking on workers. Finally, the Government can provide direct help for those worst affected by unemployment through, for example, the community programme.

The second White Paper, "Education and Training for Young People", deals with a key element in our strategy for employment — the reform of our education and training policies and programmes. It outlines our approach to work-related education and training for 14 to 18-year-olds and emphasises the need to develop more comprehensive and coherent provision for this age group.

Improvements in education and training are crucial to strengthening the economy. Only then will industry and commerce be able to find the skills they need if they are to become more competitive. Efforts to get a better trained work force must be directed at everyone in it, irrespective of age or occupation. But, in particular, we must ensure that our young people are properly prepared for the world of work. We intend to build on the success of recent achievements by taking action in three particular fields: introducing new arrangements for in-service teacher training related to the technical and vocational education initiative, setting up a review of vocational qualifications and bringing in a new two-year youth training scheme. These actions flow from the review of provision for 14 to 18-year-olds carried out by the Minister without Portfolio.

As regards the youth training scheme, the Government are providing substantial additional resources so that, from April 1986, we are able to offer a second year of training to 16-year-old school leavers and a one-year place to 17-year-old school leavers. Our aim is that all our young people leaving school will have the chance to get vocational qualifications. The Manpower Services Commission has warmly and unanimously welcomed these proposals and has now put in hand the necessary consultations, with a view to reporting back to me by the end of June.

The new training scheme, together with the parallel changes in education and the review of vocational nal qualifications, will help to put vocational education and training for our young people on a par with that of our main competitors overseas, and will help create a more flexible labour force and more competitive economy.

Taken together, these two White Papers set out clearly the Government's strategy for employment and give the details of the new proposals for improving vocational education and training in this country, which I hope will command the support of the whole House.

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): I noted with interest that the Secretary of State did not predict the increase in employment that might result from the two White Papers with which he dealt. These two documents are a reflection of the increasing public concern that exists about the growing mass unemployment in Britain and particularly about the plight of those who make up the unskilled labour force, who are suffering after six years of Conservative policies.

There is a startling difference between the two White Papers. In describing the training requirements embodied in "Education and Training for Young People", the Government recognise that they have a responsibility to intervene to ensure that there is adequate training and proper planning for training. It is clear that the Government have a direct responsibility to achieve those goals, at a time when British industry has failed to make either a financial or physical contribution to improving the skill of the nation's labour force.

That is particularly true when we compare this country with our international competitors. The concern in Britain seems to be more for training to be a business cost than an investment.

The Government stand indicted for the way in which they have dealt with the problem — that is, by their philosophy of trying to justify the abolition of 16 of the 23 industrial training boards and, more recently, 29 skillcentres, on grounds of cost. We require planning adequate to meet the training requirements of the nation and the resources from industry.

YTS schemes are to be extended to two years. We on the Labour Benches have campaigned for that for a long time, so it is a step that we welcome. Indeed, such an extension was part of our manifesto. I particularly welcome the announcement in the White Paper of the review that is to be conducted by the Secretary of State into many of the criticisms that Opposition Members have made of many existing YTS schemes.

As the Secretary of State is now considering some of those criticisms, may I ask him to confirm that the new two-year scheme will not be compulsory? Is he considering giving a proper wage to trainees, which in real terms would now be equivalent to £38—£10 or £11 more than is currently paid? Many of those now on YTS schemes regard the present rates as slave labour pay. Is the right hon. Gentleman also reviewing the health and safety conditions and the monitoring of schemes by area boards? It would be appropriate if he reported back to the House on those matters, in time for the debate when he has received the report mentioned in the White Paper.

Will the right hon. Gentleman elaborate on what is said in the White Paper about a preference for employer-based schemes in the second year? That seems to underrate the contribution that local authorities have made to some excellent YTS schemes, and I hope that he does not intend to reduce their role.

Will the Secretary of State reconsider his decision to close 29 skillcentres? Will he postpone their closure in view of the fact that for second-year YTS schemes, which will come into effect in 1986, skillcentres would be ideal places to use for that second stage, offering good opportunities for quality training.

The White Paper "Employment: The Challenge for the Nation" has failed miserably, as did the "Budget for jobs", in trying to convince people that the policy was designed to secure more jobs for the additional members of the skilled labour force that the Government hoped would be created. The Government reaffirm their belief in the free market and blame everybody for the problems of mass unemployment, which in fact has been caused directly by Government policies.

The White Paper contains some statements which we readily accept and confirms the Labour party's record on producing jobs during its five year of office. For every one extra job it produced, the Tory Government have lost six during five years of their policies. It is a deplorable document because, as with training, it refuses to accept that employment is a responsibility of Government. It compares most unfavourably with the 1944 White Paper, which fully accepted that Government had a responsibility not only for employment, but to observe their international obligations, which were embodied in the wages councils, the abolition of which is proposed in the White Paper.

This is a deplorable White Paper. It does little for employment, and the Government wash their hands of their responsibilities, and do little to reduce the mass unemployment that continues to increase. The White Paper confirms that the Government's policies are deliberately creating mass unemployment. If the Government believe that they can do nothing about it, they should resign and make way for a Labour Government who will reduce unemployment.

Mr. King: It is difficult for the hon. Gentleman to sustain the charge that the Government are washing their hands of the problem when during the past week we have introduced two White Papers, which deal specifically with some of those issues. I would have hoped for a more positive response from the Leader of the Opposition and his hon. Friends. *[Interruption.]* It contrasts noticeably —because of the noise from Opposition Members, the hon. Gentleman may not have heard this — with the warm and unanimous response from the Manpower Services Commission, which includes representatives of industrialists and the Trade Union Congress. They have confirmed their support for our expansion of the opportunities in youth training.

I confirm that the scheme will continue to be voluntary, that we intend to maintain a trainee allowance, and that we do not intend to make the sort of substantial increase in costs that the hon. Gentleman suggested—for one good reason. It is genuinely important to ensure that the maximum resources go into training and that we get the highest possible quality of training. When I am faced with a choice of priorities, I am more anxious to maintain a reasonable level of trainee allowance and a high quality scheme, than to make a much higher level of trainee allowance, which might be at the expense of the quality of the training.

The hon. Gentleman asked about skillcentres. He will know that part of the way in which we can ensure modernisation of our skill resources is to ensure that we put those resources to the most effective use, not into the maintenance of bricks and mortar for under-utilised assets in a facility which is not fully used.

"Britain will only be able to produce the goods and services of the future if those who work in industry are trained in the skills of the future."

The Leader of the Opposition happened to raise his head at that, but that is a quotation with which I agree. It also happens to be the policy that we have been putting forward.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the forecast. I have looked hard through "Labour's Jobs and Industry Campaign", but I cannot find many forecasts — and rightly so. *[Interruption.]* Well, I cannot find it in the document, which was shrewdly drafted. As we made clear in the statement, we seek to achieve the best possible prospects for employment. The measures that we have announced in the two White Papers will help significantly towards that.

Mr. Mark Carlisle (Warrington, South): I welcome whole-heartedly the statement of my right hon. Friend, and the great emphasis placed on training for young people. Does he agree that we have been well behind our European competitors in this area? Does he agree that the actions of the Government since 1979 stand in strong contrast to the complete lack of action by the Labour party when it was in Government? Does he further agree that the reaction by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) to the statement is the only matter that could appropriately be called "deplorable"? Does he further agree that it is vital to retain close links between schools and industry, and that we should put great importance on the vocational training of those who choose to stay on in sixth forms but do not intend to take A-level courses?

Mr. King: I am grateful to my right hon. and learned Friend. With his great knowledge of the subject, he will understand the importance of these issues. It is unfortunate that the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) was so grudging in his comments. All that the Labour party could manage was the youth opportunities programme. There is not much argument in the House that the YTS is a vast improvement on that. I am proud that we launched it. I am even prouder that we can announce this extension to it. I am grateful for what my right hon. and learned Friend said about the link between education and training. The fact that my right hon. Friends the Secretary of State for Education and Science and the Minister without Portfolio have worked so closely on this makes it clear that we see the vital need to ensure the closest possible link so that we genuinely meet the different needs of youngsters by vocational as well as more formal academic education. I believe that the announcements are a major step in that direction.

Mr. David Penhaligon (Truro): The Minister, admittedly under the spur of desperation, is gradually putting together a package for education and training which at least has some potential. What will he do to persuade or perhaps coerce employers to face up to their social responsibilities by making the investment in their future employees that most European employers make? Furthermore, the White Paper boasts that 60 per cent. of those leaving YTS obtained a job. Some people dispute that figure, but I will accept it. What are the Government's plans for the other 40 per cent?

Mr. King: I thank the hon. Member, albeit for his somewhat half-hearted welcome for what we are doing. It would be wrong to criticise all employers. Many employers make a substantial contribution, but on average the contribution from British employers is less than that in Germany. That is one of the major challenges contained in both White Papers. I am encouraged by the president of the CBI, who has made clear his determination to see that the CBI plays a positive role in this. While I cannot give the hon. Member exact details of how we will achieve it, I am optimistic that we shall start to improve the take-up rate of permanent jobs which for many of the youth training schemes is in excess of 95 per cent.—although the average, as he rightly says, is something over 60 per cent. We are anxious to see that figure raised at the earliest possible opportunity.

Sir Philip Goodhart (Beckenham): In his first welcome White Paper, my right hon. Friend referred to the contribution to the greater flexibility of patterns of work that can be made by young workers. The private sector has been much more helpful than the public sector. Can my right hon. Friend promise any action to make the public sector more imaginative and flexible?

Mr. King: I am interested in the point that my hon. Friend makes. Events in the postal service have brought to the public notice overtime and flexibility and how additional jobs might be created. I do not say this critically, because it is one of the issues that we are considering, but at the moment, something over 11 million hours of overtime a week are being worked. A substantial amount of employment is contained within that overtime if it were possible to reorganise it. It behoves us all to try. I shall be studying the public sector to see whether it can make a contribution with experiments in more flexible working.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that, for tens and tens of thousands of young people on YTS, 40 per cent. of whom will not obtain employment as the result of the scheme, the Government's motives are seen to be different from the ones that he put to the House? They are seen as being to take people off the register, to provide free labour for employers, to lower wages, to substitute for adult employees, and to by-pass trade unions and the health and safety regulations. Young people want real training and jobs. His statement means that the Government contemplate low wages in a permanently high mass unemployment society.

Mr. King: One reason why some young people may hold that view about YTS is that the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) and some of his hon. Friends choose to keep telling them so. I am glad to say that their views are those of a substantial minority in the country, and I am grateful for the fact that neither the Opposition Front Bench nor the responsible trade union leaders share them.

Sir John Biggs-Davison (Epping Forest): Does my right hon. Friend remember the prophecies of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) about the Falklands war and the miners' strike? The right hon. Gentleman is now making prophecies about employment.

My right hon. Friend speaks about the contribution of the CBI. Does he have anything to tell us about the decline of apprenticeships in this country, and does he have anything in mind in that regard?

Mr. King: Part of the change in apprenticeship has resulted from changes in manufacturing industry. A number of employers regard the apprenticeship route as less relevant to the new technologies. One very important aspect of the review of qualifications is the question how we can arrive at a more comprehensible and appropriate system of qualifications that will perhaps incorporate apprenticeship as well. At the moment, many youth training schemes are running parallel with apprenticeship schemes. There is certainly a need for rationalisation.

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): In his statement, the Secretary of State told us that the Government intend to devote substantial new resources to the second year of the YTS. I do not believe that that is really true. The figure for the first year was just over £100 million and for the second year it is £300 million. Those figures are derisory. When the right hon. Gentleman first talked about year one of the YTS, he used to speak of providing £1 billion. Now that we have reached year two, instead of speaking of another billion pounds, the right hon. Gentleman wants to have two years of YTS for £1 billion. That is not sufficient. Last week the Select Committee took evidence from the CBI. The YTS is a voluntary scheme—voluntary for employers too. The employers were very worried about the very small sums of money being provided by the Government.

The Government can spend billions of pounds on fighting the miners, and billions on the Falkland Islands. We want billions of pounds to be spent on educating Britain's younger generation. A realistic allowance must be made, to guard against charges of cheap labour. The right hon. Gentleman must do the job properly. He is not devoting sufficient resources to it.

Mr. King: The House will note that the hon. Gentleman describes as derisory the sum of £1·1 billion, the amount that we propose to devote to the youth training scheme when it is running. The hon. Gentleman says that he has received evidence that some employers may be concerned about the contribution that they have to make. That is exactly the point that was made by the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Penhaligon). Of course difficult decisions have to take place. We must ensure that people understand the importance of the matter. I hope that the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends will support us in ensuring that they do.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): Will my right hon. friend consider the idea of including in the training some course in basic economics? If it was pointed out that jobs are produced by customers, markets and competitive service and not by Governments, young people would not grow up to share the tunnel vision from which the Opposition suffer.

Mr. King: Almost the most unpleasant aspect of the campaign being launched by the Labour party is a postcard bearing the slogan "Gissa job". To suggest that jobs are in the gift of Governments, without any contribution or effort on the part of the person concerned, is to encourage the worst possible attitude. The Government have a clear responsibility, but we will not succeed unless our

contribution and responsibility are matched by the determination of the individual himself—for instance, to train in order to improve his qualifications—and by a contribution from the whole of industry.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): In relation to basic economics, what does the right hon Gentleman have in mind—will he insist on Pigou Keynes, Adam Smith, Ricardo, Karl Marx or Marshall? How many real jobs will we get on Merseyside as a result of this scheme? How many people will be taken into training on decent incomes —or, as some people are suggesting, is the Secretary of State all bark and no bite?

Mr. King: That is the most extraordinary supplementary question to be asked the day after the Labour party produced a paper which carefully avoided saying how many jobs Labour's policies would provide on Merseyside. The expansion and development of YTS will enormously improve the chance of young people to equip themselves for work, including some who need it most. The expansion of the community programme will significantly help a number of the long-term unemployed. The growth in the economy is now at last creating more jobs. Those factors offer a better prospect than we have had for a long time for employment in Merseyside and elsewhere.

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, in regard to adult training, what matters is not whether the building is called a skillcentre, a technical college or a college of further education, but the quality, quantity and cost-effectiveness of the training? Does he further agree that, unless British employers start to take the lead in training, British industry will follow behind our competitors?

Mr. King: I know, as will the House, the close interest that my hon. Friend takes in these matters. He is correct. We must ensure that resources are used as effectively as possible. That is true whoever is responsible for these matters. Resources must be used effectively in a rapidly changing world of skills. We must also ensure that everyone understands the importance of investment in training for the future.

Mr. Derek Foster (Bishop Auckland): Will the Secretary of State now admit that, in areas such as the north-east, placement in work of youngsters after YTS is not the 60 per cent., 70 per cent or 95 per cent. that he mentioned, but only 33⅓ per cent? No wonder they grow cynical about his scheme. Will he also admit that, until employers contribute to the scheme as has been suggested, there is no chance of it succeeding? The careers service in County Durham is deeply sceptical that employers are capable of making the type of response that the right hon. Gentleman will need.

Mr. King: A couple of times in the past month I have been close to some of the places that the hon. Gentleman has described. I have seen the difficult problems in the north-east. There is no wand to be waved, and anyone who pretends that there is is committing a cruel deceit. I believe —and I hope the hon. Gentleman will ensure—that, in the hon. Gentleman's constituency, young people realise that, in spite of the hostile and thoroughly unhelpful propaganda that some choose to put about, YTS offers a good opportunity to get a start. No, I cannot guarantee everybody a job at the end of the scheme, but I can guarantee, as is evidenced in the north-east, that young people have twice as good a prospect of a job if they have been on YTS.

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): Does my right hon. Friend agree that his excellent proposals for the extension of YTS could be more effective still if the scheme could build on a more broadly based framework of vocational training in schools?

Mr. King: Our exchanges have tended to concentrate on YTS, but the development of the imaginative technical and vocational education initiative is extremely important. Those who have had a chance to see these new courses in action realise that they are a major change and are here to stay.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): On the second White Paper, the Secretary of State mentioned "this country". Can he confirm that that means Great Britain? He also mentioned consultation with the Secretary of State for Education and Science and the Minister without Portfolio. How was the Secretary of State for Scotland consulted in the preparation of the White Paper? Is any separate statement being made on the implications for Scotland, especially the Scottish education system, which, as he knows, is different from that south of the border?

Mr. King: The hon. Member will find the references. The situation is different. In this case, the proposals are in an England and Wales context because of the differences in the Scottish educational system. The hon. Member knows better than I the differences in relation to integration and qualification. However, the first White Paper, on employment, to which I referred covers the whole of Great Britain.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): In welcoming the proposals that my right hon. Friend has set out today, may I urge him to reject emphatically the suggestion made by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) that the allowance paid to somebody who is undergoing training should be the same as the wage that is paid to a person who is doing a job of work? Will he agree with me that, whatever the situation may be today, the decline in traditional apprenticeships began precisely because the trade union movement insisted upon narrowing the gap between the wages paid to apprentices and those paid to working men, which meant that it was no longer worth while for employers to invest in that type of training?

Mr. King: My hon. Friend is quite correct. As we are quoting international comparisons, one of the very striking differences is the difference between what is expected by those under 18 in this country and what they expect in such countries as Germany, where there is a much greater acceptance of the training allowance approach. It is highly significant that there is a great deal more training in Germany.

Mr. Robert Kilroy-Silk (Knowsley, North): Does the Secretary of State not yet know that those who are most hostile to youth training schemes are the young people who have been on them, as the Prime Minister found out last Tuesday? May I remind the Secretary of State that on the very day that those 25 unemployed young people from my constituency visited the Prime Minister, there were no more than 10 vacancies for young people in the entire town

[Mr. Robert Kilroy-Silk]

of Kirkby? As a result of this statement and two White Papers, how many new jobs will be created? Will the prospects for those young people continue to be blighted and destroyed? Never mind the 10,500 people who are unemployed in my constituency; when will the 25 who visited the Prime Minister last week get real, full-time jobs?

Mr. King: Many of the criticisms made of the youth training scheme by those who have been on it, and in a major article in a national newspaper, refer not to the youth training scheme at all but to the youth opportunities programme, which was started by the hon. Member and his hon. Friends. Overwhelmingly, however, the comments about YTS are favourable. They are not universally so, and it is a problem that the scheme does not always lead to full-time employment but instead to disillusion. All I know is that these measures, including those for youngsters who have been on YTS and who are now over 18, and the expansion of the community programme, including the training component, will help them at this difficult time. Of course they would prefer full-time jobs, but the whole House knows that this country, like the other countries in western Europe, is facing a serious problem of high unemployment.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle (Lincoln): It is important that both White Papers reflect the reality that in the end jobs depend upon supplying what the customer wants. In particular, will my right hon. Friend accept that it is very welcome that the youth training scheme is being developed into a second year, which will be particularly helpful to school leavers. Will my right hon. Friend ensure that the youth training scheme is dovetailed into the present apprenticeship scheme?

Mr. King: The review of qualifications, which may have sounded to other hon. Members like a less interesting item, will, when they have read the White Paper and had a chance to see what is involved, be seen to be of fundamental significance. It is vital that we should put into operation the rationalisation of apprenticeships, together with the other training schemes. It is one of the objectives that we have in mind.

Mr. Gordon Wilson (Dundee, East): When will the Secretary of State realise that, without a policy of economic expansion, the two White Papers he has published constitute two legs of a three-legged stool? Secondly, will he give special help to those areas which have been the victims of industrial devastation over the last few years, where the skill base may have been diluted, in order to make sure that youngsters get the skills which are applicable to work?

Mr. King: Of course I accept what the hon. Gentleman says about the need for a strong and expanding economy. He will find that it is a central plank of the White Paper we have just published. This country is now embarking upon a fifth year of economic growth. It is likely to have the highest growth rate of any country in Europe. This country is likely to be the fastest creator of new jobs of any major country in western Europe. Of course that is the main platform upon which we have to build the expansion of employment opportunities in this country. I hope that the hon. Gentleman understands that I fully recognise its importance.

Mr. Conal Gregory (York): Will my right hon. Friend examine after Easter, in the light of the forthcoming review of the wages councils, the overtime aspect? There has been the prospect this week of an industrial dispute in the Post Office. Is it not both immoral and uneconomic for people to work long-term overtime rather than cyclical overtime? Will my right hon. Friend examine this aspect in conjunction with his right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer so that we may enter an area of real job creation?

Mr. King: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I think the whole House knows what a sensitive and difficult area this is. However, I gave the figures to the House earlier. It amounts to about 11·5 million hours a week, which is the equivalent of 600,000 full-time jobs. I know that it is not possible to make a straight conversion, but, in terms of part-time job release and the way in which we can work towards job-splitting schemes and the incorporation of regular overtime into those schemes, we may be able to find a way in which those who are in work contribute towards helping those who are without work.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Does the Secretary of State understand that many young people remain very suspicious of YTS? They believe that it is a cheap labour scheme, often with indifferent training being given, and that it is riddled with racial discrimination. Will the Secretary of State give a firm undertaking that he will never seek to make YTS compulsory? Will he also give a specific assurance that trainees in their second year will be given an increased allowance?

Mr. King: It is precisely that sort of comment, delivered in this House and then fed around the country, which has destroyed the opportunities for many young people. Last year, 20,000 young people who would have had the chance of training and work experience in good schemes which would have led to much better prospects of employment were put off by the comments of those who tried to score cheap political points. I have nothing but contempt for them.

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): I join those both inside and outside the House who will welcome this statement as evidence of the Government's increasing commitment to training as the one sure way to increase opportunities for our young people. Does my right hon. Friend agree that we are falling behind our competitors in information technology? Will he ask his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to persuade industry and commerce to make a greater commitment to information technology, through greater use and greater training?

Mr. King: One thing that strikes me about company reports of their financial affairs in their balance sheets and reports and accounts is that, although they depreciate their plant, machinery and buildings, it would be an excellent innovation if they depreciated the most important part of any business—the quality of the skills of their work force. I hope my hon. Friend understands that the work force is a vital investment. If it has been important in the past, it will become absolutely critical in the future because of the galloping pace of new technology.

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): The Minister is quite right. We have seen growth in Wales during the last six years—growth in long-term unemployment, from 27

per cent. in 1979 to 40 per cent. now. What does the Minister intend to do about it? Do the Government recognise the link between unemployment and health? According to medical research, thousands of people have died unnecessarily because of the Government's policy of creating unemployment. Does the Minister recognise that social factors are also linked to unemployment: that the rise in marital break-ups, in suicides and in child battering are the direct result of the policies of this Government? What does he propose to do about this?

Mr. King: In our assessment of the present position, the greatest areas of concern are clearly the prospects for young people and the long-term unemployed. For that reason, and because of the tragic human problems that accompany unemployment, especially long-term unemployment, the extension of training for young people and the doubling of adult training provision with more help for the long-term unemployed are the two central planks of the measures that I have announced.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): I welcome both White Papers. Does my right hon. Friend agree that they contrast strongly with "Labour's Jobs and Industry Campaign" which would restrict outward investment — although Japan, which has one of the lowest rates of unemployment and one of the most dynamic economies in the world, is now also the world's largest exporter of capital?

Mr. King: I do not wish at this stage to go into the fallacies and paradoxes of that document, which will no doubt engage us at a later date. In this country we live by our trade, which is a vital component in the success and strength of our economy. Our exports are expanding fast and if there is one thing we need like a hole in the head it is import controls.

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): Is the Secretary of State aware that the majority of young people leaving school or coming off the youth training scheme in my constituency still cannot find jobs and will regard with scepticism statements emanating from a Government whose only claim to fame is that for every week in office they have added 1,000 people to the dole queue?

Mr. King: I wonder how much that kind of effort really helps young people in the hon. Gentleman's constituency to find jobs. The hon. Gentleman might have used his breath to better effect in pointing out to them the opportunities that will come from expansion of the youth training scheme and in encouraging as many of them as possible to take those opportunities.

Mr. Tim Yeo (Suffolk, South): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the voluntary sector is keen to play a full part in the drive against unemployment and that any steps that he can take to encourage the participation of voluntary organisations in the expanded community programme will be warmly welcomed?

Mr. King: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend. I referred to that aspect in my speech in the Budget debate. I certainly hope that it will be possible to try some imaginative approaches to ways in which charities and the voluntary sector might be able to co-operate in the community programme in ways not so far possible. I believe that that could be a great help, especially for the long-term unemployed.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that his belated statement on unemployment today, combined with the recent statement of the Minister without Portfolio, Lord UB40, and the Chancellor's Budget statement are clear evidence of the Government's Elastoplast approach to youth unemployment. The net cost of the £1,000 million allocated to these measures in the Budget is only £75 million when dole and supplementary benefit savings are deducted. Is that not clear evidence of the Tory policy of industrial conscription and reduced wages for young people through the YTS, when my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) has correctly pointed out that the allowance should be £38 per week to keep pace with the increase in the retail price index in the past seven years, or £40 per week to keep up with wages?

Finally, in the document on employment issued last week the Secretary of State asserted that young people were pricing themselves out of jobs. Does he not recognise that since the Tories came to office school leavers' wages have fallen relative to adult wages by 8 per cent. for boys and 12 per cent. for girls while youth unemployment has trebled? Where is the connection between wages and allowances for young people and that rocketing rate of unemployment?

Mr. King: The answer to the hon. Gentleman's first question is no, Sir. The answer to his second question is also no, Sir.

Mr. Nellist: That is absolutely pathetic.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): Despite the sniping and carping of the Opposition spokesman on employment, may I say on behalf of my hon. Friends and the country that we welcome my right hon. Friend's announcement as providng real hope for the youth of today? Will he confirm that all careers teachers will be properly trained to encourage young people to go into the youth training scheme and not to regard it as a stigma as the scheme provides real hope for them, in contrast to the Labour party's "gissa job" policy which everyone is expected to pay for and from which no one will benefit in terms of lasting employment?

Mr. King: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his positive approach. The trouble with Labour Members is that they get hung up between claiming that something is really their own policy and taking every opportunity to snipe at developments which in their more rational moments they should agree constitute a major step forward for which many people in the House have called for a long time and which could offer much better prospects for young people and the long-term unemployed.

Mr. Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield): Is it not time that the Secretary of State went back to school and learnt something about the three Rs — rhetoric, reality and resources — and the difference between them? The rhetoric of the White Paper talks of investment in training and coherence in education and training provision but in reality the Government have dismantled the national training system and the industrial training boards, cut back the skillcentres and destroyed the apprenticeship system so that there is now less adult provision and less high quality training for young people than there was in 1979?

[Mr. Barry Sheerman]

Is the right hon. Gentleman further aware that the emerging problem of skill shortages is of the Government's own making and that despite the rhetoric about skills and qualifications for young people the reality is that the Government are preparing young people for low-tech and no-tech jobs with low skills and a low-waged future?

Is the right hon. Gentleman also aware——

Hon. Members: Too long.

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is for me to say things like that.

Mr. Sheerman: The right hon. Gentleman talks about coherent provision, but are not the 16 to 19-year-olds, the A-level and higher education students, also entitled to coherence, or is he intent on reintroducing the 11-plus by the back door so that the GCSE will be the new 11-plus, dividing quality education for some from low-tech, low-skill education for others?

Mr. King: In the kindest possible way, I must tell the hon. Gentleman that that was a most extraordinary collection of comments. As I still had some faith in the hon. Gentleman, I hoped that he might be able, albeit grudgingly, to express on behalf of the Opposition a warm welcome for this measure. I am sorry that he was not able to do so, but I hope that in the fulness of time the merits of my announcements will be recognised.

Mr. Nellist: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. As I understand the procedures of the House, it is usual to apply before lunch for an emergency debate. I seek your guidance on whether it is possible for me to apply now for an emergency debate on youth unemployment in view of the pathetic answers given by the Secretary of State for unemployment and the cavalier way in which he has treated serious criticisms of his statement. The support that the Secretary of State received from Conservative Members for the answers that he has given—people for whom one job and one income is insufficient—and his statement to youngsters on £26·25 a week that they are pricing themselves out of jobs, demand that the House today set aside all other business to discuss fully the statement and the documents which the Secretary of State for Employment has just introduced.

Mr. Speaker: It is not possible for the hon. Gentleman to make a Standing Order No. 10 application today on this matter. The White Paper was published, I think, two or three days ago.

Mr. Nellist: What has that to do with it?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman will have to find other opportunities to seek to debate the matter, which I am sure will occur.

Early-Day Motions

4.20 pm

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wish to raise a point of order on an altogether more esoteric subject than that of the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist). You will have seen on the court page of *The Times* today, at the head of the list of birthdays being celebrated this day, the announcement of the 60th birthday of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn).

Last night I tried to table an early-day motion pointing out the significance of this event, and particularly highlighting the outstanding loyalty and unswerving devotion to the cause of his party and to his Leader that he has evidenced recently. The Clerk refused to accept the early-day motion on the grounds that it was tendered in a spirit of mockery. *[Interruption.]* It was not tendered in a spirit of mockery. I am not suggesting that the Officers of the House should in any way be making a judgment about the right hon. Gentleman's loyalty, but how would it be possible for the whole House to celebrate, as it would wish, this great moment and to express its satisfaction and gratification that this important milestone should have been reached?

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Well, we have a very busy day.

Mr. Nellist: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it not an abuse of procedures of the House that on a day on which a statement has been made purporting to deal with the question of youth unemployment in the country the matter should be so trivialised by that rubbish over there?

Mr. Speaker: It is very nearly Easter.

The reason why the early-day motion of the hon. Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) was declined was that it was tendered in what was judged to be a spirit of mockery and, as the hon. Gentleman knows, that is not part of our conventions. I am sure that he will find other methods of celebrating this great occasion.

Colliery Closures

4.22 pm

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): I hope to bring the House back to some sort of sanity by making a Standing Order No. 10 application.

I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the announced decision of the National Coal Board to close certain collieries in south Wales and elsewhere."

I appreciate that I have first to convince you, Mr. Speaker, that the matter raised is specific, important and urgent, and that you tend to assist Back Benchers with a problem. It is, therefore, with a great deal of optimism that I ask you to grant the application. You are only too well aware of the 13 months of arguments on the colliery closure issue during the miners' strike, and so will know that the matter is undoubtedly specific.

On the issue of importance, again you have heard the multifarious arguments for and against, and so will know the importance of the matter. The fight was not for wages, holidays or any other advantages of that nature, but for jobs and communities, and the importance of the decision by the NCB to close collieries cannot be stressed too strongly.

In my constituency of Ogmore, the colliery suggested for immediate closure is the St. John's colliery in Maesteg. It employs 869 colliers, and is the last pit in the Llynfi valley. If the pit is closed, the male unemployment rate in Maesteg will escalate to some 45 to 50 per cent. It is 24 per cent. already, with a community population of some 24,000.

Another colliery in my constituency which is under close scrutiny and consideration for closure is the Garw colliery in the Garw valley, employing 650 miners. That colliery is the last one in the Garw valley.

I stress the urgency because of my experience when I made an application under Standing Order No. 9, as it then was, regarding the closure of the Wyndham western colliery, which, incidentally, was the last pit in the Ogmore valley. My request was made prior to the Christmas recess and, before the House returned, the colliery was closed on 7 January. This was done without negotiated agreements, agreed procedures and consultations that we are informed should take place. That is similar to what has happened in recent days in the Bedwas colliery in Caerphilly.

Therefore, it is without reservation that I stress the urgency of the need for the House to be afforded time to debate this issue. Knowing the attitude of the NCB chairman—the cuckoo in the nest for the Government—I would not feel safe eating my Easter egg in the short recess with MacGregor let loose with his chopper, and 1,500 jobs in my constituency at risk.

There are a number of other reasons why the matter is urgent, but they have been outlined in previous debates, and the House knows only too well what they are.

The most important matter that I ask you to consider, Mr. Speaker, is that, now the dispute is over, in the interests of the country, the communities and the people whom we here represent, Parliament should debate this to ensure that the NACODS agreement made in October last year, which avoided the escalation of the dispute, is now honoured by the Government. It is for Parliament to debate the issue of escalating unemployment caused by colliery closures. It is for Parliament to debate the plight of communities when the main source of economic survival is taken away.

I make the application for all those reasons, including the closure of Bedwas, St. John's, Garw and 10 others in Wales and many others in Scotland and Yorkshire. I am sure that my right hon. and hon. Friends will explain their regional problems in detail if the application is granted. If one checks the number of jobs at risk, it could well exceed the 70,000 mentioned by MacGregor in March last year.

I ask you, Mr. Speaker, in the interest of the thousands who endured 12 months without wages and who suffered in many other ways in fighting to retain their collieries, their jobs, their dignity and their communities, to grant the application under Standing Order No. 10 for a debate to take place before the House rises for the Easter recess.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he thinks should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the announced decision of the National Coal Board to close certain collieries in south Wales and elsewhere."

I well understand the concern of the hon. Gentleman. He knows that the only decision that I have to take is whether to give the matter precedence over the Orders set down for today or for tomorrow.

I have listened to what he has said, but I regret that I do not consider that the matter that he has raised is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 10 and, therefore, I cannot submit his application to the House.

Mr. Stanley Orme (Salford, East): I do not wish in any way to contradict the decision that you have made, Mr. Speaker. However, in view of the seriousness of the situation, which could deteriorate, there is widespread concern not only about pits in south Wales but about pits in Scotland and in parts of England. If, during the Easter recess, the situation deteriorated, would it be in order for the Opposition to communicate with you about the seriousness of the position?

Mr. Speaker: That would be absolutely in order.

Trade Union Act 1984 (Amendment)

4.29 pm

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to amend the Trade Union Act 1984 to replace contracting out with contracting in to trade unions' political funds.

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): It has stood the test of time.

Mr. Beith: When the House considered the Trade Union Bill a year ago, it failed to deal adequately with one of the features of trade union law that has fallen most into disrepute—the system by which many trade unions are assumed to be willing to pay a political levy to the Labour party unless they take active steps to contract out of that levy. My Bill seeks to put right that omission by making subscription to political funds dependent upon contracting in—*[Interruption]*—so that every trade unionist who contributed to a political fund would be doing so with his own explicit consent. That basic principle seems so eminently reasonable — *[Interruption]* — that anyone unfamiliar with the background to the issue, or, indeed, unfamiliar with the Labour Members who seek to deny me a hearing, would expect it to be accepted in the House without question or dissent. I shall refer to that background in a moment.

My Bill also includes another provision designed to improve the 1984 Act by ensuring that the ballots that are about to take place in the unions on the whole principle of having political funds are counted independently. Several unions already use independent counting facilities for internal elections and ballots, but some do not, and there have been some rare but appalling examples in previous years of interference with ballots. Fresh allegations of that sort have come to light recently in relation to the Transport and General Workers Union and have led my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Meadowcroft) to call for a Trades Union Congress inquiry. It is clearly desirable that the political fund ballots, in which there is much money at stake, should be seen to be independently counted.

The main provisions in my Bill, which concern contracting out of the political levy, are also relevant to the current round of ballots. If my Bill were passed and political funds became genuinely voluntary, the argument for voting no in the ballots would not be so strong. As long as the political levy is a way of exacting involuntary donations for a political party from people who do not support that party, any trade unionist who wants to preserve his right to decide what political use is made of his own money has no alternative but to vote against the political funds. That is what will happen in several unions, and that is why the Labour party is campaigning to save the political funds. The theory is that it will be a softly, softly campaign—unless the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) get in on the act——

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): I have done.

Mr. Beith: There will be no mention of the fact that the real destination of the political funds is the Labour party. If Labour Members supported my Bill, it would be a different story. Many trade unionists who will vote against the present Labour levy might be persuaded to accept that their union could have a political fund if that fund was genuinely voluntary.

Some argue that since it is possible to contract out under the present law and should be easier to do so under the new TUC statement of guidance, the system is really voluntary. If it is, what are Labour Members worried about? The change to contracting in should not make any difference. The figures tell a different story. In two of the largest unions, the TGWU and the National Union of Public Employees, 98 per cent. of members pay the political levy. In the last election just over a quarter of the electorate voted for the Labour party. That makes it unlikely that even half of TGWU members voted for the party to which they are contributing on a supposedly voluntary basis. That 98 per cent. figure has all the ring of a Soviet Union election. What is more, the MORI—"Union World" poll showed that at least half the members of NUPE and TGWU were against having a political fund at all.

It is obvious that the practical obstacles to opting out and the fear of being singled out in the branch or workplace lead to far more people paying the levy than would choose to do so. On the question of principle, as the Government's 1983 White Paper put it:

"It is objectionable in principle that anyone should have to indicate his dissent from the political alignment of his union to avoid contributing to political activities or to a political party to which he is opposed."

The Government have not followed through that logic.

I believe that my proposal will be widely supported by members of trade unions because it is part of the process of getting the unions back under the members' control. It will help to focus the attention of trade union leaders on the need to put the case on behalf of their members to politicians of all parties instead of concentrating on affiliating Labour party conference votes by the million and writing the cheques for Labour's election campaign.

However, there are also good reasons why a thoughtful Labour supporter should support my Bill. There have been a few within the Labour party who have questioned the desirability of the financial hold that the unions have over their party, and who have questioned the ability of trade union leaders to wield votes by the million at Labour party conferences. Labour Members might also reflect that with truly voluntary funds at least some union money might come their way, whereas under the present arrangements it is all or nothing. I think that many union members would vote not to have the funds at all.

Perhaps most interesting of all will be the attitude of Conservative Members to my Bill. During the passage of the 1984 Bill, just over 40 of their number stood firm and voted for the voluntary principle of contracting in. However, Ministers trooped through the Lobby with the Labour party to hang on to the contracting out system that they had so long criticised. Why? There are two reasons, which are well summarised in *The Guardian*:

"The Conservatives . . . are playing a cool and surprisingly 'clever clever' game. Their aim is to weaken Labour but not to destroy it. For destroying Labour would turn the Alliance into the main party opposition."

The other reason that is advanced is that

"the Conservatives do not want to draw attention to their own, equally undemocratic source of finance—company cheques doled out at the whim of company chairmen and company boards, (No question of shareholders' ballots . . .)."

On the second issue, that of company donations, the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) could help us. I do not see why we could not work as a partnership.

He has before the House a Bill designed to regulate company donations to political parties. I am happy to support his Bill and I believe that he should be happy to support mine. They would work together. It is a good pair of measures. The hon. Gentleman should do that instead of opposing my Bill.

However, when it comes to the desire of some Conservatives to protect, feather-bed and prop up the Labour party, there can be no doubt that that was the motive that led Ministers to oppose their Conservative colleagues and join Labour in the Lobby. What they are thinking is: better the devil they know, and know cannot win, than the devil they really fear can beat them. *[Interruption.]* Labour Members can laugh, but the same feeling underlies today's announcement that six Conservative and five Labour peers and one alliance peer are to be appointed. It is the same thing. Conservatives are saying, "For heaven's sake, help poor Neil out and prop up the Labour party a little longer".

I invite Conservatives to put aside those considerations and vote for what they believe—that union political contributions should be on a genuinely voluntary basis. Those who join us in the Lobby to support that principle will be supporting the best interests of trade unions and the health of British politics. Those who oppose us will be those who want to freeze British politics in the pattern of half a century ago, without regard to the wishes of the people.

4.38 pm

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Does the hon. Gentleman wish to oppose the Bill?

Mr. Fatchett: Yes.

The speech that we have just heard from the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) will rate high in terms of hypocrisy. When one looks at Social Democratic party members, one sees people who have accepted donations from political trade union funds. Now they seek to move in an alternative direction. Later I shall refer to the attempts of the Liberal party to seek funds from trade unions. I should like to hear their reaction to that.

The hon. Gentleman's proposition depends on two arguments. First, the argument goes that trade unionists are not allowed to opt out of paying the political levy. The hon. Gentleman said that it was involuntary; he said that there is a compulsory political levy. I wonder how far one can stretch reality. The truth is that over 2 million trade unionists opt out of paying the political levy. Therefore, those who opt out of paying the political levy are no secret society. They are no exclusive group of people. They are widely advertised. Let us look at the evidence—*[Interruption.]* Alliance Members do not agree with democracy because they are not prepared to listen to the debate. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] If the public saw this display, they would realise why certain people left the Labour party. We do not tolerate such tactics.

The argument about people not having the right to opt out has been considered on several occasions. For example, the Donovan Commission in the 1960s, the most thorough piece of research into industrial relations, came up with the conclusion that there was no evidence that people were forced to pay the political levy if they did not want to. At that stage only 1 million were opting out; now the figure is more than 2 million.

We have had many occasions such as this when people have come forward with this argument and one innuendo and one smear after another, but no concrete evidence. I challenge the hon. Gentleman to bring concrete evidence. In front of the Employment Select Committee two years ago, the director general of the Engineering Employers' Federation, Dr. James McFarlane—not, I suspect, a supporter of the Labour party—said that he would provide the Select Committee with evidence. When he was challenged on the point, he replied that he had

"Not anything that I think you would recognise as evidence".

I think that what we have heard from the hon. Gentleman in his speech this afternoon is exactly the same—not anything that could be called evidence. It is typical of the Members of the alliance that they run a smear a day without providing any policy or any information.

As the first proposition falls, so does the second. The hon. Gentleman says that more people pay the political levy than vote Labour. We recognise that fact. We also recognise the fact that according to the latest opinion polls more than half the trade unionists intend to vote Labour at the next election. But we recognise too—and it is about time that the alliance did so—that political funds are not used just for affiliation to the Labour party; they are also used for political campaigning by trade unionists. If the hon. Gentleman had quoted other figures from the MORI poll he would have seen that the overwhelming majority of trade unionists support the right of the trade union to organise political campaigns. The hon. Gentleman wants to stop that happening.

The hon. Gentleman made a passing reference to the £3 million a year that the Conservative party receives in company political donations—without a ballot and without the shareholders having the right to opt out. He then very kindly referred to my own Bill and said that we could form a partnership, and that he was prepared to support my Bill. May I let the House into a secret before we do the deal? When I introduced the Bill on a Friday in February I looked around and did not see one member of the alliance in the Chamber. That is the sort of support that I would get from them. When it comes to voting against company donations to the Tory party and some donations that members of the alliance may want to benefit from, they are not here. They were not here on that occasion. So the evidence suggests that we have a one-sided case from the Liberals.

I want to refer again to the Liberals' attempts to get money from trade union organisations. I am lucky enough to have a letter in my possession addressed to the general secretary of the Post Office Engineering Union. It is dated 13 June 1969—*[Interruption.]* Members of the alliance might want to listen to this. It was written by the then Member of Parliament for Cornwall, North, Mr. John Pardoe, and it still has relevance, because the leader of the Liberal party was a member of the parliamentary Liberal party at that stage and presumably supported the sending of this letter, from which I shall quote one or two sections:

"The time has come to resurrect those links which bound many of the early Trade Unionists to the Liberal party so that we can work more closely together."

The letter then goes on to say—and this is certainly true if this afternoon's performance is anything to go by:

"I have to admit that many Liberals are deplorably ignorant of the workings of the Trades Union Movement . . . This ignorance is largely a result of the lack of a full-time Industrial Relations Officer within the Party organisation. This in its turn

[Mr. Fatchett]

has been due to lack of cash and I should like to suggest that your Union might contribute to the cost of a Trade Union Liaison Department at Liberal Party Headquarters."

It is interesting, is it not, that in 1969 the begging bowl was going round to trade unions? I suspect that if the Liberals could get a penny in the begging bowl now this Bill would not be here. The reality is that trade unions have rejected the Liberal party, although companies may support it as an alternative capitalist party.

We have had from the alliance this afternoon a typical exhibition of an excess of hypocrisy and opportunism. By contrast, the letter shows a lack of consistent principle. A party that can beg the unions for money at one stage and then try to cut off contributions at another is not worth further consideration, and I hope that the House will reject the Bill.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 68, Noes 139.

Division No. 161] **[4.45 pm**

AYES

Aspinwall, Jack
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beith, A. J.
Bendall, Vivian
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Body, Richard
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Bruce, Malcolm
Buck, Sir Antony
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Cockeram, Eric
Conway, Derek
Cormack, Patrick
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Farr, Sir John
Forth, Eric
Fry, Peter
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gorst, John
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hancock, Mr. Michael
Harvey, Robert
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
Johnston, Russell
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(W Herts)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfedder, James A.
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Gregory *(Derby N)*
Knight, Mrs Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Lilley, Peter
McCusker, Harold
Maclennan, Robert
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Osborn, Sir John
Penhaligon, David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Spence, John
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Wainwright, R.
Walden, George
Wallace, James
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wilson, Gordon
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John Cartwright and
Mr. Archy Kirkwood.

NOES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashton, Joe
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Benn, Tony
Bidwell, Sydney
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cowans, Harry
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunningham, Dr John
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dixon, Donald
Dormand, Jack
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Garrett, W. E.
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Central Fife)*
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hume, John
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
Mackenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Michie, William
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, M.
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'kl'ds E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
Williams, Rt Hon A.

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. David Winnick.

Question accordingly negatived.

Orders of the Day

Interception of Communications Bill

Considered in Committee [Progress 2 April].

[MR. ERNEST ARMSTRONG *in the Chair*]

Clause 7

THE TRIBUNAL

4.55 pm

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): I beg to move amendment No. 66, in page 5, line 43, leave out 'Prime Minister' and insert 'Select Committee'.

The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means: With this it will be convenient to discuss the following amendments:

No. 80, in clause 8, page 6, line 38, leave out 'Prime Minister' and insert 'Select Committee'.

No. 95, in clause 8, page 7, line 25, leave out 'Prime Minister' and insert 'Select Committee'.

No. 98, in clause 8, page 7, line 28, leave out 'Prime Minister' and insert 'Select Committee'.

No. 102, in clause 8, page 7, line 31, leave out 'Prime Minister' and insert 'Select Committee'.

No. 78, in clause 8, page 7, line 34, leave out 'Prime Minister' and insert 'Select Committee'.

No. 105, in clause 8, page 7, line 38, leave out 'Prime Minister' and insert 'Select Committee'.

No. 115, in clause 10, page 9, line 17, at end insert—

'"the Select Committee" means a Select Committee of the House of Commons appointed to keep under review the matters referred to in sections 1 to 6 of this Act.'.

Mr. Kaufman: I apologise because after I have spoken I shall have to absent myself from the debate for a short time. I do not intend to be discourteous to the Committee.

The amendments are aimed at giving Parliament a role in the supervision of security services activities. Under the Bill the tribunal will report to the Prime Minister when it discovers a contravention of the rules. The commissioner will be appointed by the Prime Minister and will report to the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister will have to lay before Parliament the commissioner's annual reports, but the Prime Minister will be able to censor those reports on what he or she regards as national security grounds. The Prime Minister is required to consult the commissioner about such decisions, but in the end that decision is the Prime Minister's responsibility.

The commissioner will be the Prime Minister's placeman. I do not mean that he will be a discreditable person, but he will owe his appointment to the Prime Minister alone. Under clause 8(2) the Prime Minister will be able to remove him from office and he will be paid according to a Treasury decision, probably on the Prime Minister's instructions. That is not a proper position in which to place someone whose function is to pass judgment on the activities of the Prime Minister and Ministers and the agencies that they control.

The discretion to allow interception under the Bill is already much wider than we should like it to be. The commissioner's role is to review the system of authorised interception, which we believe to be too constrictive a role for him.

Even with the best will in the world the Bill will create a system which at best will be cosy and at worst collusive. Recent events, in particular the disgraceful absurdity of the recent inquiry by Lord Bridge, show how easy it is to conduct a cover-up and how tempting it is for those without knowledge of what has taken place to suspect a cover-up. The only way in which hon. Members can seek to deal with this problem is by ending the possibility of a cover-up. That means ending the system in which the Prime Minister appoints the person whose role and purpose are to ensure that the Prime Minister and his or her colleagues behave properly in one of the most dangerous areas of activity in terms of civil liberties—one of the areas where, as the *Sunday Telegraph* has indicated, the Government are most in danger of going down the road that ends in the police state.

5 pm

It is important that the special branch and MI5 know that not just Ministers are watching what they do—although that fear must have been eased by the Home Secretary's recent quickie investigation into their alleged misdemeanours from which they emerged, to universal astonishment, with a clean bill of health—but that a person appointed by Parliament has a right to examine their activities. Ministers may say that a Select Committee is too leaky or too irresponsible to be trusted with material involving national security. If leakiness is a disqualification from having access to security material, that would rule out the whole of the present Administration which has turned Cabinet government into government by sieve.

What is more, the security services leak, sometimes to the Government's advantage or to their own advantage; sometimes to their own disadvantage, as in the case of the allegations by Cathy Massiter. If the commissioner was seen to be independent of the Government and not required to report to the Government, it is possible that disaffected members of the security forces might feel that it would be worth while to bring their misgivings to the commissioner rather than to take them to the press or television. That might even lead to an improvement in security.

We are entrusting a Select Committee with matters involving national security. That has been done before. The Secretary of State for Defence recently revealed those fabulous Belgrano "crown jewels", which we were told were matters of the greatest secrecy, to members of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee. Even after that, the nation still survives.

This law is being made by Parliament. Surely the House of Commons has sufficient confidence in itself to feel that it can appoint from among its Members persons who can be entrusted with security matters. Perhaps the Select Committee will comprise only Privy Councillors, but that will be a matter for hon. Members to decide if these amendments are inserted in the Bill.

There are widespread misgivings that the security services, or at any rate elements within the security services, are out of control. If that were so, knowledge that a check on their activities could be conducted—in one sphere at any rate—by an independent person appointed by Parliament might have a healthy effect. Security has become a game played by a self-selected team. We believe that there should be an independent referee who should be

[Mr. Kaufman]

a servant of Parliament, not a nominee of the Government of the day. As Lord Denning has firmly pointed out, the national interest is not synonymous with the interest of the Government. There is no better or more appropriate guardian of the national interest than the House of Commons.

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): I support the amendments. The kernel of the argument is whether the ultimate arbiter—the body that appoints the tribunal and the commissioner and is the final court of appeal in security matters — should be the Prime Minister or a Select Committee.

One of my constituents who has achieved a certain amount of prominence in recent months is Mr. Clive Ponting. When the prosecution of Mr. Ponting began—it was announced last year—he noticed that his mail was being opened. I have in my hand an envelope that contained a simple, ordinary bank statement which was sent to my constituent by his bank. It took about six days to reach him. The envelope had obviously been opened clumsily and re-sealed. Mr. Ponting noticed later that, over the succeeding months, and even while his trial was proceeding, his mail was being treated similarly. He was extremely concerned about that. As his Member of Parliament, I am extremely concerned about it.

To whom does Mr. Ponting turn if he wishes to complain about interception of his mail, which cannot conceivably be justified even when the prosecution is proceeding, on any grounds of national interest or national security? To whom ultimately does he turn to complain, to identify what has been happening and who or what authorised that action? To whom does he turn to have the matter resolved?

In the Bill, the final court of appeal is the Prime Minister; but it was ultimately the Prime Minister, as head of the Government, who was bringing the prosecution against my constituent.

Mr. Eldon Griffiths (Bury St. Edmunds): Before the hon. Gentleman went into the generality of his argument, he started with a specific matter. The hon. Gentleman suggested that he had in his hand an example of an unauthorised interception. Will he give hon. Members a little more detail, because I am sure that he would not wish an unfounded allegation to be put abroad without sustaining it? Has the hon. Gentleman checked with the Post Office? Does he have reason to believe that that envelope had been improperly opened by the security services or by the police? What is the hon. Gentleman's evidence?

Mr. Smith: It is not the place of the House of Commons to act as the jury in a criminal trial. The evidence is in my hand. It is an envelope which has been handed to me by my constituent. He has checked with the bank which sent it. The bank did not open or re-seal the envelope. When the envelope arrived at his house, it had clearly been opened and re-sealed during transit from the bank. In his view, that is precisely what happened.

The point that I am endeavouring to make is not necessarily that this allegation about the opening of my constituent's mail is true or untrue. On the evidence, it appears to me that he has a good case in making that complaint. My point concerns how, if he believes that this has happened, he pursues the matter and attempts to arrive at the truth and ensure that the truth is identified and properly dealt with.

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): As I understand it, my hon. Friend is saying that this is one of a number of examples where the mail was late, the evidence suggested that it had been opened and the people who had sent it said that it had not been opened and re-sealed before being sent. Is not the essence of my hon. Friend's case his desire for something like a Select Committee to examine such cases, because hon. Members must satisfy themselves that such allegations are either substantiated or not substantiated? This cannot be done in any other way, and that is the point that is being put to hon. Members. The case put forward by my hon. Friend is an example.

Mr. Smith: My hon. Friend has gone to the heart of the argument. I am not necessarily saying that a Select Committee must examine the envelope, contact the bank, interview my constituent and talk to the Post Office. That is up to the tribunal and the commissioner. I am asking this question: to whom are the tribunal and the commissioner ultimately responsible?

If my constituent is facing prosecution by the Government, the head of which is the Prime Minister, he can surely have little confidence in an appeals procedure to seek redress if the ultimate court of appeal, the person responsible for appointing, dismissing, controlling and monitoring the activities of the tribunal and the commissioner that are supposed to oversee the activities of the security services, is the self same head of Government who is bringing the prosecution.

It is that which concerns me, and which should concern this House and make it wish to place some parliamentary rather than Executive scrutiny and control over the activities of the security services. I am expressing the concern of one of my constituents. It may happen to many other people throughout the country. There is a particular concern in this specific instance. I ask the House to consider carefully the point of principle of who should be the ultimate arbiter in such cases and in matters of control of the security services.

Mr. Eldon Griffiths: I had not intended to intervene in the debate, but the speeches of the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) and the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) require one or two comments.

I do not complain that a constituent of the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury brought a matter to him and that he felt it right to raise it in the House. To my certain knowledge, during the past year there has been a considerable number of allegations of mail being tampered with and they have been most carefully examined by the chairman of the Post Office. He discovered a number of cases where machines had malfunctioned resulting in tampering with mail. He sent his apologies to those concerned. Indeed, there were a number of cases where, for one reason or another, the Post Office had slipped up.

I am not sure that that is the explanation for the case mentioned by the hon. Gentleman. I would have thought that his first duty to his constituents, the Post Office and those who serve us in the police and security forces would have been to check with the Post Office to ascertain exactly what had happened, rather than raise the matter in the House in a fashion that implies that there was some

improper, unauthorised and illegal action by members of the police or security services who have had no opportunity to reply to an implied allegation made without names or times. It is not a fair procedure in the House to make such a generalised allegation without first having ascertained the facts from the Post Office.

Mr. Soley: Surely that is precisely why we need a Select Committee. It is why so many other countries in the Western world have such a system. It enables the Committee not to investigate particular cases but to look into the general allegations so that it can satisfy the public. That is what democratic forums are for; that is why so many other countries in the Western world do it; and that is what makes us such an oddity.

Mr. Griffiths: I have enough regard for the hon. Gentleman to know that he can do much better than that. He has become hoist on a particular and rather absurd petard. I shall come in a moment to the question whether there should be a parliamentary Committee to oversee this action of a prerogative. I have said what I have said about the allegation of the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury. I am entitled to comment on behalf of those who, at least implicitly, it is suggested have behaved improperly, without any evidence that the Post Office had first been asked to explain exactly what happened to the envelope.

5.15 pm

I and other hon. Members have, from time to time, debated these matters with the right hon. Member for Gorton. He put his arguments with his usual felicity and force. I do not agree with them. He suggested that the special branch is, in some strange way, wholly unaccountable. I remind the House that every special branch police officer is an ordinary police officer under the law. He may have particular functions, but he is just as much subject as any uniformed or detective officer, first and foremost, to the police discipline code; secondly, to the independent police complaints authority, which has been put in place by the recent Police and Criminal Evidence Act; thirdly, to the criminal law, as he must and should be; fourthly, to his chief officer and, through him, to his police authority; and, finally, to the oversight of the Chief Inspector of Constabulary. It is important that the House should recognise that the special branch is not some strange national Gestapo: it is a number of individual officers who are as responsible as any other constables to their individual chief officers and their police authorities. It is unfair to suggest in this House, and especially from the Front Bench, that there is a strange and unaccountable force within our midst. That is simply not the case.

I found myself in agreement with the hon. Gentleman yesterday when he said that there was a problem of parliamentarians versus the bureaucrats. He opposed an amendment tabled by one of my hon. Friends because he did not want the Home Secretary's powers put in commission either to a body of judges or to a body of Privy Councillors. I share his objections.

Yet today, the right hon. Gentleman virtually supported in respect of the Prime Minister the very things that he had been against in respect of the Home Secretary's conduct of his office. He cannot have it both ways. Either the Opposition think that it would be wrong to put the Home Secretary in commission or they now take another view that the Prime Minister's functions should be put in commission by a privy council group or—although this has not been proposed—by a group of judges. There is an inherent inconsistency in the Opposition's policy.

Prime Ministers, whatever their party, ultimately have to take responsibility for the conduct of the Government. Parliamentary accountability is in this House. It is not simply the accountability that takes place when there are votes on issues of confidence. We all know that Ministers of the Crown, of any party, must live with this House all the time. If they cause offence to the House as a whole on one matter, the House will get back at them on some other matter. That is where there is a real accountability. Ministers have to live in Parliament and are Members of Parliament. Their real accountability arises not merely from the statute but from their existence here as Members of Parliament.

It is impracticable, unconstitutional and certainly unnecessary to seek to remove from the Prime Minister the responsibility either of the appointment or of the oversight of the activities of the commissioner. The commissioner is a new invention. If I am not mistaken, his arrival on the scene is an example of the Government and the Home Secretary going further than the European Court actually requires. It is an attempt by the Home Secretary to reach out towards the objections that have been made from the Opposition on the matter of civil liberties, in the belief that he will be providing a greater degree of surveillance, oversight, monitoring and accountability of the activities of the security services.

Far from it being a matter which is hidden or disguised, the fact that the Prime Minister, as head of the Government, is brought in to select, appoint and be responsible for the activities of the commissioner is a demonstration of how seriously the Government are taking the matter. I hope therefore that the amendment will not be accepted.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): This group of amendments alerts hon. Members to the desirability of involving a Select Committee in the process of scrutiny, not just at the point mentioned in amendment No. 66 but at the points in the Bill referred to in other amendments in the group. We have an opportunity, therefore, to consider the necessity to involve a Select Committee in the Scrutiny of the activities and organisations to which the Bill relates.

It is a course of action which the Prime Minister has strongly resisted—in many respects, though not entirely, because she has volunteered to the House statements on a number of security matters. The problem is that some of those statements have subsequently turned out to be based on incorrect advice given to the right hon. Lady. That is a reminder that relying on the occasional prime ministerial statement as the main basis for parliamentary scrutiny of the activities with which we are concerned is not adequate.

The present Prime Minister, above all, should be the first to recognise the need to introduce some parliamentary scrutiny into these affairs, because she has been the victim, as it were, of security matters which have not been her direct responsibility. Some of them arose long before she came to office. Nevertheless, she has been given prepared statements to make to the House and has subsequently had to modify them. She may yet have to modify others—for example, those relating to the Hollis case.

[Mr. A. J. Beith]

There are broader reasons why we need to consider a Select Committee as a place of recourse for the tribunal, the commissioner and others who may be involved in these matters. The most obvious reason for having such a body is to build greater public confidence in the security services. We would not be passing this legislation if the European Court had not pulled up this country for its lack of legislation in this sphere. Equally, hon. Members would not be supporting the broad principles of the Bill were we not convinced that circumstances exist when an unwelcome activity such as the interception of communications must be carried out.

It is accepted that those who do that job undertake it on behalf of the country, to protect us from serious crime, such as terrorism, and to meet the criteria set out in the Bill. If they are to do that job properly, there must be greater public confidence that they are not engaged in activities that go far beyond those purposes.

Some of the machinery in the Bill will assist in creating that confidence, but if, at the end of the day, the various bodies involved do no more than report to the Prime Minister, so contributing to an annual report to the House, public anxiety will not be allayed and confidence will not be sufficiently built up, for the public rightly expect this House to take a closer interest in these matters.

I am speaking not of a day-to-day, looking-over-the-shoulder approach to individuals who carry out the tasks involved. That would be inconsistent with their carrying out those activities properly. This House should at least be involved in considering in some detail what criteria are being followed, how the work is being organised, who is doing it and what has happened when abuses have been alleged.

Another reason why the reporting procedure should go wider than the Prime Minister and involve a Select Committee is that effective scrutiny is more likely to occur if the Prime Minister and those Ministers involved, such as the Home Secretary, are under pressure and subject to scrutiny by the House, rather than being able to avoid that scrutiny by not having to answer parliamentary questions on these issues, having to appear before Select Committees or having their officials appear before Select Committees.

It is noticeable, looking back at the record, that, in their busy lives, Ministers give more attention to issues on which they are under pressure and subject to scrutiny than to those from which they are freed from that scrutiny. I am supported in that view by a former Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan), who, in a previous debate on this subject, conceded from his experience that, by and large, when Select Committees are pursuing matters, their inquiries often take priority with Ministers over other matters which are assumed to be going satisfactorily and on which those pressures are not exerted. We would have more effective scrutiny of the security services if there were some supervision by Parliament.

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): Bearing in mind the record of some Select Committees in relation to leaks, does the hon. Gentleman consider that the facilities and procedures are clearly enough established to allow delicate security matters to be aired before a Select Committee without the risk of those matters being leaked to the national press?

Mr. Beith: The hon. Gentleman may have been present when we debated matters being referred to the Privileges Committee. He will recall that I hinted at precisely the point that he raises when I spoke on that occasion.

That said, it must be agreed that there is a world of difference between those considerations which prompted someone, rather dishonourably, to leak in advance certain proposals that were being considered in that Committee, and the considerations that arise when hon. Members are under a clear injunction to respect the security nature of certain matters. The record of the House is good when secure and delicate matters are involved. If the hon. Gentleman consults the record, he will find that the arguments on the sort of issues which he has in mind concern the premature disclosure of matters which, perhaps, could be politically embarrassing.

That must be borne in mind when considering the type of Select Committee we would have. The level of seniority —whether Privy Councillors should comprise the whole membership—and similar relevant questions would need to be resolved when considering the nature of the machinery. I have confidence in the ability of the House to arrange such matters.

Sir Edward Gardner (Fylde): Will the hon. Gentleman agree, from the experience of the affairs of the Home Affairs Select Committee being leaked, and the experience of the Committee of Privileges having its report on the leak of the Home Affairs Select Committee leaked, and the number of leaks that have come from the Home Affairs Select Committee since then, that what is happening is in the nature not of a leak but of a burst pipe?

Mr. Beith: As the Chairman of the Home Affairs Select Committee, the hon. and learned Gentleman must put his own house in order. I took part with him in debating that issue.

I could not have expressed myself sufficiently clearly in what I said. I explained that, however much I deplored breaches of confidentiality—I supported the hon. and learned Gentleman and voted with him for the reference of that leak to the Committee of Privileges—there was a difference between leaks which arose when someone was taking political advantage of the opportunity to disclose something prematurely, perhaps hoping to influence the outcome of the Committee's deliberations, and circumstances when people were aware that to disclose something would severely harm the interests of the nation and carrying out the work that the Committee was overseeing. There is a clear difference in such circumstances and hon. Members would need to look much harder to find evidence of matters going wrong on that front.

Mr. John McWilliam (Blaydon): Is the hon. Gentleman aware that every week the Government deliberately leak, at unattributable meetings which are alleged never to have taken place, large chunks of information which otherwise would be official secrets?

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. If that intervention were pursued, we should be getting right away from the subject of the amendment.

Mr. Beith: I was adducing reasons why the involvement of a Select Committee is important. If hon. Members say that the Select Committee system is incapable of examining any area of government in which disclosure would harm the interests of Government, we might as well abandon the Select Committee system and a great deal else that goes on here. We might as well, at the same time, dismiss many Ministers who, for a variety of reasons, disclose information, when, if their civil servants did it, they might find themselves following Mr. Ponting into the Old Bailey.

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): And out again.

5.30 pm

Mr. Beith: We should have confidence in the House, and in its ability to recognise that we are capable of handling in an appropriate way matters which require that degree of security. We are at least as capable of doing so as Government Departments, Ministers or, indeed, the organisations that carry out these activities. Those organisations are not immune to leaks when a particular policy is being pursued, or resisted from within.

I said that public confidence required the involvement of a Committee of the House, and that effective scrutiny was required. The third reason is that those who work within the security services on intercepting communications, on organising rather than carrying out intercepts, are placed in a difficult position if they are asked to do tasks which they consider fall outside the proper terms of reference of their work. That is another reason why it is necessary for the House, rather than the Executive, to be the ultimate recourse.

The commissioner, the tribunal or any of the other bodies referred to in the Bill should have recourse to the House. It is not good enough to say, as the Home Secretary has said at least once, that those who are engaged in this work and asked to carry out tasks that they think are wrong and outside their terms of reference have only to refer upwards within their organisation or to the head of their organisation to be satisfied, to clear up the position and to have the matter properly settled.

The Home Secretary must know how contentious the record is of a previous head of one of the organisations involved. He must know that it was impossible for those who suspected that previous head to go to him to raise their fears. Whether or not those fears were justified, the Home Secretary must know that the area of doubt is sufficient for there to be a great many people ranged on either side of the argument. In those circumstances, it was impossible for certain people to go to the head of the organisation and say, "I lay my cards on the table. I think that I am being asked to do this for the wrong reasons, and that the information will be used in the wrong way. What shall I do?" The proposition is ludicrous, which is why there must be some recourse outside the service. The ultimate recourse should be to the House, not the Executive.

The Government must realise that it is in their interests and those of the country that if people within the services find themselves dragged into activities which they believe to be wrong they have the means to speak out clearly without recourse to the media. Television must not be the only way to challenge a practice which otherwise seems to be accepted by immediate superiors. The confidence of having a road to follow, at the end of which lies, not the head of the Executive or the head of Government, but the House of Commons, would improve morale in the security services, make it easier for them to do their job properly and enhance confidence in the services. The Home Secretary surely does not assume that morale in the services has been unaffected or unharmed by some of the problems that have arisen in recent years, let alone recent months, as some of his hon. Friends seek to do. The matter must be put right.

Mr. Steve Norris (Oxford, East): Those of us who were present yesterday will recall that the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) rejected the hon. Gentleman's line. The hon. and learned Gentleman supported the thoughts propounded by my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) and my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Fylde (Sir E. Gardner). They suggested that, while the point about accountability was entirely understandable, a Select Committee was not the appropriate mechanism. Would the hon. Gentleman agree to contemplate one of my alternatives, which is a committee of Privy Councillors specifically chosen to allow for accountability, and at the same time the removal of such persons from the day-to-day hurly-burly of political life?

Mr. Beith: My hon. and learned Friend was addressing a different part of the Bill. He talked about a committee of Privy Councillors without excluding hon. Members who are Privy Councillors from that committee. Clearly there are many different devices by which we can ensure that scrutiny is not confined to the head of the Executive. That is the key objective. There must be some recourse which does not simply involve the head of the service, a commissioner or a tribunal, depending on which part of the Bill we are talking about, going directly back to the head of the Executive, and only an annual report to Parliament as the means of going beyond that.

That is a key issue. It arises under this Bill and will arise again as we consider wider aspects of the work of the security services. Now is a good time for the Government to address themselves to the problem. The Bill is particularly appropriate to it. I hope that they will go further than they have gone so far in recognising the genuine need that I have set out.

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): I had not intended to intervene in this part of the debate, until I listened to the speech of the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith). He put his finger on the central weakness of the Bill, which is that there is no mechanism, outside the internal security services and the Executive, for parliamentary or extra-territorial control of the security services in relation to the interception of communications.

I was especially interested in the hon. Gentleman's brief references to the Hollis case, which, historically speaking, are the most illustrative episodes. They suggest some form of mechanism, perhaps not quite along the lines suggested by the hon. Gentleman, but along the lines of new clause 3, which will be debated shortly. In view of his suggestions, it is right at this stage to look at the history, without revealing deep secrets, to highlight the grave difficulties which the security services got into in the past and could get into in future if there is not some form of parliamentary control outside the Executive and the security services.

It is well known to those who have read recently published books on the subject that in the mid-1960s it was

[Mr. Jonathan Aitken]

common ground among the heads of the security services that MI5 had been deeply penetrated and that there were Soviet moles at large who could seriously be compromising the whole of Western intelligence. It was identified at an early stage that both Philby and Blunt were responsible for much of that penetration, but the fear continued that there was a bigger mole at large.

In 1963 a break came, largely because of the interception of communications, and the hunt for the super mole was narrowed down to one of four people. Extraordinarily enough, the hunt was reduced to either the director-general of the security services, Sir Roger Hollis, or his deputy, Mr. Graham Mitchell. I stress that there is nothing new in what I am saying, in case anyone thinks that I am making some sensational revelation.

The head of the division, who was in charge of the whole operation, naturally wished to bring the matter to whatever level seemed appropriate to get to the heart of the penetration. What could he do? We now come to the kernel of what was wrong then, and is wrong today. There was nowhere for him and his colleagues to go outside his service. They were pejoratively referred to as "the young Turks", which is a most gratuitous label in view of the deeply patriotic and serious professional counter-intelligence work that they have done. The head of the division responsible went outside the service, to the head of M16, to ask for guidance.

The head of M16 answered, "It cannot be Roger, and therefore you must ask his permission to investigate the deputy director-general of security services." There then followed a somewhat bizarre dinner at the Travellers' Club, at which the head of the anti-Soviet division discussed counter-penetration with the director-general of the security services and the possibility of investigating the deputy director-general of the security services.

By that stage, it was clear how incestuous the operation was becoming. There was no ombudsman, parliamentary Select Committee, independent oversight or court of appeal to whom a genuine and sincere whistle-blower—albeit an internal whistle blower—could go. There lay a fundamental weakness, because one of the suspects then had to insist that an investigation take place on the other suspect. There was then a massive investigation. It was well documented by journalists and others. It is illustrative that that investigation involved methods which we are reassured by my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary and by the Bill could not take place today.

I do not always find myself in complete agreement with the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), especially when he clashes in the House of Commons with my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary. There was a most revealing exchange yesterday when my right hon. and learned Friend rebuked the right hon. Gentleman for suggesting that surveillance and investigation of communications were two completely different things. My right hon. and learned Friend said:

> "There is the world of difference between listening to somebody on the telephone, which is essentially what interception is about, and surveillance. The right hon. Gentleman has just said that under the cloak of surveillance people's telephone conversations can be listened to. That simply is not true."—[*Official Report*, 2 April, 1985; Vol. 76. c. 1121.]

I was pleased to hear that reassurance given in 1985. In the middle of the 1960s, it would not have been followed. To carry out the investigation into the deputy director-general of the security services, Mr. Mitchell, all kinds of surveillance techniques were used to listen to telephone conversations, without ministerial warrants or knowledge, and with a complete abandonment of the rules which we hope are carefully observed today. I hope that before the Bill reaches the statute book all those responsible for today's arrangements will look back to the breaches in 1963, or thereabouts, to ensure that such an evasion of the ground rules and regulations cannot take place today.

Mr. Eldon Griffiths: How does my hon. Friend know that no warrant was issued for the tapping of the deputy's telephone?

The First Deputy-Chairman: Order. I have been listening carefully to the hon. Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken). We are discussing a narrow series of amendments about accountability, and I hope that he will bring himself to the amendment directly.

Mr. Aitken: I shall not wander any further, Mr. Armstrong, nor detain the Committee for much longer. Some form of parliamentary control or court of appeal—be it a parliamentary commissioner or ombudsman of the type suggested in new clause 3 or a Select Committee of the type suggested in the amendments—is crucial.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Mr. Griffiths) asked how I know that no warrant was issued. I believe it, on good authority, to be the truth. The records are there to be inspected. The security services have put their house in much better order today than was perhaps true in 1963.

I finally illustrate the need for some form of parliamentary control, as opposed to leaving the executive in control, by adding a postscript to the Hollis story. The deep discontent over the findings, or, to be more precise, the non-findings, of the various committees, researches and investigations remains unresolved.

There was a remarkable episode when, suddenly, I believe in approximately 1970, the then director-general of the security services terminated, without the agreement of his colleagues, all investigations and all further chasing of leads into penetration at that high level. At least one member of what was called the fluency committee—another highly patriotic and deeply dedicated counter-intelligence officer, Mr. Stephen de Mowbray—was so distressed that he sought to get through to a higher level. He was able to do so by a most remarkable effort—by knocking on the door of No. 10 Downing street and demanding to see the Prime Minister. At first he was refused, but, as a result of an old college connection with a private secretary at No. 10 Downing street—again, only the incestuous old boy network made some of these secret approaches outside the service possible—he was able to see the secretary to the Cabinet. Another inquiry under Sir Burke Trend was set up. The results of that inquiry would, by parliamentary commissioner or Select Committee standards, be unsatisfactory because of the methods used, and because the results given to some of those involved, and to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister much later, were completely different.

5.45 pm

Mr. Beith: Is not what the hon. Gentleman saying directed to the substance of the amendments? What

happened at the end of the day—if it is the end of the day, and it may not be—was that the Prime Minister made a statement to the House, with some aspects of which Lord Trend seems to have disagreed. In particular, he disagreed with the chronology of the events. If the matter had been brought before a Select Committee or some other scrutiny body it would have been possible to pose some questions on that point. The idea that a once-and-for-all statement can deal with such a scrutiny problem is effectively torpedoed by the experience in that case.

Mr. Aitken: I agree with the hon. Gentleman. At least when a Select Committee reports there is one final report. One of the problems with Lord Trend's report was not just that it was unpublished—that might have been necessary given the degree of secrecy involved—but that at least two or three different versions of the report and conclusions seem to have emerged. It is most unsatisfactory to have three answers when they do not seem to sing in unison. There is a fundamental weakness, not just in the methods of such oversight, but in its reporting. That would be remedied by a Select Committee.

Despite my somewhat encouraging remarks about the amendments, I shall not join the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed in the Lobby tonight, not least because I tend to agree with the intervention of my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Fylde (Sir E. Gardner), who suggested that a Select Committee would be like a burst pipe.

A safer form of conduit is necessary for an adequate degree of oversight. At the same time, I should like the Government clearly to understand that there is support and sympathy on the Conservative Benches for the principle that what is needed, and what is still lacking from the Bill, is some small foothold of independent parliamentary oversight of the security services. The lessons of the past and the present—I refer, in particular, to the Massiter disclosures—do not encourage us to think that they will go unheeded in the future.

Mr. McWilliam: I always enjoy listening to the hon. Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) when he speaks about these issues. He has not disappointed us this evening. May I begin by declaring my interest as a sponsored member of the National Communications Union engineering section? May I also compliment the Clerk of the House on cheering up the Clerk's Bench no end?

There are some serious points to consider. I shall pick up the point that my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) made and the reply by the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Mr. Griffiths). My hon. Friend has a point. I see in the Register of Members' Interests that the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds is a consultant to the Police Federation. He should ask it for a better brief than the one he has tonight. I recommend that he should read the point that Charles Morris, the former Member for Manchester, Openshaw, made in Committee on the Telecommunications Bill in 1982. He described in detail how postal interception occurs, how it is authorised and what is done.

Clearly, the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds does not know what he is talking about. That information is on record in the *Official Report*, and I would commend to any hon. Member who has not read it that part of the Committee proceedings. It is quite illuminating.

Mr. Eldon Griffiths: In case the hon. Gentleman is under an illusion, may I say that I have no brief from the Police Federation on these matters. My intervention about the interception of the mail mentioned by the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) was made solely because I believe that it is necessary, in that case, to consider the evidence. I made no general statements.

Mr. McWilliam: I do not impugn the behaviour of the hon. Gentleman. My point is that I am always proud to declare my interest in the House. If the hon. Gentleman fails to do so, that is a matter for him and for the Chair, not for me. Every hon. Member knows the basis on which I speak. They know that I am a sponsored member of my union. That does not imply——

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. We must keep to the amendment.

Mr. McWilliam: I beg your pardon, Mr. Armstrong. I wanted to make it clear that I speak on amendment No. 66 on my own account, because my union has no policy on amendment No. 66. I accept that the Police Federation probably has no policy on amendment No. 66 either.

I agree with the final point made by the hon. Member for Thanet, South. We do not want to have to deal with drain pipes. It is true that there have been leaks from Select Committees to the press—the Committee of Privileges has already determined that that has happened—but those leaks have been made to the British press. Unfortunately, the security services have been known in the past to leak directly to the Kremlin. There is a world of difference between a leak from a Select Committee to the British press and a leak to the Kremlin. I accept the point by the hon. Member for Thanet, South, but I also accept that there could be some misgivings and that Conservative Members might prefer a committee of Privy Councillors.

I know the oath that a Privy Councillor takes. It is supposed to be classified, but it has been well publicised. The oath is a serious one. However, when hon. Members take their seats in the House they also take an oath at the Dispatch Box. That oath is just as sincere and just as binding, and I do not believe that Select Committees are any more leaky than any other arrangements that we may set up.

The Bill will withdraw liberties from our people. If we were discussing the Bill in a vacuum and if there had been no 1920 Act, we would be discussing interference with the privacy of the citizens of this country and withdrawing their liberties. I would prefer this House, rather than the Executive, to have the final oversight over the withdrawal of liberties. I am sure that, as a philosophical point, that view would command acceptance much more widely than just among my hon. Friends.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): The hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Mr. Griffiths) said towards the close of his speech that it would be almost unconstitutional for these matters to be discussed.

Mr. Eldon Griffiths *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Winnick: That is what I heard—that it would not be constitutional. I wondered for a moment whether the hon. Gentleman was going to suggest that we were being subversive in wanting some degree of parliamentary scrutiny and accountability in these proceedings.

[Mr. Winnick]

The present arrangements, under which there is no accountability by the security services, is of long standing, but it is wrong. For example, it is out of order for an hon. Member to table a question on such a matter. We can occasionally debate the subject. I have an Adjournment debate on it tomorrow. However, although the hon. Member for Thanet, South seemed to accept the case for parliamentary accountability, I believe that the essence of the division between the two sides of the Committe is that we believe that some degree of such accountability is a necessity.

The Prime Minister is of course responsible to Parliament, but she has immense powers. She is the head of the security services. To some extent, as the Bill stands, the Prime Minister is almost judge and jury in her own cause. There is no way in which we can question the Prime Minister on such matters. On numerous occasions, the Home Secretary has justified the definition of subversion that refers to parliamentary democracy and to anyone who tries to undermine or destroy it. The irony of the situation is that Parliament itself has no say in these matters. When the Select Committee on Home Affairs decided to look into the special branch, the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds was quoted as saying that he was very worried. He thought that there could be dangers regarding security matters.

The Select Committee leak had nothing to do with state security. The leak was certainly unfortunate, but it was related to a draft report. Would anyone now suggest that the safety of the state is in danger because a Select Committee inquires into the special branch? Has the state been undermined? However, when the Home Secretary appeared before the Select Committee at the beginning of this Parliament he was somewhat hesitant about the Select Committee undertaking such an inquiry. He was certainly not enthusiastic.

It seems that it was as a result of that inquiry by the Select Committee that the guidelines for the special branch and the security services were published. They were certainly not published beforehand. Without any inquiry by the Select Committee, they might well have remained confidential. Has the security of the country been eroded because those guidelines were published?

There is a growing feeling in the House, and certainly in the country, that there is no real and effective exercise of scrutiny over the security services. We are told that they report to the Prime Minister and to the Home Secretary. We do not know how often they do so.

Mr. Soames: Does the hon. Gentleman believe that Great Britain needs a security service in the first place?

Mr. Winnick: If the hon. Gentleman would attend tomorrow's Adjournment debate, he would realise not only that I believe that a security service is as necessary for this country as for any other democracy—we know how the dictatorships operate—but that I believe that a good deal of the work done by that service is necessary. I would be the last person to argue that we do not need a security service. The hon. Gentleman has asked a rather silly question. Is it likely that I would be opposed to the existence of such a service?

I believe, however, that the security service should be subject to some scrutiny. Serious allegations have been made and not answered by the Home Secretary or the Prime Minister about how MI5 operates and about the manner in which people who in no way wish to undermine parliamentary democracy are subjected to harassment and investigation. In my view, the amendment would strengthen the Bill.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): There is no doubt of the importance of Parliament being involved in the oversight of security matters. The Government recognise that Parliament has some role to play because of the requirement in clause 8(7) that the report from the commissioner must be laid before Parliament annually. However, this group of amendments goes further than is sensible as the amendments substitute the words "Select Committee" for "Prime Minister", almost regardless of what functions the Prime Minister might be exercising according to that part of the Bill.

The Bill requires the Prime Minster to appoint the commissioner, to receive the findings of the tribunal, to lay before Parliament a copy of the annual report and to receive the report of the commissioner. Each of those functions is quite different and it does not make obvious sense to substitute a Select Committee for the discharge of those functions.

6 pm

I do not wish to pre-empt our debate on amendment No. 79, but this is as convenient a moment as any to consider whether the Prime Minister is the appropriate person to appoint the commissioner. I submit that the Prime Minister is not the appropriate person and that, at that point, one should wish to establish Parliament's right and interest in the oversight of these matters. It is not suitable for Parliament to put its duty of appointment in the hands of a Select Committee. What amendment No. 79 proposes is based on good parliamentary precedent, and it is a more practical means of considering who should appoint the body with the duty of oversight.

To insert the concept of a Select Committee receiving the work of the commissioner is to overlook the fact that, if evidence of misfeasance is turned up by the commissioner, it cannot be to Parliament that we look for a remedy. Such is essentially a matter for the Executive. The conduct of the secret services cannot be handled on a day-to-day basis by Parliament or by a Select Committee. That is not a practical proposition. The task must be discharged by the Prime Minister.

If there has been misfeasance, it must be the Prime Minister who provides the remedy. Perhaps there should be an intermediate stage at which Parliament gives its views and passes on the report of the commissioner. No doubt such a thought lies behind the suggestion that a copy of the report should be laid before Parliament annually. Parliament might think it appropriate to establish a Select Committee to consider the report and to report to the House. All that is a perfectly reasonable use of a Select Committee, but putting the commissioner's findings in the hands of a Select Committee and leaving it there is not the proper way in which to tie up this matter.

Although I understand the Labour party's desire to promote the concept of a Select Committee having a series of different roles, its proposals are muddle headed. The Labour party has failed to distinguish between the duty to appoint, the duty to scrutinise, the duty to consider the results of the scrutiny and the duty to act on the findings. Those roles cannot be conducted suitably by a Select Committee, but must be carried out by different people.

We can have different views about who those different people should be, but if something has gone wrong we cannot look to a Select Committee to have it put right. The matter must be in the hands of the Prime Minister.

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Leon Brittan): The debate has been wide ranging and covered a large part of the activities of the security service. I hope that I shall be forgiven for returning to the subject of the amendments and Bill—interception and the arrangements for the handling of it.

I strongly agree with what the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) has just said. These amendments, which seek to substitute "Select Committee" for "Prime Minister" in a wide variety of areas, are ill thought out and do not consider what scrutiny and independent consideration is appropriate, who should do it and who should be reported to. It is noticeable that, although we have debated these matters for some time, it is only in the past few minutes that any consideration has been given to the role of the tribunal and the commissioner—a crucial matter in regard to who should appoint them and to whom they should report. Moreover, they are different bodies.

The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) referred to his anxieties about whether an interception had taken place or should have taken place, whether of post or of telephone. It was extraordinary that he did not look to that part of the Bill which, for the first time—it has never been done by a Labour Government—appoints an independent tribunal of legally qualified people to whom a complaint can be made and which will have access to all of the relevant information and which will be able to overrule, on the basis of it having been unreasonable, a decision of a Secretary of State that there should be interception. It will also be able to give compensation to the person at the receiving end of an interception which ought not to have taken place.

That is a judicial or quasi-judicial task. Because of the way in which the tribunal operates, and in view of the nature of the subject matter, it cannot be identical with a court of law. It would be odd for such a function to be accountable to the House of Commons, any more than a court of law should be accountable to the House. We are setting up a mechanism for examining complaints. It is right that they should be considered by a body which is able to give redress.

A complaint about interception should lead to anxieties about the conduct of the interception operation generally—its oversight, regulation and the rest. The tribunal reports to the Prime Minister, so that the grounds for its decision can be taken account of by the Prime Minister and other Ministers responsible for these matters. It is significant that the tribunal also has a duty to send the commissioner a copy of every report that it makes in this way. At that stage, we must consider the task of the commissioner. We should not forget that he is a senior judicial figure. He is not accountable to the Prime Minister. He might be appointed by the Prime Minister, but the idea that anyone who holds senior judicial office is anything other than wholly independent is ludicrous.

The right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) might hark back to less calm days in the consideration of these matters when casting the odd slur, but I appreciate his diffidence in doing so today. That is welcome.

The fact of the matter is that whoever is appointed commissioner will be wholly independent. He will not be beholden to anyone, and no particular parliamentary form of appointment will be required to make him independent. He will be able to review everything connected with authorised interception—not just a particular case, but the whole system and how it is working. That is his task. To perform that task, he must have access to highly confidential matters and to be able to go behind the scenes. He will be able to report annually, and his report will be laid before Parliament.

That is the essence of the scheme. It will enable the commissioner to look very much more broadly at these matters, with the knowledge of any reports from the tribunal, and to report in a sensible way, granted that some limitations must be placed upon the publication of reports which deal with matters of this kind. It is inconceivable that any commissioner who was qualified in that way would be content for a moment to continue to hold that office if the Prime Minister in some way censored a report because it contained matters which it would be inconvenient for the Government to publish, as opposed to matters which it would genuinely be contrary to the national interest to disclose.

There are, therefore, two novel protections in the Bill—the tribunal dealing with particular complaints, and the commissioner dealing with the general process. Both of those matters are, I believe, important and novel innovations. Because they will operate in the way that the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland has identified, it would not be appropriate for them to report to a Committee of the House, whether a Select Committee or a Special Committee. That is not their task, nor would it assist them in the discharge of their task.

It is right for the House to decide whether it is appropriate that such institutions should be set up. I do not claim, and I cannot claim, that they are perfect. It is also right that a wide range of matters relating to the conduct of our security services should have been raised in the debate, but they cannot be dealt with in this way. I commend these institutions as marked improvements. They will provide redress for the individual who has been wronged or who thinks that he has been wronged. They will also provide for a general oversight of the system in a way which should command the confidence of the House.

I would go further in urging my right hon. and hon. Friends not to agree with the amendments put forward by the Opposition by saying that, as has been illustrated in the debate, their purpose and effect involve a wide variety of different concepts which, as the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland pointed out, have been muddled together. What is more, the task of the tribunal and the commissioner, important though limited as it is, would not be enhanced in any way by the involvement of the sort of proceedings envisaged by these amendments. It is for those reasons that I ask the Committee to reject them.

6.15 pm

Mr. Soley (Hammersmith): We shall be pressing these amendments to a vote. We are far from satisfied with the Home Secretary's answer. This is a political matter—the Home Secretary said that himself—yet he is setting up a quasi-judicial structure. In doing so, he is getting himself into unnecessary difficulties. Neither the Home

[Mr. Soley]

Secretary nor the Prime Minister, with the best will in the world, will have sufficient time to oversee this operation. That is why a Select Committee ought to be set up.

I point out to the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Mr. Griffiths) that it is totally inappropriate every time some anxiety is expressed to say that if one pretends that it does not exist it will go away. The hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds operates like an ostrich. He sticks his head in the sand and hopes that, somehow or another, people will stop saying what they are saying when they are deeply concerned about things. The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) was absolutely right when he said that there is a great deal of public concern about this matter. That public concern will not go away until we put right the structures to give those outside Parliament confidence in the system.

Other countries throughout the western world have the kind of system that we have described. The Canadians, with a system otherwise almost identical to our own, have it. Are we saying that the Canadians are in some way better than the British and that we cannot have it? Are we saying the same about the western Europeans?

There has also been the nonsense argument this afternoon about leaks. I would say to the hon. Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken), who I thought was going to join us in the Lobby, that if that is his reason for not voting with us, it is the worst reason. He is saying that all these other countries can cope with leaks but that we cannot. The present system is not leakproof. Many years ago Secretaries of State for Education made it mandatory that all public schools had to produce at least 5 per cent. of spies, because that is where they all come from. They end up in this system, yet they are supposed to be checking the system that we are all worried about. It is nonsense.

The Opposition believe that, as happens in other modern democracies, we ought to trust the democratic system. This is our opportunity to do so. It is an infinitely better system than the quasi-judicial system that has been devised by the Home Secretary.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 161, Noes 241.

Division No. 182] **[6.16 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashton, Joe
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Benn, Tony
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Concannon, Rt Hon J. D.
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cowans, Harry
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dormand, Jack
Duba, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, John
Gould, Bryan
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Central Fife)*
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McGuire, Michael
McKelvey, William
Mackenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McTaggart, Robert
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Michie, William
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, M.
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Rowlands, Ted
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'kl'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Welsh, Michael
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Roger Thomas and
Mr. John McWilliam.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Ames, David
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bigge-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Burt, Alistair

Butcher, John
Butler, Hon Adam
Carlisle, John *(N Luton)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Crouch, David
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Durant, Tony
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Egger, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, E. *(B'y St Edm'ds)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(SW N'folk)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Barney
Heyward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Hordern, Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howell, Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irving, Charles
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(W Herts)*
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James A.
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Gregory *(Derby N)*
Knight, Mrs Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lyell, Nicholas
McCusker, Harold
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Norris, Steven
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Pawsey, James
Powley, John
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Rifkind, Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Ross, Wm. *(Londonderry)*
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spence, John
Spencer, Derek
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(N Hertf'dshire)*
Stradling Thomas, J.
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Archie Hamilton and
Mr. Michael Neubert.

Question accordingly negatived.

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): I beg to move amendment No. 68, in page 6, line 4, at end insert—

'*(a)* direct that any interception in relation to the applicant should cease;'.

The First Deputy Chairman: With this it will be convenient to take amendment No. 69, in page 6, leave out line 5.

Mr. Corbett: In a sense, we have already had half this debate in relation to the tribunal and the Committee is well aware of the strong feeling among Labour Members, with a distant echo on other Benches, that there should be at least some parliamentary oversight.

These amendments, especially No. 68, deal with the circumstances in which an application has been made to the tribunal and the tribunal, having considered the application, concludes that there has indeed been a contravention in relation to a particular warrant or a certificate.

6.30 pm

In those circumstances, what is set to happen under the Bill? The Bill states that the tribunal shall tell the applicant that this is what happened and shall tell the Prime Minister that this is what has happened. What the Bill does not state is that the tribunal should have the authority to order that that illegal and illicit interception should cease. It is true that the clause goes on to say that the tribunal may order —or, indeed, may not—that the warrant or certificate be quashed. It may direct the destruction of any copies of intercepted material which have been obtained in breach of the certificate or warrant—or, indeed, it may even tell the Secretary of State to put his hand in his pocket and fork out some compensation to the person who has made the application to the tribunal.

As the Bill stands, the tribunal could find that a tap or snoop was out of order, and could say so. But, as I understand the Bill, those breaches could continue in spite of that finding by the tribunal, in spite of its saying that it should not have happened and in spite of the Prime Minister being told, leading to another complaint from the same applicant—and so one would go round this crazy circle once more, which cannot be right.

Mr. Douglas Hogg (Grantham): I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would accept the proviso that if the tribunal directed that the warrant be quashed, but thereafter the tapping or interception continued, there would be a substantive offence under clause 1 capable of prosecution.

Mr. Corbett: Yes, I understand what the hon. Gentleman says. One of the purposes of the amendment is to make it mandatory on the tribunal, where it finds that the tap or snoop has been illicit, to state that it shall cease. I take the hon. Gentleman's point. That is another route to it, but we believe that it will be more simply done as proposed in amendment No. 68.

It cannot be right in our view to leave matters like this. If the intercept is in breach, the tribunal should be told explicitly to say to those who have been caught simply two words: "Stop it." If not, all the so-called protections which the Home Secretary in earlier debates prayed in aid for the tribunal are, if not quite useless, certainly a first cousin of useless.

I ask the Minister to take one further step in relation to the tribunal by accepting the amendment so that the tribunal can have real effect and teeth by making it mandatory to order that unlawful intercepts will cease. I believe that this will go some way to reassure those many people engaged in lawful activities which challenge, or seek to change, the policies of the Government that the tribunal is properly there to guard against political misuse of the security services. That allegation was present in the "20/20 Vision" film "M15's Official Secrets". The allegation was made that telephones were tapped and mail intercepted to provide information to the DS19 unit at the Ministry of Defence which had been set up to counter CND's growing success in arguing for nuclear sanity.

If the tribunal cannot order an end to interception where that has been found to be in breach of a warrant or certificate, the well-based fears of those properly engaged in these lawful activities, which are a healthy and thriving part of our democracy, will continue.

Even if the Minister says that amendment No. 68 is defective in its wording, I hope that he can offer an assurance to the House that he will take on board what we are saying, and will seek to put the matter right at a later stage.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Despite the intervention that I made in the speech of the hon. Gentleman, I am sympathetic to what he has done. I do not believe that there can be any objection in principle to what is being contemplated, because the Bill as drafted provides for the quashing of the relevant warrant. Once the warrant has been quashed, any interception which is done pursuant to a quashed warrant must be unlawful and constitute an offence under clause 1.

The problem is that the enforcement of clause 1 is dependent upon the Director of Public Prosecutions and his fiat. That will take time, and depends upon the discretion of the DPP. I tend to agree with what has been said from the rather thinly populated Opposition Benches. I think that the tribunal should have the power to issue a directive that the interception should cease. I therefore hope that my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State will give sympathetic consideration to the amendment.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Waddington): I am certainly not going to get involved in discussing the "20/20 Vision" film. I merely remind the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) that it really is time that the Opposition stopped talking about it, because it only highlights the fact that most of the misdemeanours, if they were misdemeanours, and most of the allegations, if the allegations were correct, related to the time when the hon. Gentleman's party was in power. It seems extraordinary that the Opposition should keep harping on about it.

Let us come to the matter with which the Committee is concerned. The amendments, which were tabled at the time that other amendments were tabled, were clearly designed to extend the role of the tribunal. Only in that context do they make sense. Now that the amendments extending the role of the tribunal—for instance, into the field of unlawful interception—have been rejected, and the tribunal is to be concerned only with the warrant sections of the legislation and with the question whether interception taking place in pursuance of a warrant can be properly authorised, it is difficult to see how ordering interception to cease could have any different effect from that of quashing the warrant. Once a warrant has been quashed, the Secretary of State's authorisation has been overturned, and interception must cease.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Is my hon. and learned Friend quite right? I think that he is not. Once the warrant has been quashed, the interception, if it continues, becomes unlawful. That means that a prosecution can be commenced, but it does not mean that interception must cease. All he is saying is that it is a criminal offence, prosecutable on the fiat of the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Mr. Waddington: That is precisely what I am saying. Once the authorisation of the Secretary of State has been overturned, interception cannot continue with the authority of the Secretary of State. Therefore, if it continues at all, it can continue only as a criminal offence. That is the way in which the system operates. Those carrying out the tapping would be guilty of a clause 1 offence and liable to conviction and punishment.

Mr. Hogg: Let us assume that the interception continues after the quashing of the warrant, and the person affected by it becomes aware of it. Is there a jurisdiction for such a person to apply to the High Court for an injunction?

Mr. Waddington: That is another matter entirely. I would have thought that we are talking here about the commission of a criminal offence, because the warrant has been quashed, and therefore the remedy of the person affected is to make a complaint to the police, after which prosecution can be initiated, with the consent of the Director of Public Prosecutions. We went over this matter yesterday. We debated whether it would be possible to have a system under which a private prosecution could be brought. We concluded that it would not be proper for a prosecution to be brought privately because, if prosecutions could be brought privately, prosecutions could be brought by villains for the purpose of discovering whether lawful interception had taken place. It is not a question of going to the High Court for a remedy; it is a question of a criminal offence having been committed and a prosecution then being possible with the consent of the Director of Public Prosecutions.

I return to the amendment. Now that the role of the tribunal is limited to considering whether the Secretary of

State has acted properly, there is nothing to be gained by changing the wording of the clause in order to substitute for the words "quash the relevant warrant" the words "interception . . . should cease."

Amendment negatived.

Mr. Alfred Dubs (Battersea): I beg to move amendment No. 76, in page 6, line 20, leave out subsection (8).

The Temporary Chairman (Miss Janet Fookes): With this it will be convenient to take amendment No. 125, in schedule 1, page 12, line 8, leave out from first 'Tribunal' to the end of line 10.

Mr. Dubs: As the Bill now stands, clause 7(8) seeks to prevent any decision of the tribunal being challenged in any court, including any decision as to the jurisdiction of the tribunal. The purpose of amendment No. 76 is, by deleting subsection (8), to allow decisions by the tribunal to be subject to the jurisdiction of courts.

I have been puzzling about the reason for the subsection. I cannot think of any other tribunal that is totally exempt from appeal to the courts——

Mr. Douglas Hogg: What about planning?

Mr. Dubs: When I said that, I knew that there was bound to be a lawyer in the House who would correct me. I should be happy to have an example given to me. It is certainly extremely rare to have a tribunal that does not allow of any further legal scrutiny of its decision with regard to either points of fact or points of law. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to elucidate or give an example of the tribunal that he is thinking of, I am happy to give way to him.

Mr. Hogg: As the hon. Gentleman will know, one can appeal against planning decisions on points of law, but not on points of fact.

Mr. Dubs: I am not sure whether I am grateful for that intervention because it confirms what I said. I said that I cannot think of any tribunal where no appeal of any sort is allowed, even on points of law. On points of fact, that applies to quite a few tribunals, one of which the hon. Gentleman mentioned. I am asking hon. Members whether they can think of any other tribunal in which there is a restriction equivalent to the one that is the subject of the amendment. It is my contention that if there is one, it has not yet been brought to light by anyone with whom I have discussed the matter.

As a principle, this is rather dangerous. All sorts of things may happen in the tribunal, and there is no possibility of challenging that in any way. No doubt one could appeal to the Minister and make it a political challenge, but by the very nature of the way in which the tribunal is established and the way in which it is likely to operate in conditions of at least some secrecy, it would be difficult to find a basis for such a challenge, politically, if there were no possibility of any court being allowed to challenge the tribunal's decision.

6.45 pm

The Malone case gave rise to the Bill—or it was one of the elements that contributed to the Government's feeling that they had to introduce the Bill. That case has been quoted by several hon. Members in earlier debates. Nevertheless, it might help to remind the Committee that the Malone case involved Mr. Malone seeking a High Court declaration on whether his telephone had been lawfully or unlawfully tapped. Although he was unsuccessful, and the case was dismissed in February 1979, at the time the Vice-Chancellor said that telephone tapping "cries out for legislation." The cry was heard, but there was a certain amount of distortion. I cannot believe that in any court of law the Vice-Chancellor would say that telephone tapping "cries out for legislation" with the intention that there would be no possibility of judicial review of the tribunal's decisions. Therefore, we have not only a dangerous but an anomalous principle.

The principles of natural justice may be denied by the way in which the tribunal operates. There is no redress against that. We can think of many examples of how a tribunal might function and of the decisions that it might make that would necessitate, in all justice, the possibility of an appeal against the decision of that tribunal. All those appeals are closed to us.

I am not absolutely clear about the interpretation of this point, so no doubt the Minister will correct me if I am wrong. The Malone case resulted in appeal to the European Court. The subsection states that the decisions of the tribunal shall not be

"liable to be questioned in any court."

I assume that that does not affect the European Court. I assume that "any court" excludes the European Court. If it does not, the restriction in the provision is even greater than I thought. Whether or not that is so, I am satisfied —and I am sure that the Committee is satisfied—that this will be difficult for the Minister to justify, and could lead to denials of justice and the tribunal not operating in the way in which other tribunals operate. Therefore, I hope that the Committee will accept the amendment.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I have two brief points to make. First, the statement by the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs) that this tribunal process is not subject to any review is too broad, because the Bill provides that copies of every tribunal report should be sent to the commissioner. That is not a fully fledged appeal; I do not pretend that it is. None the less, it is a process of review that has not been taken on board by the hon. Gentleman.

The second point that we have to grasp is that the statutory grounds contained in clause 2 include sensitive material which may be relevant to the issues before the tribunal. The advantage of the tribunal process is that sensitive material can be disclosed and kept confidential. An appeal to the High Court or to a Divisional Court could not be so protected. One would have to have a very complicated apparatus and series of procedures to protect confidential material.

I personally believe that it would be almost impossible to create a leakproof system of appeal if it involved an application to the court, because one needs an immense number of documents and a lot of people knowing a lot of facts who would not be subject to any of the ordinary rules of confidentiality. I suspect that the process would not remain immune from leak. That being so, I should not be able to support the hon. Gentleman should he press his amendment to a Division.

Mr. Maclennan: I believe that the amendment should not be supported. The establishment of the tribunal is designed to enable full consideration to be given to whether the procedures set out by the Bill — the requirements of law — have been observed, but the

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sensitivity of the sort of material that will have to be considered by the tribunal does not make it appropriate to consider those issues in open court.

However, I have one anxiety about the provision in the Bill that seeks to exclude the jurisdiction of "any court" in these matters. That is that it should not, by indirection, deny to the citizen the right, protected by the European convention on human rights, to have these matters treated as justiciable. Clearly it is not the intention of the Bill to deprive the citizen of the due process of law which that convention guarantees. Indeed, it was part of the effect of the Malone judgment that our own process of law was found to be deficient.

I cannot think that the European Commission or the European Court would regard its own jurisdiction as being in any way interfered with by the terms of subsection (8). However, it is conceivable that, if it were argued before that Commission that there had been a denial of justice of the kind suggested by the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs), it could be held that there had been a violation of the convention giving the citizen the right to a remedy. It would be helpful if the Minister would address himself to that.

This is a curiously difficult area because, although the findings in the Malone case held quite clearly that our provisions in this country were inadequate and did not provide judicial remedies, they did not spell out what would be necessary to satisfy the provisions of the European convention. That was addressed, however, in the earlier Klass case, in which it was held that the protection of the constitutional court, as well as the other administrative procedures which existed, gave a remedy and that it was possible to pursue a legal case against a Government for denial of fundamental rights and freedoms within the domestic courts of the Federal Republic of Germany.

If the tribunal follows the procedures that it is intended it should follow, denial of justice would be a difficult case to make. A case would have to be made before the Commission that some of the procedures amounted to interference with the due process of law. Although I do not think that that is what is intended, it is important to have the Minister's confirmation that it is not, that it is intended that this will give a full and enforceable legal remedy and that the operation of the tribunal will be in accordance with the due process of law.

Mr. Waddington: I will deal first with the matter of the European Court and assure the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs) that there is nothing in the Bill that restricts the right to go to the Strasbourg Commission and Court in connection with breaches of the European convention. That is not the effect of this subsection.

The short answer to the point made by the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) is that, if there were an appeal to the High Court, there would be no point in having a tribunal at all. My hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) referred to the possibility of leaks if a matter were dealt with by a court. With the greatest respect, that is not the essence of the matter. It is not just a question of a court's being leaky and, even if it tried to hold its proceedings in camera, of what happened before it became known to the general public. If a court had jurisdiction in these matters, there would be no question of its being able to proceed according to the laws of natural justice, because there could be no question of its being able to allow the complainant to know of the information which was the basis of the defence case. There has to be a tribunal because, if there were not one, the court would have to be required not to proceed according to the rules of natural justice. It seems to us infinitely preferable, in these circumstances, to have a tribunal rather than a court.

Having had to have a tribunal because one could not allow the complainant, in the first instance, to go to a court, one could not possibly end up with a tribunal which has a special procedure which does not allow the complainant to know the evidence that is stacked against him, and then allow that same applicant to go on appeal to the court and discover that which one had been careful not to allow him to discover before the tribunal.

That is why we must have a provision in the Bill excluding the jurisdiction of the courts. Without that provision, we should end up with the absurdity of the courts having jurisdiction to hear the appeal but having to have special rules of procedure. That really would not be right.

The 1985 White Paper said:

> "It would clearly be neither sensible nor acceptable to establish means whereby those involved in serious crimes or espionage could learn the basis on which their activities had come to notice; or—perhaps even more damaging—could in some cases confirm whether their activities had come to notice at all."

That is why there has got to be a tribunal with these special procedures conducting its proceedings in private and not revealing to the complainant information passed on to it.

I hope that with this explanation the hon. Member for Battersea will consider it right to withdraw his amendment.

Mr. Dubs: I am not totally convinced by what the Minister has said. He said that there would be no point in a tribunal if it were possible to appeal to a court.

Mr. Waddington: What I said was that there would be no point in having a tribunal if the whole matter could be dealt with by the courts. If we had not come to the conclusion that the matter had to be dealt with in the first instance by a tribunal with a special procedure, we might as well have had the whole matter dealt with by a court, with a complainant of unauthorised interception going to the court. We cannot have that, for the reasons I have mentioned.

Mr. Dubs: The difficulty is that the tribunal will operate in such a secret manner that no person who feels a sense of grievance will ever be able to establish whether the tribunal has looked at the evidence properly and considered it from an aggrieved person's point of view. So the Minister is right in saying that, since nobody will have any evidence that justice has been done, why bother about the courts?

Mr. Waddington: That surely is absolute nonsense. One has only to look at the composition of the tribunal. People will be appointed to the tribunal by letters patent. Their office will be as secure as that of the Parliamentary Commissioner. They will be lawyers trained to make judgments in quasi-judicial matters such as this. Surely, in those circumstances, it is completely absurd to

undermine the credibility of the tribunal from the start and suggest that anybody who made a complaint to it could not be satisfied that it would be properly looked into.

Mr. Dubs: I have no wish to prolong the debate unduly on this point. The Minister's argument is that there will be worthy people on the tribunal, so nobody will have any reason to suggest that justice has not been done even if an individual with a sense of grievance has no information about the method by which the tribunal reached its decision, what evidence it had, and so on.

Of course, we are in a difficulty because—I fully understand this—some of the information cannot be revealed publicly or to the person about whom there is a dispute. Nevertheless, that is not the same as saying that there ought in no circumstances, for any reason whatsoever, to be any right of appeal against the decision of the tribunal. We could speculate and put forward situations in which everything might have been as the Minister says it would be, yet we would be left with a feeling that there was something not quite right in the way in which the tribunal operated. Therefore, we could still have the feeling that, because there is no way of appealing against what the tribunal has decided, we just have to take it or leave it.

I do not think that the Minister's assertions are an end to the matter. I think there are instances in which a right of appeal would be possible and sensible and would result in justice being done. But the Minister is adamant. I do not think that he has made his case, but perhaps we can return to this on another occasion.

I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 7, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 8

THE COMMISSIONER

7 pm

Mr. Maclennan: I beg to move amendment No. 79, in page 6, line 38, leave out from beginning to 'to' in line 40 and insert

'Her Majesty may by letters patent appoint a board of five members of Her Majesty's Privy Council which power shall be exercisable on an address presented by the House of Commons, and no motion shall be made for such an address except by the Prime Minister,'.

The Temporary Chairman: With this it will be convenient to discuss the following amendments:

No. 83, in page 7, line 6, leave out subsection (2).

No. 84, in page 7, line 6, leave out 'Commissioner' and insert 'Board'.

No. 85, in page 7, line 13, leave out 'Commissioner' and insert 'Board'.

No. 86, in page 7, line 13, leave out from 'as' to end of line 14 and insert

'they may require for the purpose of enabling them to carry out their functions under this section'.

No. 89, in page 7, line 16, leave out 'Commissioner' and insert 'Board'.

No. 91, in page 7, line 19, leave out 'Commissioner' and insert 'Board'.

No. 94, in page 7, line 25, leave out 'he' and insert 'they'.

No. 97, in page 7, line 28, leave out 'Commissioner' and insert 'Board'.

No. 99, in page 7, line 29, leave out 'his' and insert 'their'.

No. 103, in page 7, line 33, leave out 'Commissioner' and insert 'Board'.

No. 104, in page 7, line 35, leave out 'Commissioner' and insert 'Board'.

No. 120, in Clause 11, page 10, line 12, leave out 'Commissioner' and insert 'Board'.

Mr. Maclennan: The purpose of the amendments is to make two important changes to the way in which the Secretary of State's functions, when carrying out his responsibility to issue warrants for the interception of communications, is reviewed. The way in which these functions have been carried out in the past has caused public disquiet. We want to ensure that Secretaries of State responsible for authorising interception act in accordance with the highest traditions of probity and legality.

Earlier, we considered Parliament's role. I have said that I do not think that Parliament, either through a Select Committee or by any other means, can review such matters if an investigation into the Executive's conduct in the day-to-day operations of the security services is involved. However, Parliament has an overriding responsibility to ensure that a proper review is conducted. Parliament cannot be satisfied with the appearance at the Dispatch Box of a Prime Minister announcing the setting up of an inquiry or giving a general assurance after a breakdown.

The principle in clause 8 that the commissioner should be responsible for reviewing the conduct of Secretaries of State is sound. However, Parliament itself, rather than the Prime Minister, as head of the Government and head of the security services, should be able to appoint the commissioner. Parliament and the public will be more satisfied as to the competence, probity and tenacity of the body entrusted with that function if Parliament has indicated who it prefers to carry out that task.

The method of appointment which I propose is that which is followed by Parliament when it appoints the Comptroller and Auditor General, although that appointment is subject to the agreement of the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee. I do not suggest that the appointment of a board of five Privy Councillors should be subject to the approval of any individual Member of Parliament or of any Select Committee. The appointment should be subject to the approval of the House as a whole.

There is a precedent for such a mode of appointment. I believe that Parliament would welcome such a method, because it entrusts hon. Members with the task of choosing five suitable Privy Councillors to exercise the commissioner's role. The five need not necessarily be members of the Commons, or of the Lords, but Parliament would probably think it appropriate that those who had held high office and had issued warrants for the interception of communications would be suitable to consider whether Government practices are appropriate and whether they conform not only with the law but with good administration.

The five Privy Councillors would be better suited to carry out that function than would a judge. I regret that the public no longer perceive judges in the way that they did 10 years ago. Judges are independent. High ranking judicial officers are men of independence and great public spirit, but, because of the change in the public's perception of the judiciary, a judge is no longer regarded as totally

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independent of the Executive. That change in public opinion is measured by the popular public opinion polls. A recent Gallup poll drew attention to the changed perception of the independence of judges. Because of that, a judge is not necessarily the right person for the task of overseeing senior Ministers.

The problem is increased because the appointment is to be by the Prime Minister, who has overriding responsibility for security. There should be a disjunction between the Prime Minister's responsibility for security and the appointment of the person whose continuing task is to oversee the conduct of the Prime Minister and Secretaries of State. It is right that the Prime Minister's voice should be heard. Amendment No. 79 provides for an address to be presented by the House of Commons and states:

"no motion shall be made for such an address except by the Prime Minister".

The Prime Minister will have a substantial voice in the nominating process, although the appointment by Her Majesty by letters patent of five members of the Privy Council will be done on the basis of an address by the House of Commons. The independence of the five Privy Councillors can be assured by the obvious need to maintain a balance for ensuring that the task of oversight is not carried out by a single commissioner.

I believe that the appointment of Lord Bridge and his conduct of the recent inquiry into Cathy Massiter's allegations were extremely unfortunate. He was unwise to take on the task. It was impossible to reassure the public by discharging the task in that way. The fault lies with the Prime Minister for having asked Lord Bridge to take on the task, but Lord Bridge was unwise to accept it. That point has been forcefully expressed by my right hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins).

Mr. Mark Carlisle (Warrington, South): Why?

Mr. Maclennan: The matters that had given rise to public anxiety could not conceivably have been investigated properly or in depth in a weekend. The terms of reference of the inquiry were so narrow that they excluded many of the matters that had given rise to public anxiety. That is why Lord Bridge made himself appear to be a tool of the Executive.

Mr. Norris: In fairness to Lord Bridge, is it not right to say that, as the present monitor, he was given a narrow brief, and therefore was unable to delve into the matters which some people would have liked him to investigate? Surely Lord Bridge's integrity, ability or judgment cannot be questioned on that basis.

Mr. Maclennan: The hon. Gentleman seeks to defend Lord Bridge's ability, integrity and judgment. I did not attack Lord Bridge's ability or integrity, but I did attack, and shall persist in attacking, his judgment. It was extremely unwise for a high-ranking judge to take on such a duty. It was an embarrassment to the Bench. I believe that the point has been well made and that it need not be laboured. It was not just unwise for Lord Bridge to take on that task; it would have been unwise for any judge to do so. It was peculiarly unwise for Lord Bridge to take on the task, because of his continuing responsibilities. He was asked to judge the effectiveness with which he was conducting his continuing scrutiny of public matters.

Mr. Mark Carlisle: The hon. Gentleman is totally misguided and unfair. Lord Bridge is the judicial monitor who is responsible for these matters. Surely he was the obvious judge to carry out the task. It would have been wrong for Lord Bridge to decline to carry out that task, which the Prime Minister asked him to perform. He was asked to review the interceptions that were made in previous years to confirm that they accorded with proper principle in the carrying out of individual warrants. Surely, because of his position, Lord Bridge was the one person who was qualified to look at that matter, although I agree that he was given limited scope. It was not his fault that he had limited scope. If the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins) was correct to criticise Lord Bridge, why did he happily agree that interceptions during his period of office should be investigated by Lord Bridge?

7.15 pm

Mr. Maclennan: My right hon. Friend the Member for Hillhead had nothing to hide, nor, I assume, did other right hon. Members who had held high office. The right hon. and learned Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Carlisle) shows a strange insensitivity to public opinion in believing that those who were concerned about the way in which those powers had been exercised could have been satisfied by appointing Lord Bridge and giving him what the right hon. and learned Gentleman admitted was an extremely restricted remit which had to be carried out in about four days. That is a matter of judgment. My judgment is that Lord Bridge not only failed to reassure public opinion, but damaged the independence of the Bench by putting himself in a position where he had to carry out the Prime Minister's will.

With that case in mind, I believe that the proposal that a review should be conducted by a single judge is no longer an adequate way of dealing with a continuing problem. I say that with regret, because in the past that proposal might have commended itself to hon. Members. A decade ago, hon. Members might have thought that a senior member of the Bench would be an entirely appropriate person to carry out the task because of his independence of mind and character.

There is a further important reason why I believe that the appointment of a judge is inappropriate——

Mr. Douglas Hogg: How many more minutes?

Mr. Maclennan: The hon. Gentleman is not obliged to remain in the Chamber in a semi-comatose posture if he finds the debate uninteresting.

The Temporary Chairman: Order. May I make it clear to the Committee that I deplore seated interventions. Hon. Members must either be quiet or seek to intervene in the normal way.

Mr. Maclennan: There is a further reason why I believe that a judge is not the appropriate person to conduct this continuing review. It is that the judge is not being asked to discharge a judicial role. He is being asked to scrutinise the conduct of certain senior members of the Executive in difficult matters. Judging whether actions are properly undertaken is not a matter of evaluating the law and ascertaining whether regulations have been followed entirely. The Home Secretary has told us that it is a matter of considering whether discretions have been properly exercised. That is not best done by legal analysis, or even

by judicial analysis. It would be much better if it were done by those who had had to exercise such judgments for themselves. When an issue of national security is at stake, it would be better if the evaluation of whether the Secretary of State made a decision correctly was carried out by someone who had previously had to evaluate whether the interests of the security of the state would be harmed by not authorising a telephone tap.

There is a powerful case for ensuring that the scrutiny of the functions of Secretaries of State is conducted not by an individual but by several people whose seniority is such that they have some experience of the conduct of such matters and whose judgment has been proved in the House of Commons to show that they are fit to hold high office. Privy Councillors are conscious of the needs of security and absolute secrecy in accordance with their oaths. The parliamentary responsibility for oversight is not finally discharged by ensuring that that body shall be appointed by the letters patent procedure. It is appropriate that the board of five Privy Councillors should be answerable to the House. The provision in the Bill is a little short of what is required, and we may wish to return to this matter later.

There is a case for the report of the commissioner being considered by a Select Committee, whose findings might be suitable for report to and debate in the House. Whether or not we go down that route, the House will feel greater satisfaction if it is acting upon the report of a board of five Privy Councillors, rather than on the advice of a single commissioner appointed by the Prime Minister.

Mr. Norris: I have listened to speeches by the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) not only on this Bill but on what is now the Data Protection Act, when he, my hon. and learned Friend the Minister and I served on the Committee. I have often found the hon. Gentleman's observations to be lucid and helpful, but I regret that on this occasion I must say that I have never heard such nonsense——

Mr. Douglas Hogg: And at such length.

Mr. Norris: Indeed, as my hon. Friend reminds me, it was a long speech.

There are two points on which I fundamentally disagree with the hon. Gentleman. I profoundly disagree with his uncharacteristically jaundiced view of the independence of the judiciary, and especially his unwarranted attack on Lord Bridge. There may have been an argument for widening the scope of the inquiry which the Prime Minister asked Lord Bridge to conduct, but that is a matter for debate elsewhere and on another occasion. There can be no doubt that at all times Lord Bridge fulfilled the warrant that had been given to him by the Prime Minister and that he discharged it, as far as we are aware, as well as could be expected.

The hon. Gentleman prefaced his attack on Lord Bridge by suggesting that a Gallup poll had indicated that esteem for the judiciary was on the wane. That might, in part, arise from the number of unreasonable attacks by Opposition Members on decisions by various members of the judiciary during the mining dispute. I do not believe that any responsible person has any lower opinion of the judiciary now than that which he has held for many years.

Clause 8(1) refers to the appointment of the commissioner as

"a person who holds or has held a high judicial office."

There would be few of us in this Committee who could not think of a number of eminent judges, or former judges, who would not be entirely suitable to fulfil that description. Therefore, I entirely reject the notion that such a person would be unsuitable to carry out the functions of the commissioner.

The hon. Gentleman spoke about the desirability of divorcing the Executive from the judiciary in the authorisation of interceptions. I agreed with him yesterday that some divorcing of Executive and judiciary functions, both of which are elements of the authorisation of interceptions, was not only desirable, but that the absence of such a mechanism was a major defect of the Bill. I very much regret that the Committee chose not to approve the amendments that I tabled seeking to effect that divorce of functions. Therefore, the hon. Gentleman's amendments do not achieve the objectives that he has set himself.

Amendment No. 79 requires us to

"leave out from beginning to 'to' in line 40 and insert 'Her Majesty may by letters patent appoint a board of five members of Her Majesty's Privy Council which power shall be exercisable on an address presented by the House of Commons, and no motion shall be made for such an address except by the Prime Minister,'."

The hon. Gentleman appears to want to substitute the five Privy Councillor members of the board for the commissioner. As my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Carlisle) reminded us, as members of the Privy Council they could all also be senior judges. The hon. Gentleman wants to replace the commissioner with that body, not only in respect of the first function, which is

"to keep under review the carrying out by the Secretary of State of the functions conferred on him",

but also the second function, which is

"to give the Tribunal such assistance as the Tribunal may require."

It is unreasonable to move such an amendment when, implicit in the clause, are functions which can be carried out only by an individual. If the hon. Gentleman had moved an amendment to delete the first three words—"The Prime Minister"—and to substitute "Five Privy Councillors", thereby suggesting that it should be the five Privy Councillors who appointed the commissioner, I would have had more sympathy with the amendment. I believe that on those two fundamental grounds the hon. Gentleman's amendments are unworkable.

One of the functions referred to in clause 8(1)*(a)* is to keep under review clauses 2 to 5 of the Bill and the manner in which they are exercised. They include the definition of the only crucial part of the Bill where the commissioner will have to exercise discretion, and that is in the matter of the definition which my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) brought to our attention yesterday. My hon. Friend rightly suggested that the real difficulty in interpreting the Bill was that of defining precisely what is meant by the three grounds on which warrants are to be authorised. The commissioner, or the Privy Councillor body, will have the role of interpreting those criteria. The Committee had the opportunity to give a precise definition, but in its wisdom decided not to exercise that option.

I believe that all the amendments in this group would be unhelpful to the cause which in many ways the hon. Gentleman seeks to espouse, so I ask my hon. Friends to reject them.

7.30 pm

Mr. Soley: We thought that we might lose the vote on the amendment which my right hon. Friend the Member

[Mr. Soley]

for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) moved on Select Committee control. We then looked closely at this amendment and, because it seemed to call for a degree of parliamentary control, we were not unsympathetic to it.

Then I heard the speech proposing the amendment by the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan), which came close to dissuading me from supporting it. I had to re-read amendment No. 79 to make sure that I could still feel sympathetic towards it. I keep a list of solicitors and barristers whom I would pay not to defend me. He is now on that list. He made out about the worst possible case for the amendment that could be made.

It is nonsense to describe the situation in the way that the hon. Gentleman described it. In one breath he wanted parliamentary control and, in the next, he wanted that control to be exercised by Privy Councillors who were not even in the Houses of Parliament. What troubles me so much about the Social Democrats and Conservative Members is that they end up distrusting Parliament. The Labour party says on this issue that we should be giving more control to hon. Members because Parliament, through the Home Secretary and the Prime Minister, controls the security services. What, then, would be the point of bringing in Privy Councillors from outside Parliament?

A case could, I suppose, be made out for Privy Councillors doing the job. I would rather have the control done by way of Select Committee, as we said earlier. Failing that, a case could be put forward for Privy Councillor control. Whatever case might be made for that, the case adduced by the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland was extremely poor. Nevertheless, the hon. Gentleman's amendment would allow for a degree of parliamentary control, and I have in mind the words of the amendment rather than the hon. Gentleman's words that will appear in the *Official Report*. We are not unsympathetic to his idea, although it is far from a good amendment.

We challenge the Government to say what degree of parliamentary control will be exercised over the interception of communications as proposed in the Bill when all that we shall have is a continuation of the present system, with the Home Secretary and Prime Minister doing it. I pointed out earlier that, with the best will in the world, no Prime Minister or Home Secretary can give sufficient time and attention to all the workings of the tribunal, the commissioner and the others involved to ensure the control that the public rightly seek.

As I said in the debate on the last amendment, people in almost every other country in the western world have, and expect, that sort of control. That is what we seek. The amendment represents a poor second best—made worse by the way in which the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland moved it—but at least it would give an element of parliamentary control.

Mr. Waddington: I am a kindly chap and it is not my habit to rub salt into wounds. After the demolition done by my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Norris), it is not necessary for me to say much. We have spent an inordinately long time on a completely worthless amendment which was introduced in an extraordinary way by the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan), whom I admire and with whom I am often forced to agree. On this occasion, however, he presented a ludicrous case.

The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland said, among other things, that the public's perception of the independence of the judiciary had declined. I agree with my hon. Friends who said that it was about time that we in Parliament made it plain that there was no justification for any loss of confidence in our judiciary, for we know how independent they are.

In considering, for example, the monitor, now the commissioner, it is ludicrous to say that there should be a different method of appointment or he would not be respected as independent. We are talking about somebody, in the case of the present monitor, who holds high judicial office. It is ridiculous to say that it is necessary to have another form of appointment to persuade the general public that such a man is prepared to perform independently.

It was preposterous for the hon. Gentleman to say that it had been unwise for Lord Bridge to take on the job that he had been asked to do. Far too many people have deliberately set out to confuse the public about the task that was given to Lord Bridge. That task was purely to see whether warrants issued by the Home Secretary had been properly authorised, according to the guidelines. It is clear that that task was entirely appropriate for somebody who, for more than a year, had been exercising the role of monitor and had a knowledge of the way in which the system worked. He was the obvious person to carry out the task.

It is shaming that members of the hon. Gentleman's party should have made press statements and comments in Parliament denigrating a fine public servant who, on this occasion, was rightly prepared to carry out a task which he had been asked by the Prime Minister to perform.

The essence of the case put forward by the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland was that the role was one not for a judge but for a board of Privy Councillors. What absolute rubbish. The commissioner is the successor of the monitor, whose post has been in existence sice 1980. His job is to keep under continuous review the way in which the Secretary of State carries out his duties. He can go where he likes and see what material he likes. It is a policing role carried out by someone who commands public confidence, who is absolutely independent, who has an experienced legal mind and who can act independently and decisively.

The work which I have just described is not work for a committee of any sort. We are not talking about a committee of inquiry designed to produce recommendations about an incident. We are talking about a continuing review of the exercise of discretion and all of the associated administrative procedures. It is ludicrous to say that such a role could be carried out by a committee. In those circumstances, with great confidence I invite the Committee to reject the amendment.

Mr. Maclennan: I listened carefully to the slender arguments adduced by the Minister and the hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Norris) and to the patently malignant remarks of the hon. Member on the Opposition Front Bench, the name of whose constituency eludes me. [HON. MEMBERS: " Hammersmith"]. I refer, of course, to the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley).

Mr. John Golding (Newcastle-under-Lyme): Perhaps it would be advisable for the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) to come nearer the Opposition Front Bench so as more easily to see the hon. Member to whom he is referring. Otherwise there may be much confusion in the *Official Report* about who said what.

Mr. Maclennan: Only one Labour Member has deigned to speak on the amendment. I am sure that *Hansard* will not have any difficulty in determining who that hon. Member was. His reputation, in any event, runs before him.

The Minister allowed his attitudes to be put forward as a substitute for reason on this occasion. I regret that, because he is a thoughtful man who normally listens to argument and does not take refuge in words such as "preposterous," as he did on this occasion.

The Minister, like his hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East, failed to analyse the function of the commissioner. It is not a judicial function in any sense. It is not a function of evaluating evidence and reaching a verdict. It is that of conducting a continuing inquiry into Executive activities. I do not believe that judges are the right people to carry out that type of inquiry at that level.

The Minister did himself less than justice in being so dismissive of the possibility of a committee of Privy Councillors being the appropriate body to conduct a continuing inquiry. When it suits the Government, that is precisely what they set up. They established a committee of Privy Councillors to look into the conduct of the Falklands campaign. It was analogous, and involved high executive decisions taken by Secretaries of State on issues of national security. It was precisely the sort of matter in which it would have been wrong to ask a judge to intervene. It is far more appropriate for someone of the calibre of Lord Franks or the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) to conduct such an inquiry.

An inquiry by Privy Councillors into matters that touch on national security would carry weight. That is what we seek to ensure. The review of the exercise of the functions would be seen by the public and Parliament to carry weight.

I must retract one of my remarks about Lord Bridge. I have no criticism of his abilities or his public-spiritedness. He is an eminent man, who has reached his eminence through the demonstration of his qualities of character and mind. However, it was a mistake to give an individual judge such a task. It was the Government's mistake. It was a mistake for a judge to seek to discharge that role. Lord Bridge made that mistake. It would be a mistake for a judge to accept the role of commissioner under the terms of clause 8. However, if Parliament wishes and prefers to entrust that task to a judge than to a committee of Privy Councillors, no one will quarrel with that.

I must confront head-on the Minister's allegation that I was contributing to undermining the public's esteem of the Bench. That is a complete misconception. I specifically said that I believed that the judiciary was independent, and was properly regarded as such. However, I must draw attention to changing public opinion, and Ministers who are not aware of it are simply out of touch. The Minister should not seek to turn the charge against me. As a lawyer I have nothing but admiration for the Bench, its independence, integrity and public-spiritedness. I regret that the Minister thought that his weak argument would be bolstered by making a personal accusation of that kind. It was uncharacteristic and I hope that, on reflection, he will regret it.

Amendment negatived.

7.45 pm

Mr. Dubs: I beg to move amendment No. 82, in page 6, line 42, leave out from first 'the' to 'and' in line 2 of page 7 and insert

'matters referred to in sections 1 and 6 above'.

The Temporary Chairman: With this it will be convenient to take the following amendments:

No. 90, in page 7, line 19, leave out subsection (5) and insert—

'(5) If at any time it appears to the Commissioner that there has been a contravention of sections 2 to 6 above which has not been the subject of a report made by the Tribunal under section 7 above he shall refer the matter to the Tribunal for investigation under that section.

(5A) If at any time it appears to the Commissioner that any arrangements made for the purposes of section 6 above have proved inadequate he shall make a report to the Prime Minister with respect to those arrangements.'.

No. 92, in page 7, line 20, after 'that' insert

'an offence under section 1 above has been committed or'.

No. 93, in page 7, line 20, leave out '2' and insert '1'.

No. 96, in page 7, line 26, after 'that', insert 'offence or'.

No. 100, in page 7, line 30, at end insert

'nothing shall prevent the Commissioner from reporting upon any matter which he considers to be connected to the matters referred to in sections 1 to 6 of this Act, nor from making recommendations for the better regulation of the matters referred to in this Act'.

No. 101, in page 7, line 30, at end insert

'that report shall enumerate the number of occasions on which it appears to the Board that there has been a contravention of sections 2 to 5 above'.

No. 106, in page 7, line 40, at end add

'which exclusion may not remove the enumeration of the apparent contravention of sections 2 to 5 above referred to in subsection (6) above'.

No. 108, in page 7, line 40, at end add—

'(9) Where it seems appropriate to the Board and following consultation with the Prime Minister, the Board may report to the Tribunal its opinion that there has been a contravention of sections 2 to 5 above. On such a report the Tribunal shall notify any person who would in its opinion be entitled under section 7(2) to apply to the Tribunal for an investigation that it has received such a report from the Board.'.

Mr. Dubs: These amendments deal with the powers of the commissioner. I shall refer specifically to amendments Nos. 82, 93 and 100. All the amendments seek to widen the role and the functions of the commissioner.

Amendment No. 82 seeks to give the commissioner a wider role than that envisaged in the Bill. He would not merely supervise the Secretary of State in complying with the procedural requirements of the Bill, but would have the power to review the entire area of the interception of communications. He would also have a responsbility to review the extent of unauthorised interception which is not covered in the present arrangements for the commissioner's powers.

Amendment No. 93 would oblige the commissioner to report on any unauthorised or inappropriate interceptions which have been discovered, apart from any which may have been reported to the tribunal. Amendment No. 100 is intended to strengthen the role of the commissioner so

[Mr. Dubs]

that he could act as a watchdog over all operations which involve the interception of communications. It would allow the commissioner to review and comment on connected or related matters such as the visual surveillance of individuals or the infiltration of organisations. Why is it necessary for the commissioner to have wider powers than those envisaged in the Bill? I shall give some examples to justify the wider powers.

I shall deal with an incident that occurred a couple of weeks ago near my constituency, which is directly relevant to the amendments. The South London Hospital for Women and Children had been occupied by many women protesting against its closure. They had made contacts in the locality with many friendly people whose telephones they could use in their flats or houses, and where they went for cups of coffee. Those telephone numbers were on a list which the people occupying the hospital had made available. As a result of a court order obtained by the district local health authority, the police went in one night and removed the protesters.

On that evening four of the telephones in the neighbouring flats which had been part of the support system for the women occupying the hospital went out of action until the morning and then, miraculously, they started to work again. Hon. Members must decide whether that was a coincidence. However, I suggest that it is stretching the arm of coincidence too far for that to have occurred merely through a malfunctioning of the telephone system. Either the telephones were being intercepted and it was decided on the night when the police removed the protesters that to stop any support being marshalled it would be better to put the telephones out of order, or they were put out of order as part of a process of interception. It may have been a pure coincidence that four telephones went out of order. Other telephones may also have gone out of order, but I have not had time to check on that. I heard about the matter when people telephoned me to tell me what had happened.

I would like the commissioner to have the power to look into such an incident, and to be able to investigate such interception or interference with the telephones of ordinary people. At present there is no way in which people who feel their telephones have been interfered with have a right or the ability to have those wrongs redressed. If a commissioner had that responsibility, he could investigate and discover whether it was a coincidence or a deliberate attempt to undermine the ability of those women to telephone for more support on the night in question. However, if the events relating to the closure of the hospital were an isolated incident, one could say, "All right, it happened once".

We know well that whenever a cruise convoy leaves Greenham common heading westwards through Newbury towards Salisbury plain those people who are monitoring the movements of that convoy—this debate is not the occasion to go into the merits of that activity, but it is legal—and who telephone one another or who would like to to say that the convoy is heading down a road find suddenly that their telephones cease to function. There is no way in which that type of interference, which is what I allege it is, is within any of the terms of reference or the parameters which have been laid down by the Home Secretary or are suggested in the Bill.

Mr. Mark Carlisle: Perhaps I misunderstand what the hon. Gentleman has said, but surely what he is saying, if it be right, would be a matter for the tribunal rather than the commissioner. I thought that the tribunal was there to judge as the body to which the individual could go. As I understand it, the commissioner is more a judicial monitor. Although I do not accept the hon. Gentleman's argument that it is necessary to expand the role in the way he put forward, if it were, surely it would be the tribunal rather than the commissioner.

Mr. Dubs: I understand what the right hon. and learned Gentleman is saying. We are in some difficulty because the amendments seek to widen the role and functions of the commissioner and I therefore have to illustrate that predicament. As the Bill is at present drafted, it is unlikely that the incidents to which I have referred would be appropriate for the tribunal, because it would be argued that they do not necessarily represent interception of telephone communications so much as interference with or prevention of them. That being so, the amendments allow the commissioner to consider the wider question rather as some of us had hoped Lord Bridge would consider the wider question. I take the right hon. and learned Gentleman's point. It might be logical, if my argument were to be accepted, that one should also consider the functions, responsibilities and terms of reference of the tribunal and similarly to widen those responsibilities as I am seeking to widen those of the commissioner.

If the Minister were to accept the argument—I do not know that he will, even in the genial mood in which he is this evening—we could sort out the details on Report. There is a gap in the legislation and it is that gap to which I am drawing attention.

I shall return to the example of Lord Bridge which relates to the amendment. In a sense, the responsibility given by the Prime Minister to Lord Bridge recently in the context of anxiety about the "20/20 Vision" film about MI5 was narrow. I am not seeking to criticise Lord Bridge for the way in which he carried out his task. His terms of responsibility were so narrow that the conclusion to which he came was so inevitable that it was hardly worth his while carrying out the task. All he said was that no warrant for interception had been issued in contravention of the proper criteria, but the point about the "20/20 Vision" film and the amendments in relation to the commissioner are that other things may happen which are not directly and simply a matter of the precise way in which the Home Secretary has authorised an interception.

Clause 8(1)*(a)* states in relation to the functions of the commissioner:

"to keep under review the carrying out by the Secretary of State of the functions conferred on him by sections 2 to 5".

It is a matter there of saying, "Is the Home Secretary carrying out the functions as he should?" There was a clear implication with the "20/20 Vision" film not that the Home Secretary, or successive Home Secretaries, had authorised some of the things that the film revealed, but that they had been carried out without any authorisation. That is the difference.

If Lord Bridge had been given different terms of reference, he might well have been able to come up with conclusions relevant to the charges made in the film. There are three matters which are relevant to the amendments. Lord Bridge should have been asked to answer the

following three questions. First, did the interceptions and other forms of surveillance shown in the film take place? After all, the film was a matter of allegations. Secondly, who authorised them? Thirdly, if they were not authorised, how did it come about that any of them were carried out in an unauthorised manner? If those three questions had been answered, we should have had a longer and much more revealing report, although it would have taken Lord Bridge longer to investigate.

In the amendments, I am seeking to establish wider terms of reference which would allow the commissioner, if on any future occasion allegations were made similar to those in the MI5 film, to carry out the task which many of us hoped that Lord Bridge would have been able to carry out.

It is a matter of the terms of reference. I have conceded the right hon. and learned Gentleman's argument about the terms of reference of the tribunal, but, nevertheless, I should like to feel that if there were unease in the future the commissioner could study the whole range of allegations, because unless allegations are investigated how can any of us be satisfied that the events that we have been told about have been happening? As the Bill now stands, we may have further MI5 films and further investigations by the commissioner along the lines of the Lord Bridge inquiry, and none of us will be happy that the truth has come out.

The Minister owes it to the House and, obliquely, to Lord Bridge and to whoever will be appointed commissioner to modify the Bill. I hope that that will be done by accepting these amendments so that the type of anxiety that I have expressed will not be felt in the future.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I should like to speak to amendments Nos. 92 and 96. I shall anticipate the criticism that is likely to be made by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Carlisle) and say that the amendments are mirrored by amendments Nos. 63 and 75 which I tabled previously with respect to the tribunal's powers.

The purpose of amendments Nos. 92 and 96 is similar to that which the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs) sought to achieve. It is desirable that the commissioner should be empowered to determine whether an offence has been committed under clause 1. That is a jurisdiction which I wish to give to the tribunal as well. On reading the Bill, it seemed that the commissioner, as is also the case with the tribunal, is empowered to consider almost anything other than whether a substantive offence under clause 1 has been committed.

The commissioner receives the tribunal's report. He determines whether the Home Secretary is acting within the scope of the jurisdiction conferred on him by clause 2. The commissioner is empowered to determine whether the time limits have expired or have not been adhered to. He is empowered to determine whether the Home Secretary has complied with the procedure necessary to obtain a warrant. They are all proper matters for the commissioner to determine, but the one matter which he is precluded from determining is whether there has been unauthorised tapping, which is an offence under clause 1.

For the life of me I cannot understand why the commissioner, who receives information which discloses prima facie evidence of an offence under clause 1, should not be empowered to say, "This is my conclusion." Indeed, there are powerful reasons why he should. This is an infringement of the liberty of the subject. It is a criminal offence. At the discretion of the DPP, it is prosecutable. Why should not the commissioner draw the commission of an offence to the attention of the Prime Minister in the course of his report? He should do so. I would be very pleased if my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State could accede at least to the spirit of the amendment.

8 pm

Mr. Maclennan: I rise to support the amendment in the name of the hon. Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg). He has deployed his arguments with brevity and cogency and I will not animadvert further upon them. I should like, however, to commend to the Committee amendment No. 90 in the name of my hon. Friends and myself.

As the Bill is drafted, the procedures for investigating contraventions are somewhat inadequate. Only the tribunal will be able to investigate complaints by the public under the terms of clause 7(2), and neither the commissioner nor the Prime Minister seems to have any obligation to inform the tribunal of contraventions found by the commissioner. Someone whose communications have been wrongly intercepted may never know or suspect what has happened. As such contraventions cannot be considered by the ordinary courts or, under the terms of clause 9, even referred to in them, the commissioner should have an obligation to refer all contraventions to the tribunal.

Amendment No. 90 is designed to ensure that that should happen. It will also require the commissioner to have regard to the safeguards in clause 6 in deciding whether there had been a contravention. The commissioner would only report to the Prime Minister on the adequacy of the safeguards, as he or she would receive reports from the tribunal of its findings on any contraventions under clause 7(4).

Mr. Waddington: The Opposition amendments and those of my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) give the commissioner a role other than that provided for in the scheme of the Bill. The amendments tabled by the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) and his hon. Friends deal with a different point, but one that is also important. I promise not to be rude to the hon. Gentleman again.

The commissioner's role is to undertake from within a continuing review of everything concerned with authorised interception. That is often forgotten. His role is to ensure that warrants have been properly authorised. That task is entirely appropriate for a senior judicial figure and is one that a single person can effectively undertake.

Offences against the criminal law, on the other hand, are a matter for the police. What is the commissioner supposed to review in connection with clause 1? Is he supposed to supervise the adequacy of investigations or to become the recipient of allegations of criminal conduct that should be made to the police? I do not know. The commissioner has manageable duties under the Bill. How could he look into the operation of clause 1? His task is within Government. He has to consider whether, when the Secretary of State has authorised a warrant, he has done so correctly. It is not the commissioner's job to roam the country asking people whether they have heard funny clicks on their telephone lines.

I am not being frivolous. If the commissioner's job is other than to work within Government to make sure that

[Mr. Waddington]

when the Home Secretary issues a warrant he does so properly, what is his job? Is he to wander round the country in an investigative role? If so, is he the appropriate person to carry out that role? Is he to consider the way in which the police investigate offences? That would not be appropriate. Is he to be the recipient of complaints from members of the public that they think their wires have been tapped? That, again, would be inappropriate. That is a job for the police. I do not think for a moment that the commissioner could investigate the operation of clause 1. We should not muddle inquiries into offences, which are one distinct matter, with the duties of the commissioner, which are another.

My hon. Friend the Member for Grantham has raised — not in his own speech — a different point. What should happen if by chance, while carrying out his duties, the commissioner came across unlawful interception? Clearly, we in no way accept the implication that public servants will engage in unlawful interception contrary to clause 1. It is inherently unlikely that the commissioner will come across unlawful interception in the course of his duties, as his duties are undertaken within the Government, ascertaining whether the Secretary of State has issued warrants properly according to the guidelines.

In the unlikely event of his discovering that there has been unlawful interception, the commissioner is hardly likely not to bring to the attention of the authorities such evidence of an offence as he has discovered. In that respect, he would behave no differently from any other responsible person to whom evidence of an offence became available.

Amendment No. 101 stipulates that the commissioner's report should state the number of occasions when clauses 2 to 5 had been contravened.

Mr. Maclennan: I did not speak to amendment No. 101 because I assumed that it had fallen with an earlier amendment to which I spoke. However, I would be grateful for the Minister's remarks on it.

Mr. Waddington: I do not wish to speak for longer than necessary. Unless the hon. Gentleman particularly wants me to deal with that amendment, it would be more profitable for me to deal with matters about which hon. Members have shown concern.

Other amendments in the group suggest that the commissioner should report to the tribunal matters that have apparently not come to its notice, that the tribunal should then notify the person or persons concerned, and that the commissioner should report to the Prime Minister about any arrangements under clause 6 that he considers inadequate. There are considerable practicable difficulties in what is suggested. The tribunal is not supposed to substitute its own views for those of the Secretary of State, but rather to consider whether he has acted reasonably. The commissioner would be looking for cases in which something had gone wrong with the system. For instance, there might be a case in which the Home Secretary had acted reasonably but in which subsequent events had cast doubt on the reliability of the sources of his information. The commissioner will be able to question the wisdom of the issue of particular warrants without disputing the reasonableness of the Secretary of State's decision.

Presumably, if the necessary consequence of the commissioner's reporting his disquiet about a particular warrant was that the warrant became public knowledge, he would seek to minimise the damage to the system by limiting criticism to cases in which the issue of the warrant was beyond doubt unreasonable. Even then, difficulties would arise. For example, let us suppose that a warrant is properly issued in respect of a terrorist living in certain accommodation. However, a mistake is made and the Secretary of State is asked to renew the warrant after the terrorist has moved out and a perfectly innocent person has moved into that accommodation. If the commissioner notified the tribunal, and the tribunal notified the persons concerned, the tribunal would have to notify the terrorist as well as the householder. There is no easy way round the problem. We could not begin to follow the form of words chosen by the hon. Gentleman, and I am not suggesting that any other form would solve the problem that I have just described. That merely shows that the Bill is right to draw a clear distinction between the role of the commissioner in checking the system and the role of the tribunal in giving remedies to those who think that they are victims of improperly authorised interception.

I was surprised by what the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs) said. In effect, he said that the amendments are important because the problem with the Bill is that people will have no opportunity to have their wrongs redressed. The whole point of the Bill is that, for the first time, people will have an opportunity to have their wrongs redressed. In those circumstances, I invite the hon. Gentleman to withdraw his amendment.

Mr. Mark Carlisle: Although I accept that the commissioner is not the right body to consider the matters that the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs) has mentioned, what is the status of the tribunal? I accept that the role of the commissioner is to review the carrying out of the Secretary of State's duties in the granting of warrants, but it must be highly likely that the tribunal will find during its inquiries that unlawful interception has taken place. I am not clear what is to happen if the tribunal, on receiving a complaint from a member of the public who believes that his mail or telephone has been intercepted, finds that there is prima facie evidence of interception for which no warrant has been granted. Should the matter be referred to the police? What is the tribunal expected to do? Is there not a lacuna and should the tribunal be required to refer such matters to the Director of Public Prosecutions?

Mr. Waddington: The tribunal is under no duty to report such matters to the police, but it will act as any other body or individual would act. There is no reason to suppose that a tribunal would fail in its clear duty. It would have exactly the same duty as any other citizen who learnt that a criminal offence had been committed. These matters were discussed yesterday when my right hon. and learned Friend was unable to be here.

8.15 pm

Mr. Dubs: I accept that our amendments should also apply to the tribunal. I have listened carefully to the Minister but do not believe that he has answered the main doubt.

I understood him to say that if, during an investigation, the commissioner comes across breaches of the law, he is expected to report the matter to the police. The Minister did not say why the commissioner should not be allowed

to investigate prima facie when there have been allegations of the law being broken. I take the analogy of the Lord Bridge inquiry. He was asked to examine something which was defined pretty narrowly and he did not look further into whether some of the allegations in the film on MI5 were accurate. The Minister seemed to say that it is all right if the commissioner stumbles on something, in which case he will report it, but that he should not be empowered to set out to discover whether such things have happened. If the Minister is saying that such matters should be left to the tribunal, he must answer more fully how it will operate in circumstances such as I have described.

Mr. Waddington: I am not saying that that function should be carried out by the tribunal. It is to act in a quasi-judicial way. I am suggesting that those matters are for investigation by the police.

Mr. Dubs: The difficulty is how such matters are drawn to the attention of the police. I am sorry to labour the point, but the allegations in the MI5 film have not been answered, and the Minister knows it. There are clear allegations in that film that the law has been broken. Perhaps the law has not been broken because, before the Bill becomes law, we have no law. Perhaps that is the answer. However, if the Bill becomes law in its present form and if the film had been produced after then, how could the film's allegations be investigated? I suspect that they could not be investigated by the tribunal, unless those whose phones had apparently been intercepted complained to the tribunal. The alternative would be a Lord Bridge type inquiry, but with wider terms of reference—which are the subject of our amendments. I am not sure what the Minister is saying cannot happen and why. I think that the proposition is reasonable.

Mr. Waddington: I thought that I had made this matter plain. The commissioner's role is perfectly easy to understand. He works within the Government, carrying out a continuing review of how the Home Secretary carries out his duties, to ensure that when the Home Secretary issues a warrant he does so properly. How on earth can that be compared with investigating whether a criminal offence has been committed?

Mr. Dubs: I thank the Minister for answering the question. In that case, what is the procedure if there has been a breach of the law under clause 1? The Minister is saying that only the tribunal is available for that.

Mr. Waddington: No. The tribunal is concerned with complaints about warrants that should not have been issued but which have been issued. Clause 1 is concerned with breaches of the law. It creates a new criminal offence. If a person believes that he is the victim of the commission of a criminal offence, he will behave exactly as he would if any other offence had been committed. These are matters for investigation by the police. Any number of judges cannot carry out the work of the police. A man such as Lord Bridge cannot go on a roving commission investigating whether criminal offences have been committed. That would be improper. The job of investigating the new criminal offence created by clause 1 is for the police.

Mr. Dubs: I understand that, but we are still in a difficulty. If it is alleged that there have been interceptions without the issue of a warrant by the Secretary of State, as outlined in clause 1, what is an aggrieved person to do? The police will not have enough information on which to act. If MI5 is carrying out unauthorised interceptions, as was alleged in the film, the matter is too remote for the police to get the evidence. The whole point of the Lord Bridge inquiry is that it was set up following the allegations in the film on MI5. The Home Secretary may shake his head. However, when the Bill becomes law the police may well be able to carry out investigations if there are allegations of the kind made in the film. I understand the Minister's theoretical answer, but I do not understand how it will work in practice. Therefore, I do not believe that the point at issue has been covered. If the Minister says that the point has been covered, I can do no more than allow reinforcements to come in from the hon. Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg).

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I have some sympathy with the point that the hon. Gentleman is making. The Minister said that if there has been a breach under clause 1 this is entirely a matter for the police. If, however, the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs) cares to look at clause 7(2) of the Bill he will see that it empowers anybody who believes that his mail has been interfered with or his telephone tapped to go to the tribunal. At that stage the tribunal is in a position to determine whether an offence under clause 1 has been committed. Why should it not make a report to that effect?

Mr. Dubs: If the tribunal's remit is so wide, there is no problem.

Mr. Hogg: Under clause 7(2) a complaint is made to the tribunal that an offence has been committed under clause 1 but the tribunal is not empowered under clause 7(4) to make that determination and to report.

Mr. Dubs: If that is the case, the tribunal is nearly there, but not quite. I repeat that I am unhappy about this matter and I am not sure whether it will be possible to resolve it. I believe that we are left with an inadequacy in the Bill. I do not think that our discussions have pinned down whether the inadequacy is in the way the tribunal functions or in the way that the commissioner might function. I am prepared to accept that the terms of reference of the tribunal ought perhaps to be widened, but I repeat that there is a sense of anxiety which the Minister has not allayed.

Amendment negatived.

Mr. Golding: I beg to move amendment No. 87, in page 7, line 15, at end insert—

'(4) In pursuance of his functions under this Act the Commissioner may receive and retain documents or information from any person whomsoever, and such receipt or retention shall not be the subject of proceedings for an offence.'.

The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Sir Paul Dean): With this it will be convenient to discuss the following amendments:

No. 88, in page 7, line 15, at end insert—

'(4) It shall be lawful for any person holding office under the Crown or engaged in the business of the post office or in the running of a public telecommunication system who reasonably believes that an offence under section 1 above has or might have been committed or that there has or might have been a contravention of sections 2 to 5 above in relation to a relevant warrant or relevant certificate, to disclose or give the Commissioner such documents or information as the Commissioner might reasonably be expected to need in order to determine whether an offence under Clause 1 above has been or

[Sir Paul Dean]

might have been committed or whether there has been or might have been a contravention of sections 2 to 5 above in relation to a relevant warrant certificate.".

New clause 2 — *Protection for disclosure of information to the Tribunal, the Commissioner or the Select Committee*—

"Disclosure of information to the Tribunal, the Commissioner, or the Select Committee, in pursuance of their functions under this Act, shall not be the subject of proceedings for any offence.".

New clause 3—*Complaints Commissioner in respect of allegations of misconduct and abuse of authority by members of the security services intercepting communications*—

"(1) The Prime Minister shall appoint a person who holds or has held a high public office (in this section referred to as "the Complaint's Commissioner") to carry out the following functions, namely—

(a) to investigate any complaint made to the Complaints Commissioner by a member of the Security Services in respect of an allegation of misconduct or abuse of lawful authority by another member of the Security Services in relation to the interception of communications; and

(b) to decide whether in all the circumstances any such allegation is of such a character and substance as to justify a report by the Complaints Commissioner to the relevant Secretary of State; and if this is the case,

(c) to make as soon as practicable, a report to the relevant Secretary of State with respect to the alleged complaint.

(2) The Complaints Commissioner shall hold office in accordance with the terms of his appointment.".

Amendment *(a)* to the proposed new clause 3, at end add:

"(3) The Complaints Commissioner shall present an annual report to parliament of the number of complaints he has received and the number of complaints he has reported to the Secretary of State.".

Mr. Golding: May I say what a pleasure it is to debate the amendments without undue pressure on time.

These amendments relate to the situation that will face individuals who give information about unlawful telephone tapping. They will not be subject to the Official Secrets Act if they pass on information in a proper manner. I added my name to new clause 2 because of my interest as an official of the union which organises both the engineering and clerical staff of British Telecom and many workers in the Post Office. I want them to receive absolute protection when they provide information to the commissioner, the tribunal or a Select Committee, if such a committee is created, and also to a complaints commissioner, if this proposal is accepted.

Telephone tapping is undertaken by a small group of our members, and many others come across it in the course of their work. It is not a pleasant duty. Our members are sensitive to the criticism to which they are subjected for being associated with it. Many of them are also troubled when they believe that there is no apparently legitimate reason for the taps. They tell me that they particularly resent taps being installed for the monitoring of industrial disputes. As good citizens they support telephone tapping to fight serious crime and subversion, but the problem that our members face is that they cannot tell anybody when they believe that telephone tapping has gone beyond that. The managers of BT do not wish to know. They put the responsibility on the Home Office.

Our members are inhibited from coming to the union because of the Official Secrets Act. They ought to be able to complain either when they see what they believe to be unauthorised tapping or when they believe that the Government are failing to keep the law. They ought to be able to go to the commissioner, the tribunal or a Select Committee without fearing that action will be taken against them. The Bill, as drafted, does not provide that protection.

Clause 8(3) says:

"It shall be the duty of every person holding office under the Crown or engaged in the business of the Post Office or in the running of a public telecommunication system to disclose or give to the Commissioner such documents or information as he may require for the purpose of enabling him to carry out his functions under this section."

That, to me, implies immunity from prosecution, and I should be delighted if the Home Secretary could reassure me that that is so. However, even if such a reassurance is given, clause 8(3) does not cover tribunals or, if it were to be given power, a Select Committee. Under schedule 1 persons holding office under the Crown have a duty to provide information, and presumably they will escape prosecution under the Official Secrets Act, but this immunity does not extend to BT or Post Office employees who now work for private employers. Why should the conditions be different for the commissioner and the tribunal?

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Is there not yet another objection to this subsection, namely, that the duty to provide information or documents arises only if it is required—that is, if it is asked for — and does not provide immunity in the event of a public servant volunteering it?

Mr. Golding: The hon. Gentleman will have a chance to speak to his excellent amendment later. However, I shall refer to it now. My next sentence would have been that clause 8(3), which covers information to the commissioner on request, does not cover those cases where the employee wishes to give unsolicited information. This is indeed a very important question. BT and Post Office employees ought to be able freely to pass on information which worries them, yet it ought to be passed to somebody who, without holding direct responsibility, is totally safe from a security point of view. That means the commissioner, the tribunal or, if our proposals are accepted, the Select Committee and the complaints commissioner.

I would emphasise most strongly to the Home Secretary that it would be better if BT and Post Office employees, whom I represent, who are very troubled and disturbed about what they see, could go to the commissioner or to the tribunal rather than leak information to the newspapers in the hope that something will happen.

When people come to me asking what they should do in those circumstances, I would much rather be able to tell them that there is someone whom they can tell who is absolutely safe from the point of view of the security of the realm than to have to tell them that there is nothing that they can do, knowing that they will then be tempted to ring the *Daily Express*, the *Daily Mail*, *The Guardian* or *The Observer*. From the point of view of security, the Home Secretary would do well to think hard about this practical point.

8.30 pm

So far I have dealt only with the Official Secrets Act, but it is also important that no internal disciplinary action should be taken against any BT employee who gives

information. At present, the Bill does not cover that and the Home Secretary should consider it carefully. Under paragraph 4(2) of schedule 1 the tribunal is forbidden to disclose any information given to it without the consent of the person disclosing it, but BT and Post Office employees may regard that as insufficient protection because by the act of communicating, whether by letter or in some other way, their views on particular instances of telephone tapping they may not only have committed a breach of the Official Secrets Act but have acted in a way detrimental to the business and thus be subject to internal disciplinary proceedings. Just as no prosecution under the Official Secrets Act should be permitted, so no internal disciplinary proceedings should be permitted in these circumstances.

On Second Reading I asked in an intervention:

"Can the Home Secretary tell us whether employees working for public telephone operators will be able to give evidence to the tribunal about unauthorised telephone tapping without risking prosecution under the Official Secrets Act 1911? If employees cannot give such evidence, are we not to depend on official sources only for what are the facts of the situation?"

The Home Secretary replied:

"I am perfectly satisfied that the tribunal will have full powers to take whatever evidence is necessary in relation to a particular case. I do not believe that there will be any inhibition of the kind that the hon. Gentleman mentions." — [*Official Report*, 12 March 1985; Vol. 75, c. 164.]

It is not the ability to take evidence that is the question. The point is the ability to give evidence without fear of reprisals either under the Official Secrets Act or under internal disciplinary codes. That is very important indeed.

I ask the Secretary of State to consider these matters very carefully. I hope that we shall get a good response today. I should make it clear that in a matter as serious as this I would not press the precise wording of a particular amendment or seek to divide the Committee on the matter. It is not an issue of great party principle. It is, however, a matter of great practical consequence.

Before the hon. Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) jumps up again, I wish to deal with the background to this group of amendments and to say something about the hon. Gentleman's own proposals. New clause 3 recognises the importance of giving members of the security forces the opportunity to initiate complaints. It is essential that anyone who believes that something is going on unlawfully should be able to take the evidence to a person who is completely safe from the security point of view.

This group of amendments seeks to deal with a very difficult problem — how to ensure that Ministers and others are not encouraged to break the law because they act in complete secrecy and can rely on the fact that those who know about or stumble across the activities in question will baulk at the consequences of disclosure. That is the nub of the matter. At present, there is a great deal of discontent. We know that there is discontent in MI5, and I find it among employees of BT because on occasion —I do not wish to exaggerate this—they believe that things are not quite right and they want to be able to tell someone.

It is no answer to say that BT employees can go to the management of BT, because the management is not interested and will simply say that it is the business of the Home Office. It is equally pointless to tell employees of BT or MI5 that the right person to approach is the Home Secretary, because the Home Secretary is seen to be responsible for these activities and the people undertaking them may well be carrying them out in his name, so he is certainly the wrong person with whom to have a chat about what is going on.

There must be an independent person to whom people can go. Frankly, I am not fussy whether it is the commissioner, the tribunal or a complaints commissioner, but there must be an independent person to whom people can express their unease about the apparent unlawfulness of what is happening in their sphere of activity. I believe that this will also act as a check on the Home Secretary and his officials and on MI5, making them more accountable. If they know that there is a possibility of people operating in the field going to an independent person with responsibility for the oversight of telephone tapping, they will be more careful about keeping within the law. That is human nature. It is not, however, the major point to which I wish to draw attention.

The essential point is this. Despite my earlier comments, I believe that Post Office employees are covered as Crown employees, but it is vital that all BT employees should be exempt from any threat under the Official Secrets Act or internal disciplinary procedures if they give evidence, solicited or unsolicited, to the commissioner, the tribunal or any other responsible body.

Sir Edward Gardner: I wish to speak to new clause 3 which stands in my name and those of my right hon. and hon. Friends.

The new clause seeks to give the security services what I believe many people on both sides of the Committee would agree are badly needed facilities—the means to make a complaint or to express dissatisfaction about what is happening within the service. It hardly needs to be said that secrecy is the ace weapon of the secret service, giving the security services the same advantages of stealth and surprise on which the sinister people — terrorists, dangerous criminals and those involved in subversion— also rely.

The trouble with secrecy, of course, is that in the wrong hands, and handled irresponsibly, it can be a weapon that backfires. In those circumstances, the people who will suffer are the people who should not be touched by the secret services, and civil liberty itself can, indeed, as we know, be put in danger.

It would in my view, and I am sure in the view of all hon. Members, be quite unrealistic to suppose that any service or any group of people could ever be looked upon as being free from the risk of having in their number those who might misconduct themselves or abuse or misuse privilege and authority. When this happens, if it does happen, the question is the very question that new clause 3 attempts to answer: what happens if a member of the security services discovers, believes or, indeed, is certain that a colleague in the service is, in the words of new clause 3, abusing the authority which has been given to him? To whom does this discontented, dissatisfied or possibly very alarmed member of MI5, for example, turn? At the moment, there does not appear to be anyone. There is no channel through which he can put a complaint. There is no one to whom he can say "I feel that something is going wrong in the service, and I want to have it investigated and put right." There is no oversight, no independent person standing either inside or outside the service who can undertake the very responsible and, I believe, very necessary task of making up his mind whether something is going wrong.

[Sir Edward Gardner]

As to the case of Michael Bettaney, an MI5 officer who was recently the subject of a criminal investigation and ultimate conviction, this man, it seems, when he was dissatisfied turned, or tried to turn, to the KGB. A colleague who was working with him, a Miss Miranda Ingram, has said, or at least certainly has written in *New Society*, that she knew Bettaney well, and if Bettaney had had someone to whom he could have talked in confidence, in her view, from what she knew of the man and the circumstances, it was unlikely that he would have done what he did.

May I ask the Committee also to consider the case of Sir Roger Hollis. My hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) referred to this case earlier in the debate, and I do not want to repeat what he said. It is important to remember that not only was Sir Roger Hollis the director-general of the service MI5, but ultimately he became the target of suspicion of officers in that service who found themselves impotent when they tried to express their dissatisfaction and uncertainty about what Sir Roger Hollis was doing because they believed — rightly or wrongly—that he was the man who was the mole, who was in fact working with the KGB. When the colleagues of Sir Roger Hollis — and this seems to me wholly pertinent to the question of the proposal contained in new clause 3 that there should be a complaints commissioner to whom members of the secret service should be able to turn—tried to make known their suspicions, they had ultimately to send one of their number to No. 10 Downing street. He tried to see the Prime Minister and ultimately he was fortunate in being able to consult the secretary of the Cabinet of the day, Lord Hunt of Tanworth, and from that, of course, as we all know, flowed the inquiry into the various events which have given rise to the suspicions.

8.45 pm

If there had been, as I submit to the Committee that there certainly ought to be, a complaints commissioner standing outside the security services, then there would be no reason, and certainly no excuse, for someone like Miss Massiter to turn to the media to try to get relief. It is the absence of someone to whom the dissatisfied officer in MI5 or the security services can turn that leaves what I believe is an alarming gap in the procedures that ought to be available within the secret service.

The support that is being given, I understand — though looking round the Chamber would not be the best evidence of it—to new clause 3 is substantial and wide and covers both sides of the Committee, I am happy to say. I understand, for example, that the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees), a former Labour Home Secretary, and the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan), a former Home Secretary and a former Prime Minister, both have indicated their support for new clause 3 and the intention which it proclaims of the appointment by the Prime Minister of a complaints commissioner. The complaints commissioner would first investigate any complaint, he would then have to decide whether the complaint was one of substance and was sufficiently serious to justify a report, and he would then have to report, as new clause 3 makes quite clear, to the relevant Secretary of State. His duties—and this has been pointed out during the course of the debate—would be wholly different, separate and distinguishable from the duties of the commissioner who is now known as the judicial monitor. His duties would be those which at present are being fulfilled by no one in MI5.

There is an alternative to the solution which is set out in new clause 3, and I recognise that. The alternative is a reorganisation of the administration within MI5. It would be a managerial solution. Attempts should be made by the management to see that when complaints are made they are heard and investigated, and conclusions are reached which would be for the benefit of the service. I do not for one moment have the least confidence in that alternative being a remedy for the specific difficulties that we are facing at present through the absence of a proper channel for complaint.

In America, the CIA and the FBI were both troubled —and grievously troubled—by the sort of problems that we in this country have found affecting MI5. In America, they tried to resolve those problems by administrative reform, by bringing in what one might call managerial solutions, and they failed. And what did they do, having failed? They appointed an inspector general within an oversight system of the kind that is proposed by new clause 3. In Canada, people were troubled, as they had been in America and we have been here, by the problem of no proper channel for complaint. They tried to bring in the alternative of a managerial solution. They, too, failed. What did they do? They appointed an inspector general of the kind that is proposed by the new clause, under the title of a complaints commissioner. I am told that in both America and Canada they call him an ombudsman. I do not mind what they call him provided that we have one.

There were suspicions in the case of Sir Roger Hollis, there was the case of Michael Bettaney and the film of Miss Massiter. If anyone believes that we have seen the last of those troubles, he is deceiving himself. Those troubles and problems are so serious and so fundamentally affect the future security and efficiency of our security services that they must be faced by the Government. I believe that my new clause contains the proper and effective solution. If my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary cannot say that it is the right solution, I hope that he will at least undertake to look again at the problem so that at some later stage we may have the opportunity of reconsidering all these difficulties and bringing them to a proper and satisfactory conclusion.

Mr. Maclennan: I support new clause 3, spoken to by the hon. and learned Member for Fylde (Sir E. Gardner) with eloquence and cogency. It would be difficult to resist the force of what he said about the present situation and the inadequacies of the routes available to those within the secret service who are concerned, rightly or wrongly, that there has been some fault or activity that they believe is reprehensible, dangerous or wrong.

The hon. and learned Gentleman made a positive case extremely well. I have tried hard to think what conceivable arguments the Government might try to apply against it. The strongest argument that they could dredge up is that the new clause would be ineffective because it would be difficult for an outsider to have total access to the workings of the machine that would enable an effective examination to take place. In the case of Sir Roger Hollis, it was possible for channels to be blocked, or at least it was alleged that that happened. There is no guarantee that an outsider, given the most far-reaching powers, would be able to unblock such channels or would not be stopped by

the battlement deliberately put in the way by someone obstructive in a hierarchy where it is possible to block communications.

However, that argument of ineffectiveness does not demolish the hon. and learned Gentleman's case. I suspect that the complaints that arise from time to time flow from an incomplete appreciation of the picture by someone in the service who is capable of seeing it only from that corner from which he views those things, a part of the whole. All that is needed is an outside, independent person to say, "I have looked at the situation in the round and I think that what has happened is justified and was done for good reasons." Then many of the problems might disappear.

I think that the hon. and learned Gentleman has in mind someone of the highest authority and experience and of the utmost probity and reliability to be in such a role. Therefore, there is no possible security argument that could be deployed against the hon. and learned Gentleman's case.

Sir Edward Gardner: The person who would be eligible for such an appointment by the Prime Minister would, as the new clause says, be someone who holds or has held high public office.

Mr. Maclennan: I have no doubt that suitable names spring to mind.

Even if the new clause does not altogether deal with the problem, which has occurred repeatedly—the hon. and learned Gentleman cited the examples of the Bettaney, Hollis and Massiter cases—we must try to do something to improve the situation. It may not be the perfect remedy, but at least it does not carry within it any seeds of the destruction of the service. It is not such a radical proposal that it need cause fluttering in the dovecots of those who have a professional involvement in security matters and to whom "outside intervention" of any sort would certainly seem unusual. It should not necessarily be unwelcome.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I should like to speak to amendment No. 88, which is in my name.

I also support in broad terms new clause 3 argued so persuasively by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Fylde (Sir E. Gardner) and the point made by the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan).

However, I do not want to range as widely as my hon. and learned Friend because I should like to confine my attention to the scope of the Bill. We are seeking to determine a good system for investigating complaints about the misuse of the interception of telephones and postal communications. That is the prime purpose of the Bill. The inevitable truth is that those who know most about the abuses are those who are employed either in the public service or by the relevant agencies of the public service. For the most part, they are covered either by the Official Secrets Act or by restrictive covenants in their contracts of employment. Consequently, they cannot go to the commissioner with a complaint without exposing themselves either to prosecution under the Act or perhaps to disciplinary procedure arising from a breach of their contract of employment.

It is perfectly true that subsection (3) gives unlimited protection, but that protection exists only when the commissioner requires disclosure of information or production of documents. It does not exist when somebody wishes to volunteer either one or the other. It is in the public interest that members of the security services, Crown employees of one kind or another, employees of BT or the Post Office, should be able to go to the commissioner if they have reasonable grounds to suppose that an offence is being committed under clause 1 or that there has been a contravention of clauses 2 to 6, and that they should be able to do this without exposing themselves to legal sanctions.

There are three things which make this desirable. First, this is a way whereby abuses will be discovered and the existence of the sanction will itself be a further restraint and check on abuses. That is the first advantage.

Secondly, these are matters that should be brought to the attention of the public. Furthermore, this will act as a safeguard for discontented members of the security services. If they do not have a safe quarter to which they can turn, they will be dissatisfied and discontented.

9 pm

Mr. Golding: I am not sure that it is a matter of bringing it to the attention of the public. The attraction of the amendment for me is that it is taken to somebody who is going to examine it in private. These are not matters, speaking for myself, about which we want public discussion. I have been appalled at the naming of Harry Newton as an MI5 agent without possibility of proof or disproof. We do not want discussion of these matters in public, either because of the individuals involved or because of the security of the realm or wanting to fight crime. What is needed is access to somebody in private who is able to act on one's behalf.

Mr. Hogg: The rebuke is well taken and the hon. Gentleman is quite right. To use President Reagan's words, I mis-spoke myself. The point I am making is that it is desirable that there should be a body to which discontented members of the security services can turn. It is the fact of disclosure to that body and then an independent and private inquiry that will do so much to reduce discontent within the secret service and elsewhere.

The third point is that, if there is not this particular safety valve, people will undoubtedly turn to the press and there will be a whole series of scare stories, which would be in nobody's interest.

Accordingly, I am in favour of some means whereby members of the security service, the Post Office and BT who fear there may have been an offence or a contravention can pass on this information without exposing themselves to legal action.

Mr. Brittan: The debate covers two separate but related aspects of the Bill. The first is the anxieties initially expressed by the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mr. Golding) about the position whereby the staff of BT or the Post Office had information which they were afraid to disclose for fear that they would be guilty of an offence under the Official Secrets Act.

I would not wish those staff to be inhibited in any way by such a concern. The only reason why I cannot advise the Committee to accept this amendment is that I believe that they need not be inhibited by any such concern under the provisions of the Bill together with the general law as it stands. I can certainly assure the Committee that if I were not of that view I would be extremely sympathetic to the belief that it is necessary to do something about it.

[Mr. Brittan]

I have no desire to prevent those with legitimate grounds for making a complaint or anxieties to express through the proper channel from doing so.

To explain why I think that it is not necessary for there to be any provision other than what stands on the face of the Bill it is necessary once again to make the distinction I made at an earlier stage, in our deliberations on another amendment, between the various institutions and the various things that may go wrong. I will deal first with the aspect that has been the main subject of this part of the debate and the anxiety expressed by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett)—that is, breaches of the law; matters which become offences under clause 1 but which have not been offences until now.

I am advised that, if a telecommunications or Post Office employee were, like any other member of the public in a similar position, to make a complaint to the police—which would be the proper avenue for dealing with breaches of the law—he would not be in breach of section 2 of the Official Secrets Act.

I should explain—this relates perhaps to some of the earlier debates rather than to this one—that it is my intention to issue guidelines to the police, as I said on Second Reading, as to how they should discharge the new function of investigating breaches of the law constituted by this newly created offence. The police will have a new task and they might require assistance from outside their own ranks to investigate matters which previously had not been subject to their scrutiny. Someone who makes a complaint to the police about a breach of the law will not be liable to prosecution under the Official Secrets Act.

We must also consider impropriety, which is within the ambit of the commissioner and the tribunal. I do not want anyone to be inhibited by the fear of prosecution under section 2 of the Official Secrets Act.

Hon. Members have mentioned clause 8(3), which imposes a duty on all concerned to disclose to the commissioner such documents or information as he may require to enable him to carry out his functions. My hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) made a distinction between information sought by the commissioner and information volunteered by those who believe that their information is relevant to the commissioner's task. It will be for the commissioner to determine how he formulates his requirement for information and documents.

There is little doubt that those requirements will be expressed — this is the Government's intention — in general terms and be directed to the Ministers or senior persons concerned and so will apply to all subordinate staff. Anyone in possession of information which he thinks is relevant to the commissioner, even if he has not been asked for it, would be authorised to disclose it, and therefore not be guilty of an offence under section 2. If there were any doubt, the person need only tell the commissioner that he is in possession of relevant information or documents and the commissioner will ensure that his requirement is framed, or reframed, in terms which cover those circumstances. It is inconceivable that that would not be done.

Although I sympathise with the anxieties of hon. Members on both sides, I do not believe that an amendment is necessary because the Bill, with the general law, is couched in terms which will have the desired effect.

Mr. Golding: The Minister has been helpful and I thank him. However, I am still unclear about why the provision is different for the commissioner and for the tribunal. Have I missed the explanation?

Mr. Brittan: The tribunal's position is different. The commissioner is concerned with interception in general terms, with the whole operation of the system and perhaps with impropriety in the broader sense. The tribunal is concerned with a narrower question. It must decide whether official interception has taken place — a relatively simple matter—and whether it should have taken place in the sense of the Secretary of State acting reasonably in applying the criteria when he issues the warrant. For those purposes, the information relates to the material presented to the Secretary of State. That material will not emanate from Post Office or telecommunications employees. The tribunal's task therefore differs from the commissioner's task. It is almost impossible to conceive of circumstances in which the particular protection of the tribunal as opposed to that of the commissioner is called for.

Mr. Golding: The Home Secretary might find it difficult to envisage such circumstances, but what harm is there in the Home Secretary making it absolutely clear that, if such circumstances arose, the same cover would apply to tribunals as applies to commissioners? Because there is doubt in the minds of BT staff, and possibly Post Office staff, what do we have to lose by making it absolutely certain in the Bill that BT and Post Office employees can give evidence to the tribunal, if they wish, without fear of prosecution under the Official Secrets Act? In many ways, it would be simpler if the Home Secretary, who has been so helpful in the matter of the commissioner, at the very least said, "I shall look at this aspect again before Report" rather than shut the door.

Mr. Brittan: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for accepting what I said about complaints about the police. I beg him not to fail to appreciate that, just because the police are not mentioned, they are the most important part of the matter. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman also for accepting that the coverage effectively deals with the commissioner.

I do not believe, for the reasons that I have given, that there is a problem in relation to the tribunal, but I shall be happy to consider the hon. Gentleman's points further. As presently advised, it would be wrong for me to give the impression that a further gap needs to be filled. I shall certainly consider the hon. Gentleman's point.

My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Fylde (Sir E. Gardner) referred to wider matters. They are very much wider matters. The Bill relates to interception, so it is inevitable that my hon. and learned Friend's new clause should refer to complaints about interceptions. Many, if not most, of the complaints mentioned in the various examples given by my hon. and learned Friend either do not primarily relate to interception or do not relate to interception at all. It would be a curious remedy therefore to set up a complaints system that would deal with the problems which have been identified, rightly or wrongly, by my hon. and learned Friend and would confine itself

to the interception of communications. It would plainly be impossible for this legislation to do anything other than confine itself to the interception of communications.

I hope that my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Fylde will not feel that, apart from any other considerations, the necessity of giving so narrow a remit to the commissioner makes it inappropriate for the legislation to contain such a provision.

Sir Edward Gardner *rose*——

Mr. Brittan: I think that I shall be dealing with the broader point to which my hon. and learned Friend intends to refer.

Sir Edward Gardner: I was going to point out that I was very much aware that some of my examples were merely illustrative of the need for a person to investigate complaints. I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend will bear in mind that the Massiter film dealt with alleged unlawful and wrongful interceptions.

9.15 pm

Mr. Brittan: Perhaps my hon. and learned Friend would be good enough to peruse at his leisure my speech on Second Reading. He will find that I dealt seriatim with the various allegations, of which the allegations in relation to interception — which were the subject of Lord Bridge's report—were only a part. Therefore, the very example that my hon. and learned Friend gives appears to illustrate that this would be an ineffective remedy even if a remedy of this kind were appropriate for the security services.

I thought that my hon. and learned Friend was going to chide me with not dealing with the broader considerations that he raised. However, he was charitable enough to anticipate that I might go on to do so. Of course, I share and understand his concern and that of other hon. Members about the necessity for those in the security services to be able adequately to discharge their feelings of resentment, discontent, inadequacy as to their seniors' conduct or even a feeling that something more serious had gone wrong. It is important that there should be a proper way in which they can do so. However, there is a risk that, because there have been one or two cases such as those mentioned, wrong conclusions may be reached.

I do not accept that it necessarily follows that a person who has subsequently gone very seriously wrong would not have done so if there had been a person on whose shoulders he could lean. It is very easy, for charitable or other reasons, to make such assertions. Even if we were inclined to go down that path, we would be reluctant to impose so great a degree of confidence in an institution as to assume that it could avert a person in that frame of mind from committing offences. There is a risk that topical examples lead us to reach the wrong conclusions.

The experience of a disciplined service in which those who feel that something has gone wrong need a vehicle for expressing their discontent is not unique to the security services. Indeed, it is not unique to them for the position to be such that disclosure of information by disaffected persons would be damaging to the country. An obvious example is the armed forces of the Crown, where many people in both the lower and more senior positions are properly and necessarily equipped with material information of a highly secret nature.

I do not think that it would be suggested that we should have an ombudsman in that area of activity. It is appropriate to consider in the Civil Service as a whole what the proper channel of complaint should be. Most people who have been involved in these matters, whether in the Civil Service, armed forces or the security services, would feel that it is a proper function of senior management to organise itself so that there is a machinery whereby persons lower down can ventilate complaints with confidence that they will be properly investigated.

It is necessary that that should happen in any organisation — the so-called managerial solution, on which my hon. and learned Friend looked with an unnecessarily critical gaze—but we are talking not only about a large organisation but one where there is ministerial responsibility and oversight. I said on Second Reading that I regarded the discharge of that responsibility as one of my most important tasks; that I wished to make certain in my mind that the director-general and his senior colleagues so organised the security service that it was possible, and active encouragement was given, for complaints to be made.

I have discussed that matter with the new director-general and I propose to continue discussing it so as to satisfy myself that, within the security service, the problem is adequately understood and properly dealt with. That is the right approach. It is reasonable to have a system in which one is alert to the problem but in which the responsibility for dealing with it is put on the professional head of the service, under the superintendence of the Minister to whom he is responsible.

That is the proper approach to these matters and we should not be diverted from it because of an example, or even a couple of examples, where it is asserted, but cannot be proved, that the alternative approach commended in the amendment would have prevented serious matters that did occur.

I assure hon. Members, from the point of view of the director-general and myself, that I regard the provision of proper machinery in the security service for the ventilation of complaints of all kinds as a matter of great importance. The Committee owes a debt of gratitude to my hon. and learned Friend for giving us the opportunity to make the position on that absolutely clear.

Mr. Golding: It must be a sign of the times that the Home Secretary is far more critical of amendments standing in the names of his hon. Friends than he is of anything that we on these Benches say. I thank him for his positive approach to the problems that the members of my union face. I say that with the proviso that we shall almost certainly table a new clause on Report.

Mr. Brittan: The hon. Gentleman must not add to what I said. I expressed sympathy, but I gave no undertaking.

Mr. Golding: I am mystified. I simply thanked the right hon. and learned Gentleman for his positive approach. I shall read with wonderment the *Official Report* of what I must have said that has caused him so much concern. I am glad that the right hon. and learned Gentleman rose, because I am encouraged to examine every dot and comma of his reply. In other words, I shall examine far more carefully than I might otherwise have done the position that he adopted.

Until the Home Secretary rose to interrupt me, I was positively grateful to him for what he said about the

[Mr. Golding]

commissioner and about access to the police. In view of his intervention, I am not sure whether he is withdrawing some of what he said earlier.

Mr. Norris: Get on with it.

Mr. Golding: Any Conservative Member who tells me at 9.25 in the evening to "Get on with it" cannot have had as much experience of my speeches as, for example, the Government Whip. We are debating a matter that is most important to me. It will not be dealt with by Conservative Members, who come in out of the cold late in the debate and make comments from a sedentary position.

We are not satisfied with the position regarding the tribunals, and we shall certainly table a new clause for consideration on Report. I am not sure whether the Government should not give protection to British Telecom and Post Office employees in respect of information which tribunals may request from them. If the Government are saying that they cannot envisage tribunals asking for evidence, they should make it clear in the Bill that tribunals do not have the right to ask for information. It is wrong for the Government to create a position which will give tribunals the power to ask BT and Post Office personnel to give information relating to their duties which is covered by the Official Secrets Act without at the same time making it absolutely clear in the Bill that there will be no breach of the Act if the employees respond to that request. The Home Secretary cannot have it both ways.

Mr. Brittan: The hon. Gentleman is doing both himself and me less than justice. I said that I would consider his point carefully. If he wishes me to do so, I shall do so. However, if he misrepresents what I said, it makes it difficult to do so in the same spirit.

Mr. Golding: I should have thought that the Home Secretary would consider my point despite what I say. I should have thought that, acting in a judicial manner, he would not say to me, "If you are hard on me, I shall consider the matter differently from the way that I would consider it if you said nice things to me." The Home Secretary must consider the matter carefully.

I put two separate points to the right hon. and learned Gentleman. Under the Bill, will the tribunal have power to ask BT and Post Office staff about matters relating to their official duties? If the answer is yes, he must give protection to those employees. If the answer is no, he must make it absolutely clear to the tribunal that it cannot ask them about such matters. It must be one way or the other. That is my point.

I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment, although I am not satisfied——

The Second Deputy Chairman (Sir Paul Dean): Order. Before the hon. Gentleman does that, another hon. Member wishes to make a contribution.

9.30 pm

Sir Edward Gardner: I am bound to say to my right hon. and learned Friend that my faith in the efficacy of the proposal in new clause 3 has in no way been undermined by anything that he has proposed by way of an alternative managerial solution. I am anxious, as I hope every member of the Committee is, to give the idea contained in new clause 3 the opportunity of living on and, I hope, a more successful day.

The Second Deputy Chairman: Does the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mr. Golding) wish to withdraw his amendment?

Mr. Golding: I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I beg to move amendment No. 142, in page 7, line 31, leave out 'Subject to subsection (8) below'.

The Second Deputy Chairman: With this it will be convenient to discuss amendment No. 143, in page 7, line 33, at end insert

'together with a statement as to whether any matter has been excluded from that copy in pursuance of subsection (8) below.'.

Mr. Hogg: This is part of the process which provides greater safeguards for the citizens. Under clause 8(4) the procedure is for the tribunal to report to the commissioner. The commissioner investigates and considers and then, in time, reports to the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister is under a duty to provide a copy of the annual report made by the commissioner, but it is clear and necessary that the Prime Minister should have the power to delete material which is prejudicial to the national security. It seems to me, and I hope that it will seem so to my hon. and learned Friend, that if that power is exercised, the fact that that material has been excluded should be contained in the report. It is additional information which I feel the House should have.

Mr. Waddington: The Government welcome the approach adopted in these amendments and will be glad to see them incorporated in the Bill. The commissioner's report must meet two requirements. It must be frank, and the commissioner must not in any way be inhibited in what he thinks is appropriate formally to draw to the Prime Minister's attention. He therefore may wish to comment on matters of the greatest secrecy. It is therefore also necessary that before the report is published such passages should be deleted. If that were not possible, the report could not serve the purpose which it is intended to serve.

The Government like these amendments because they, as it were, round off that arrangement. They ensure that the Prime Minister makes a statement if any changes have been made, so that Parliament is informed of the fact of deletions, but is not, of course, given any indication as to their content. These are welcome additions to the Bill. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for moving the amendment.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment made: No. 143, in page 7, line 33, at end insert

'together with a statement as to whether any matter has been excluded from that copy in pursuance of subsection (8) below.'. —*[Mr. Douglas Hogg.]*

Clause 8, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 9

EXCLUSION OF EVIDENCE

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I beg to move amendment No. 109, in page 8, line 2, after 'shall', insert

'except as authorised by a direction given in pursuance of subsection (1A) below'.

The Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Harold Walker): With this it will be convenient to consider amendment No. 110, in page 8, line 8, after 'persons', insert—

'(1A) a direction as mentioned in subsection (1) above may be given by a court or tribunal if that court or tribunal is satisfied whether on application or otherwise that a failure to give such a direction would seriously prejudice the rights of one or more of the parties to the proceedings there before it.

In the event of such a direction being given no matter given as evidence pursuant to that direction shall be published in any written publication available to the public or to broadcast except as authorised by direction made under subsection (1B) below.

(1B) If the court or tribunal which makes such a direction as is mentioned in subsection (1B) above is satisfied that the effect of subsection (1B) is to impose a substantial and unreasonable restriction upon the reporting of the proceedings and that it is in the public interest to remove or relax the restriction it may direct that that subsection shall not apply to such matter as is specified in the direction.

(1C) If any matter is published or broadcast in contravention of subsection (1A) of this section, the following persons, namely——

(a) in the case of a publication in a newspaper or periodical, any proprietor, any editor and any publisher of the newspaper or periodical;

(b) in the case of any other publication, the person who publishes it; and

(c) in the case of a broadcast, any body corporate which transmits or provides the programme in which the broadcast is made and any person having functions in relation to the programme corresponding to those of an editor of a newspaper,

shall be guilty of an offence and liable on

(i) summary conviction to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 6 months or to a fine not exceeding the statutory maximum or both;

(ii) on conviction on indictment to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 7 years or to a fine or both.

(1D) In this section—

"a broadcast" means a broadcast by wireless telegraphy of sound or visual images intended for general reception, and cognate expressions shall be construed accordingly;

"written publication" includes a film, a sound track and any other record in permanent form but does not include an indictment or other document prepared for use in particular legal proceedings.'.

Mr. Hogg: I take the view that these are important amendments. As I understand it, the effect of clause 9 as it stands is that in no legal proceedings other than those mentioned in clause 9(4) may evidence be adduced to the effect that an offence has been committed under clause 1 or that the warrant is in existence. That is a broad power. It is a statutory prohibition on the admission of evidence in court.

The first question that I must ask my hon. and learned Friend is whether at the moment there is any statutory bar on the admission of evidence relating to the issue of warrants or the identity of persons to whom the warrant has been issued. So far as I am aware, there is no such statutory bar. I feel sure that the Committee would appreciate my hon. and learned Friend's guidance. There is of course always the residual power of the judge to exclude, but I am not aware of the exclusion being used in circumstances such as these.

If I am right in thinking that there is at present no statutory bar, the Government are going beyond what was said in paragraph 7 of the White Paper, which stated that it was not the purpose of the Bill to extend the law beyond the existing custom and practice. If we introduce an exclusion rule which does not exist at present, we shall indeed go beyond present custom and practice.

The purpose of the amendment is to admit evidence of the kind to which I have referred but which is now excluded in certain circumstances. There must be, and there is, a general presumption in favour of the admission of relevant evidence. I do not mean a legal presumption —there is in fact a legal rule—but every member of the Committee will accept that as a general rule relevant evidence should be admitted to courts. Sometimes it is necessary to impose restraints on the publication of matters before a court. Sometimes that is justified. However, as a general rule, I am in favour of relevant evidence being admitted before a court.

One must recognise that the exclusion of relevant evidence can often cause real prejudice. That is a general proposition. May I test it by example? If I suggest an example, my hon. and learned Friend can always say that the example is a fanciful one, that such a case would be unlikely to arise, or that such evidence would perhaps be admitted or would not be relevant. However, I would like to test the proposition by considering two or three examples.

First, let us take the example of a libel case. A newspaper alleges of a Minister or a specific official that he has acted in a repressive, unreasonable or dictatorial way. That would seem to be a defamatory observation to make of any Minister or official. The Minister or official sues the newspaper for libel. The newspaper has in its possession evidence to show that the Minister or official had connived at, instigated or otherwise been a party to an unlawful interception or an interception which contravened clause 2 and the consequential clauses. Is it to be said that, in libel proceedings, a newspaper is not able to adduce evidence to show that an offence has indeed been committed under clause 1, or alternatively that the Minister or official has connived at a breach of, for example, clause 2? That is an extraordinary proposition. It does not seem right at all. That is one example of a case in which the interests of justice and of the parties involved require the admission of that class of evidence.

Let us take another example. An employee of British Telecom unlawfully intercepts a telephonic communication. That employee is of course committing an offence under clause 1. He is therefore dismissed. He then goes to the industrial tribunal and claims that he has been dismissed unfairly. However, the reason why he was dismissed is that he had been interfering with telephonic communications, which is an offence under clause 1. Is his employer to be prevented by the Bill from adducing evidence to that effect or cross-examining on that matter?

For a third example, let us take the case of a Post Office worker. Quite frequently—I mean no disrespect to the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mr. Golding) —members of the postal service interfere unlawfully with the mail, for a variety of reasons. That happens in a significant number of cases every year, and could be an offence under clause 1. The Post Office dismisses that employee, and the employee goes to the industrial tribunal alleging unfair dismissal. The reason for his dismissal was an offence under clause 1. Is the Post Office to be prevented from adducing evidence, or cross-examining, to the effect that there has been an offence under clause 1? The answer must be no. Nevertheless, all of the cases that I have outlined are covered by the Bill in its present form and would prevent justice from being done. That is why it is a serious matter.

[Mr. Hogg]

I am aware that deeply sensitive issues must be involved in the material that might be put before courts. I have therefore put down the presumption that such evidence will not be admitted. That is the starting point. I have then incorporated the proviso that such evidence may be admitted if refusal to admit it

"would seriously prejudice the rights of one or more of the parties to the proceedings".

We therefore start from the presumption—which my hon. and learned Friend the Minister would favour—that the evidence is inadmissible, and say that it must be admitted if the judge or tribunal gives a direction in the interests of justice. Even then I am prepared to accept my hon. and learned Friend's anxiety, because I have provided that the material should not be published unless the tribunal or judge thinks that it is in the national interest to do so.

I regard this as a modest means of dealing with the problem. A bar is likely to cause grave injustice, and I am anxious about its appearance in a statute presented by my hon. and learned Friend.

Mr. Waddington: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising interesting issues. There is no statutory bar on evidence being adduced on the existence of warrants, so there is no bar on questions being asked.

My hon. Friend said that the Government are now trying to do what they said in the White Paper they were not trying to do. With respect to my hon. Friend, he is wrong. He is obviously reading paragraph 7 of the White Paper which says that the Government are not seeking, through the introduction of the Bill, to broaden the scope of existing practices in the interception of communications. Paragraph 7 could not be read as referring to questions about the law such as my hon. Friend asked.

My hon. Friend's amendments are based on the assumption that the problem is that the courts will not be able to reveal publicly that in which there is a public interest. That is not the problem or, if it is, it pales into insignificance as compared with the real one, which is how we can afford to finish up with a system in which a rogue is enabled to discover the evidence which is available against him. We have to have a system under which a person does not learn, by bringing proceedings, what evidence there is against him. It would be absurd if, having constructed a tribunal to hear complaints, but under a special procedure which does not allow the complainant to know the evidence available against him, the complainant was able to go to a court of law and bring proceedings for the sole purpose of discovering that which he had no hope of discovering from the tribunal.

The Committee has already considered the tribunal for which special procedures are set out in schedule 1 which prevent the tribunal from revealing to one party information that it has received from another. This is absolutely vital, otherwise a person would be able to take an application to the tribunal and thereby discover whether a warrant was in existence in his name. The whole system would collapse.

9.45 pm

Precisely the same point arises over court proceedings. The circumstances are different but the principle is the same. Somebody should not be able to discover whether a warrant is to be directed against him just by mounting proceedings. These amendments do not mean that in any such proceedings evidence about interception would necessarily be presented. However, they are based on two assumptions: first, that it is known that there is such evidence to give, which in itself is unacceptable; secondly, that both parties might be involved in any consideration of whether or not a direction should be given, and, if it were, would be privy to what was presented as a result.

It does not take a great deal of imagination to conceive of circumstances in which an ingenious litigant would discover grounds with which he might expect to persuade the court that it was in his interests that evidence which he believed to be in the hands of the authorities and which he believed to be the result of interception was essential to secure his rights. Merely to start down this road means that the existence of a warrant may have to be confirmed or denied. This in itself would go too far and would prejudice the very confidentiality upon which the effectiveness of authorised interceptions so crucially depends.

My hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) referred to the possibility of a Minister conniving at unlawful tapping and of a newspaper having evidence of it, with the Minister suing the newspaper and the newspaper therefore being put at a disadvantage. As I understand it, in those circumstances there would be no difficulty whatsoever because the Minister would have committed a crime under clause 1. My hon. Friend will see that, according to clause 9(3), subsection (1) does not apply to a relevant offence, and "relevant offence" means, among other things,

"an offence under Section 1"

as provided in subsection (4)*(a)*.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My hon. and learned Friend does me an injustice, because I thought of that one as well. If he cares to look at subsection (3) he will see that

"Subsection (1) does not apply in relation to proceedings for a relevant offence."

A libel case does not constitute proceedings for a relevant offence within the meaning of the clause.

Mr. Waddington: I do not really follow what my hon. Friend is saying. I am referring to clause 9(4) which contains a definition of "relevant offence".

Mr. Hogg: With respect to my hon. and learned Friend, that is perfectly true, but subsection (4) is dependent upon subsection (3).

Mr. Waddington: I shall look into that point when I have a little more time, but my advice is that if a Minister were guilty of a crime because an offence had been committed under subsection (1), the first part of clause 9(1) would not come into play. However, I shall take advice on that point and will write to my hon. Friend if he is correct in assuming that the explanation I have given is incorrect. One has to address one's mind to the main problem: that if one sets up a tribunal which prevents a man from finding out whether he has been properly intercepted, one cannot finish up with that man being able, by bringing proceedings in court, to obtain the information which he failed to obtain from the tribunal. One has to face up to that difficulty.

Mr. Hogg: I wish to make three brief points. First, my hon. and learned Friend the Minister must accept that he

is extending the scope of the law in that there is at present no statutory bar to exclude such evidence and in future there will be such a bar.

Secondly, my hon. and learned Friend did not deal with the points that I made about unfair dismissal, and it is clear that in the two cases that I mentioned the employer would be at a substantial disadvantage as a result of the Bill.

Thirdly, we must accept that if the Bill is enacted in its present form injustice will be done to parties. As a general proposition, I am prepared to accept that the evidence should not be introduced, but I want a residual power to introduce it in some circumstances.

Having said that, I recognise that I am not about to persuade my hon. and learned Friend——

Mr. Maclennan: Will the hon. Gentleman allow others to comment before he seeks leave to withdraw the amendment?

Mr. Hogg: I am happy to oblige the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Maclennan: The hon. Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) has done the House a great service by raising this issue, which has given rise to considerable anxiety. The whole of clause 9, with which the amendment seeks to deal, has been commented on most adversely by Justice, the British branch of the International Commission of Jurists, as being oppressive and going beyond what is necessary to confine the judicial remedy to the tribunal.

Clause 9 takes away a right which was previously enjoyed and does not need to be removed for the Minister to achieve his aim. I understand the argument that it is undesirable and, indeed, impossible to set up a tribunal and to allow a remedy through the High Court to proceed in parallel, but that is not the point to which the main thrust of clause 9 relates. In fact, it will preclude the possibility of a line of examination or cross-examination being pursued which may arise in the course of some quite different matter.

The circumstances of the Malone case spring to mind in this regard. If these provisions go through in their present form the circumstances of a case of that kind may never come to light again. I do not think that the hon. Gentleman has sufficient troops here to force a Division on the matter, but I sincerely hope that the issue that the hon. Member for Grantham has very properly raised will receive very careful consideration by the legal luminaries in another place.

Mr. Waddington: Perhaps I may reply to the last point. The hon. Gentleman suggests that if the new procedure had been in existence the Malone case would never have come to light. But once the Bill becomes law there need never be such a case again because a person such as Mr. Malone will have a remedy. He will be able to go to the tribunal.

Mr. Maclennan: With respect, the Minister misses the point. Mr. Malone would never have known that his telephone had been tapped if it had not been revealed in the course of examination of a policeman's notebook that something had been going on, leading Mr. Malone and his counsel to suspect that interception had taken place. We are men of the world. We appreciate how difficult it is to identify whether telephone tapping or any other form of interception has taken place and that it is only in circumstances of that kind that it will ever come to light. In reality, although in theory Mr. Malone might have a remedy, he would never know that he needed to exercise it.

Mr. Waddington: Surely this is nonsense. If Malone or his advisers had suspicions that his telephone was being tapped, in the old days one would look through a policeman's notebook to ascertain whether there was some evidence of it there. Under the new regime, he would be able to go to the tribunal.

Mr. Maclennan: With respect to the Minister, they did not have any knowledge or suspicion that this was taking place. It was only because the matter came out in cross-examination that it was followed up at all. I think that the Minister will find that this matter arouses anxiety in another place, and I have no doubt that it will have to be pursued.

Amendment negatived.

Clause 9 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 10

INTERPRETATION

Amendment made: No. 118, in page 9, line 37, at end insert—

'(3) For the purposes of this Act conduct which constitutes or, if it took place in the United Kingdom, would constitute one or more offences shall be regarded as serious crime if, and only if—

(a) it involves the use of violence, results in substantial financial gain or is conduct by a large number of persons in pursuit of a common purpose; or

(b) the offence or one of the offences is an offence for which a person who has attained the age of twenty-one and has no previous convictions could reasonably be expected to be sentenced to imprisonment for a term of three years or more.'.—*[Mr. Waddington.]*

Clause 10, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 11 and 12 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

New Clause 5

OFFENCE OF DISCLOSURE

'A person who intentionally discloses a communication intercepted in the course of its transmission by post or by means of a public telecommunications system shall be guilty of an offence unless such disclosure is made—

(a) with the consent of the individual to or by whom the communication is sent;

(b) for the purposes connected with the maintenance or provision of postal or public telecommunications services;

(c) for the purposes in respect of which the Secretary of State has issued a warrant under section 2 below;

(d) to the Tribunal or to the Commissioner or to the Select Committee;

(e) in proceedings in respect of an offence under this Act;

(f) in the public interest to disclose evidence that a grave offence had been committed.'.—*[Mr. McWilliam.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. McWilliam: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

I do not wish to detain the Committee for long. I have no doubt that the Minister will pray in aid schedule 2. Several problems arise here. It seems to us that disclosure is a far more heinous crime than interception. Many people have to intercept communications in the course of their duties. If they disclose something to another person that is a different matter. Indeed, during the debates on what

[Mr. McWilliam]

are now the Telecommunications Act 1984 and the British Telecommunications Act 1981, this was a preoccupation of hon. Members. Given that disclosure is the real crime —and I submit that the real crime is that someone who has gained information from interception discloses it to a third party — the Bill as drafted seems to us to be inadequate, which has led to the tabling of new clause 5.

The proposed new section 45(2) to the 1984 Act, as set out in schedule 2, says that control should be lifted from people who make

"any disclosure which is made for the prevention or detection of crime or for the purposes of any criminal proceedings".

Any detection which is made under warrant is also covered by the Bill. The only assumption that can be made is that this must be a let-out for disclosures other than those that are made under the proposed subsection (1). Indeed, it is made clear in subsections (2)*(a)* and *(c)* that the same kind of let-out exists in terms of national security.

It is not part of the Opposition's case that we shall make life easier for criminals or for those who would jeopardise national security. However, we are concerned that the Bill should not contain a catch-all provision. Therefore, we have tabled new clause 5, which is perfectly straightforward. It imports the principle of schedule 2 to the main body of the Bill, but does not import the let-out that has been built into schedule 2. Therefore, I commend it to the House.

Mr. Norris: I should like to draw the hon. Gentleman's attention to paragraph *(f)* of his new clause because I, too, proposed a new clause—new clause 6—which was not selected, but which was virtually identical to his——

It being Ten o'clock, THE CHAIRMAN *left the Chair to report Progress and ask leave to sit again.*

Committee report Progress.

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Interception of Communications Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour—*[Mr. Archie Hamilton.]*

Bill again considered in Committee.

Question again proposed, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Norris: I should like to ask the hon. Gentleman this question. I believe that it is important enough to ask if only because many of the amendments that have been withdrawn during the Committee stage will be debated at length in another place. Does the hon. Gentleman not think that by adding the words "to disclose evidence" and thereafter in paragraph *(f)*, in other words, by trying to define what is meant by the public interest, he vitiates the purpose of adding that important paragraph?

Subsection (2)*(a)*, as set out in schedule 2, covers the point that the hon. Gentleman is making. It states that any person who makes such a disclosure

"for the prevention or detection of crime"

would be exempt from the provisions of schedule 2. I have sought to make the point that the most important areas of public interest are where a crime may not have been committed but where, none the less, it is in the genuine public interest that matters be disclosed. Will the hon. Gentleman address himself to that point?

Mr. McWilliam: I am grateful for that intervention.

We are trying to clarify the law as it is proposed. New clause 5 with paragraph *(f)* in it would entirely meet the point raised by the hon. Gentleman. It is an important point, and we must all bear it in mind. The difficulty is that the proposed subsection (2)*(a)* is too broad, whereas paragraph *(f)* of new clause 5 is narrow enough to impose a reasonable constraint upon the Executive, but broad enough to meet the hon. Gentleman's point. That was the intention behind drafting the new clause in this way. When we did so, we were minded of the new clause which the hon. Gentleman had tabled. It is not our intention to be partisan about this matter. We are trying to protect the people and at the same time allow the security services the access to information which they need. That is the entire import of new clause 5 — to prevent the sweeping suggestion in schedule 2 and to import the main point into the body of the Bill.

Mr. Waddington: The Government accept that it is essential to secure proper protection of material intercepted by warrant. That is what clause 6 is all about. The improper disclosure of intercepted material is already covered by various statutory provisions. The first is, of course, section 2 of the Official Secrets Act. It covers improper disclosure by those in the Crown service, which includes the police, and it is also expressly applied to the staff of the Post Office through the Post Office Act 1969 and to the operators of public telecommunications systems through the Telecommunications Act 1984. Its application is therefore comprehensive over possible possession of intercepted material.

The telecommunications side is additionally covered by section 45 of the Telecommunications Act 1984, which, as the hon. Member for Blaydon (Mr. McWilliam) said, is amended by schedule 2. The hon. Gentleman complains about the wording of subsection (2) of that section. I suggest that his criticism is misconceived. Subsection (2)*(a)* follows the scheme of the Data Protection Act, under which, as the hon. Gentleman knows, a person may disclose matters to the police even though the police do not appear in his registration particularly as somebody to whom he may disclose data. Therefore, I suggest that it is entirely proper that a similar scheme should be found in this Bill.

Mr. McWilliam: I intervene merely to point out that we opposed that section because we did not think it was sufficiently tightly drawn. Therefore, it is entirely consistent with the argument that we are now putting that this provision is not sufficiently tightly drawn.

Mr. Waddington: The hon. Gentleman is clearly entitled to make that point, but it is not going to get us very far tonight because we, obviously, were satisfied with the Data Protection Act or we would not have presented it to the House. We shall have to agree to disagree on that.

Given the fact that the Data Protection Act is now on the statute book the hon. Gentleman must not be surprised to find that in this Bill we have followed exactly the same scheme for the disclosure of information.

On the postal side the provisions are rather older, being contained in telegraph legislation of the last century, the provisions in question making it an offence for a post office official to disclose the contents of any message entrusted to the Post Office for the purpose of transmission to any person.

In addition to these offences, there are two other considerations to be borne in mind. First, the arrangements which must be established under clause 6 and which the

commissioner keeps under continuing review deal comprehensively with the safeguarding of intercepted material. Thus, at a stage short of the involvement of the criminal law there are arrangements to ensure that the material is properly looked after. The Secretary of State is obliged by clause 6 to address his mind to these arrangements when he issues warrants.

Secondly, as a matter of practice in the Crown service as well as in the Post Office and for public telecommunications operators there are codes of conduct covering a wide range of things, including the proper handling of material obtained during the course of people's duties. Breach of these codes can in appropriate circumstances lead to dismissal.

Therefore, there are a number of pieces of legislation which bear on these matters, there is the new protection provided in schedule 2 and there is the scheme in clause 6 of the Bill. These, taken together, I would submit, meet any mischief such as that suggested by the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. McWilliam: I would not wish to delay the Committee by pushing this clause to a Division. I cannot say that I am entirely satisfied with the Minister's reply. It may well be that we shall seek to return to the matter at a later stage. At this stage, however, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

Schedule 1

The Tribunal

Mr. Dubs: I beg to move amendment No. 121, in page 11, leave out lines 4 to 6.

The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): With this it will be convenient to take the following amendments: No. 122, in page 11, line 4, leave out from 'members' to end of line 6.

No. 123, in page 11, line 4, leave out 'each' and insert 'one of whom holds or has held a high judicial office and two others'.

Mr. Dubs: There is a principle in life in Britain: when in doubt about starting any particular set-up, one brings on the lawyers. I am not particularly attacking lawyers. All that I am seeking to do in amendments Nos. 121 and 122 is to end the monopoly of lawyers—in other words, to end the requirement that only people with a legal qualification can be members of the tribunal. That would not stop Ministers appointing lawyers, but they would not be obliged to do so.

Amendment No. 121 gives the Minister discretion to appoint more or less than five members of the tribunal. The amendments are simple and I hope that the Minister is sympathetic to them.

Mr. Maclennan: Amendment No. 123 is in part motivated by the considerations which led the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs) to move his amendment. It recognises that the Government think that the tribunal should have a quasi-judicial role, that it should therefore be presided over by a judge, and that a majority of tribunal members should have a legal background.

Other experience and expertise, in addition to legal expertise, might be of value to the tribunal. Technical expertise such as that offered by hon. Members who have participated in the debate might be useful. A tribunal consisting solely of people with legal expertise might be a little confining. I hope that the Minister agrees that greater flexibility is required.

Mr. Waddington: Only yesterday we decided through a Government amendment that the tribunal would act as the High Court would act on hearing an application for a judicial review. The tribunal will have a quasi-judicial role and it is therefore appropriate that lawyers should discharge its functions. I say that not because lawyers alone are able to reach balanced judgments, but because legal training is particularly desirable for members of the tribunal.

We do not say that only legal qualifications are needed. The tribunal must comprise people with wide experience and proven maturity of judgment. We stick to the view that tribunal members should be lawyers but that they should not just be lawyers. The Government intend the tribunal to include in its membership people with a wide experience of affairs. That should give some comfort to hon. Members. We do not think it necessary that the tribunal should include someone who has held high judicial office. I hope that the amendment will be withdrawn.

Mr. Dubs: I am not convinced, but I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Schedule 1 agreed to.

Schedule 2

Section substituted for section 45 of 1984 Act

Mr. Maclennan: I beg to move amendment No. 126, in page 13, leave out lines 6 to 8.

Without my amendment, the schedule could drive a coach and horses through the Bill. It would permit the official telephone tapper to reveal the content of any intercepted conversation to prevent or detect crime, however minor, and to give evidence at any trial of that content.

The schedule is not restricted to simple metering—that is, information about the destination and duration of calls. The amendment would ensure that the use made of any intercepted material has to be covered by the Bill so that all the safeguards apply.

If an intercepted message is disclosed in a manner not authorised by clause 1, an offence would be committed. The amendment takes out matters which should be covered by warrant in sub-paragraph *(b)* and permits information about metering to be disclosed on the order of a court.

However, the contents of intercepted conversations can be dealt with only under clause 9. I hope that the Minister will undertake to give some thought to my points.

10.15 pm

Mr. Waddington: The key point is that there is a fundamental difference between the disclosure of the contents of a communication and the disclosure of so-called metering information. That is why metering is dealt with separately from interception. Intercepted material does not, in the natural course of events, come into the hands of the person intercepting, but metering information is information that is properly held by a telecommunications operator in the course of running his business. Meter

[Mr. Waddington]

check printers, which record metering information, are used in a wide variety of cirumstances, principally when there is a query about a person's bill.

There is no doubt that the disclosure of metering information other than for the purposes of operating the telephone system gives rise to sensitive issues and that there should be a clear statutory basis for such disclosure which sets out the grounds on which it is permissible. The Bill as drafted does this. Nor is there any doubt that access to such information can be of great assistance in the prevention and detection of crime, or in the interests of national security.

It is important to realise that nothing in these provisions requires a telecommunications operator to disclose metering information. Such operators are simply permitted to do so in circumstances which are defined in a way that closely follows the precedent of the Data Protection Act 1984. The comparison between the disclosure of personal data under that Act and the disclosure of metering information is much closer than the comparison between interception and metering.

British Telecom already has procedures in which disclosures of metering information for the investigation of serious crime must be approved at a senior level in its headquarters. To ensure compliance with the requirements of section 45 of the Telecommunications Act as amended by schedule 2, I have no doubt that BT and other public telecommunications operators will adopt appropriate procedures to ensure that metering information is disclosed only in appropriate circumstances. The Government believe that the procedures in schedule 2 are appropriate in all the circumstances and that this amendment should, therefore, be rejected.

Mr. Maclennan: I am grateful to the Minister for that explanation, which I shall study carefully before deciding whether to return to the matter. In the circumstances, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Schedule 2 agreed to.

Bill reported, with amendments; as amended to be considered tomorrow, and to be printed. [Bill 123.]

Road Traffic (Northern Ireland)

10.18 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Chris Patten): I beg to move,

That the draft Road Traffic (Type Approval) (Northern Ireland) Order 1985, which was laid before this House on 18th February, be approved.

The order provides for the introduction of national type approval arrangements for motor vehicles in Northern Ireland by extending the powers of the Department of the Environment under the Road Traffic Order (Northern Ireland) 1981. The arrangements envisaged would be broadly similar to those that have been in force in Great Britain since 1978.

The provisions have been urged on the Government by a number of hon. Members, including the right hon. Members for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) and for South Down (Mr. Powell). The hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) has given this subject his usual scholarly attention. I am sorry we have not been able to bring the order forward before.

Type approval is the process under which a vehicle or vehicle part is submitted, usually by a manufacturer, for testing against objective standards of design, construction and environmental protection. Once that vehicle or vehicle part has been approved as meeting the standard or standards in question, individual vehicles or vehicle parts produced in conformity with the approved type can be certified as meeting the standard without further testing.

The order will enable regulations to be made listing the standards with which vehicles must comply before they can first be licensed in Northern Ireland. The intention would be initially to make regulations apply only to cars and certain dual-purpose vehicles. For the time being they would not extend to goods vehicles. In their scope, the regulations would cover all the requirements in the construction and use regulations and lighting regulations. They would be precisely the same as those in Great Britain, which are largely based on standards set in EEC directives or regulations issued by the Economic Commission for Europe—a United Nations body.

Hon. Members may ask why type approval is considered necessary if motor vehicle standards are already laid down in the construction and use regulations and lighting regulations. The main point is that there is no means of checking that vehicles comply with the requirements of those regulations. Therefore it is possible to license a vehicle that is not in compliance with the regulations.

While the vast majority of new vehicles in Northern Ireland were supplied either from manufacturing plants or import concessionaires in Great Britain, where national type approval is already operated, this distinction was not important. However, with the growth from 1982 of imports direct from the Republic of Ireland and continental Europe—a point to which right hon. and hon. Members have drawn our attention since 1982—there was less assurance that imported cars complied with the requirements.

Purchasers of non-complying vehicles therefore face the possibility of prosecution for infringement of the construction and use regulations. This type approval order will help overcome that problem by enabling other type

approval arrangements to be introduced. The draft order therefore represents a consumer protection as well as a road safety measure.

The draft order closely follows corresponding legislation in Great Britain. Indeed, it is very closely modelled on the Road Traffic Act 1972 and the amending Act of 1974. In essence it provides for the establishment of type approval requirements by the Department which, if met by a particular model, will result in the issue of a type approval certificate. In turn it enables manufacturers to issue certificates of conformity for individual vehicles.

I draw the attention of hon. Members to the provisions of the inserted article 31*(d)*(iii) which would enable the Department to make regulations making the first licensing of a vehicle conditional upon its being type approved.

Since most new vehicles will continue to come into Northern Ireland from Great Britain, and as it is proposed to apply exactly the same requirements as those in Great Britain, arrangements will be made to accept type approval issued in Great Britain as applying in Northern Ireland, and vice versa. In practice, since vehicle manufacture in Northern Ireland is negligible, most, if not all, applications for national type approval will be dealt with in Great Britain by the Department of Transport, which has facilities for testing and inspection and the issue of approval certificates.

However, against the possibility that an application for approval would be made in Northern Ireland, arrangements would be made for the Department of Transport to act as agents for testing and inspection. That would mean that there would be no need to provide separate testing and inspection facilities in Northern Ireland.

When the draft order was considered by the Northern Ireland Assembly, the position of personal imports was raised. I wish to make it clear that regulations made under this order will not be retrospective and that those who purchased imports through independent dealers have no cause for concern. The regulations would, as in Great Britain — we are being entirely consistent — exempt vehicles that qualify as personal imports from the requirement to produce type approval documentation.

I appreciate that importation in bulk by parallel importers will fall outside the scope of that exemption and that, unless they can obtain the necessary documentation, their business will be adversely affected. That point was put to me forcibly by the Independent Car Importers Association, which sought the withdrawal of the draft order.

However, as hon. Members may know, the Department of Transport and the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders have agreed a code of practice under which a parallel importer can apply to a manufacturer or to his accredited representative in Great Britain for the type approval certification needed to enable the imported vehicle to be first licensed in Great Britain.

Under the code, that certification will be issued provided that the vehicle was built in conformity with an approved type or can be converted so as to comply. It is proposed that steps shall be taken to extend these arrangements to vehicles imported into Northern Ireland.

That being the case, the order should proceed, given that it offers substantially increased protection to motorists in Northern Ireland and should enhance road safety. I therefore commend the order to the House.

10.26 pm

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): My party welcomes the order, though it has been a long time coming. Its history goes back a considerable time, for the Government were being asked, not only by the motor agents in Northern Ireland but by my party—notably by the party's leader, my right hon. Friend the Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux), and my right hon. Friend the Member for South Down (Mr. Powell)—as far back as early 1982 to do something about the matter.

It would seem that the problem arose, as the Minister said, because of a shift in the economic advantages of importing vehicles. Apparently the manufacturers cut the prices of the vehicles that they supplied to the Irish Republic because of the levels of car tax and VAT pertaining in the Republic. That meant that if one could avoid the tax, the vehicle was much cheaper in Northern Ireland, taking into account the sum actually charged by the manufacturer of the vehicle.

In addition, the taxation policy on the collection of VAT was being altered in a way which rendered it even more beneficial to those who could import cars in large numbers, and it so happened that the Republic's assemblers of vehicles were protected by the Treaty of Rome from imports which were similar to vehicles being assembled in the Republic.

To add to the burden on the folk in Northern Ireland, they were in great difficulty when it came to exporting vehicles to the Republic, because only registered exporters could send vehicles south of the border. Thus, it came down to being, for financial and trade reasons, a one-way street, and that bore heavily on those who were the traditional suppliers of cars and other vehicles in Northern Ireland.

The VAT arrangements in the Republic apparently gave a time lag which at one stage enabled the importer to get his cars in and have them sold—not necessarily even in Northern Ireland but possibly in Great Britain—before they had to pay the VAT that was payable on the cars.

There was, therefore, a considerable flood of cars coming across the border in early 1982 and for 12 months thereafter. It is hard now to say exactly how many were coming in. So many were at the game—those who were buying as individuals and those who were importing in quite large numbers—that nobody really knows the true numbers.

The trade suspects that several thousand were coming across the frontier. However, I wonder, if that were the case, where all those cars went to. It is clear that they did not stop in Northern Ireland. One suspects that quite a few went straight out through Larne harbour to Stranraer, and goodness knows where they are now in Great Britain.

In a Treasury parliamentary answer on 30 April 1982, my right hon. Friend the Member for South Down was told that five vehicles had been imported in October 1981 and that by March 1982 the number had risen to 442, a considerable number of vehicles for a population of 1·5 million. It is alleged that at that time, of all the Ford vehicles sold, two thirds were imports, and that more than half of the Mazdas sold were imports. At least a quarter of all cars sold in Northern Ireland were the grey imports from the Republic. After years, the position eased because of pricing and tax changes in the Republic. By June 1983, the figure was between 5 and 10 per cent., or even lower.

[Mr. William Ross]

There is no doubt that those who engaged in the importation of those vehicles were doing well and therefore, we should not be surprised that the independent parallel importers object to the regulations. Although at first sight those people appeared to be good for consumers, they were not good for the Province or consumers in the long run. The importers and sellers invested little, there were few jobs and little back-up if anything went wrong.

The regulations have taken a long time to come to the House. On 27 May 1982 my right hon. Friend the Member for South Down received an answer from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport to the effect that he would try to introduce the regulations. I understand that at that time it was expected to take about nine months. When nine months extends into three years, one wonders how long it will take to get the legislation through the House.

By 1 July 1982 we had been told in answer to a further question that the Government intended to introduce the legislation as soon as possible. By September 1982 the Department said that there were 100 prosecutions for the use of those vehicles pending. Perhaps the Minister would tell us what happened to them. From his remarks we know, but we would like it put clearly on the record. By 20 December 1982 Department of the Environment officials were saying that they hoped that the matter would be debated in the House about the end of 1983. That is more than a year ago.

By 31 December we had been told that officials were working on the necessary legislation, and the proposals were eventually referred to the Assembly. Now, three years after the matter was first raised, we have the regulations on the Floor of the House, where they could have been a long time ago.

We have only ourselves to blame. If the type approval regulations had been embodied in United Kingdom legislation rather than in Great Britain legislation, we would not be here tonight and we could all go home an hour or so sooner. The Minister made that point even better when he pointed out that the work done in Great Britain by the Minister of Transport is the deciding factor, and that the Northern Ireland Office would only pick up a rubber stamp and agree to accept the findings of the Great Britain authorities. It has taken far too long to get the regulations to the House. I hope that the cars are better constructed than the Orlit houses were, because we are running into severe problems with them.

Despite the long delay, the Government have taken many measures, some of which were helpful, but all of which were certainly delaying tactics. The helpful measures were the use of the construction and use regulations to make threats to those who were buying imports. It was widespread in the news media of Northern Ireland that they might not be able to use their vehicles. There were the prosecutions, but they did not appear to come to much, and the changes in the tax and pricing arrangements by the manufacturers and the Dublin Government, which affected the economics of the importation of vehicles from the Republic.

The legislation is widely welcomed and long awaited. It has been dragged slowly inch by inch—millimetre by millimetre, one should say nowadays — out of the Department. It is the best way to deal with the problem.

I am glad that the efforts of my right hon. and hon. Friends have been brought to a successful conclusion. It shows that when Ulster has a just case and the matter is pressed home in the House, it can be brought to a successful conclusion. This is one of many successful conclusions during my years in the House. It also exposes the nonsense that is often about in Northern Ireland, that because there are only a few Members from Northern Ireland in the House they can never get anything done. We have got it done. It has been a long, slow process but it has been brought to a welcome conclusion. The fact that it has encourages us all to redouble our efforts for Northern Ireland's just case in other directions.

My right hon. and hon. Friends fought the battle to a successful conclusion. We hope that in the future the Minister will listen to us rather more readily and act a great deal more speedily, and then we can all get home a great deal earlier.

10.36 pm

Mr. Peter Robinson (Belfast, East): The hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) referred to what he saw as the delay in bringing forward this draft order to the House. The Minister will want to respond to that. I understand that during the Assembly process, when we were considering the draft order, it was said that his Department had experienced some anxiety about the welding of two vehicles that had been imported into Northern Ireland — the Mazda 323 and the Toyota Starlight. The Department was worried about what might happen if there were a collision. If the anxiety was as great as we were told, I wonder why the legislation did not come forward somewhat faster.

It is to some extent a comfort to the Minister to recognise that the burden of complaint by Members in the House centred around the fact that the legislation did not come earlier. That shows that the substance of the order is generally accepted by Members in the House.

The essence of the order is to ensure an acceptable standard of vehicle. I note that in the communications from the motoring organisations, the RAC and the AA give a warm welcome to the order, as does the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents.

There is a difference of opinion between the two organisations involved in the selling of cars. The Motor Agents Association as one would expect, is in favour of the draft order, whereas the motor importers seem to be fighting strenuously to the last. We can, of course, understand their anxiety even if we do not altogether share it. However, the general view of those of us in the Northern Ireland Assembly who have studied the draft order is that the independent view expressed by those with an interest in road safety should be taken more seriously than the views of those who have a vested interest, although that is no reason to ignore anyone's views.

When the Minister refers to import controls and says that personal imports are exempt, what thought has he given to the fact that it will be relatively easy for anyone who is so minded to carry out a relay system by personally importing cars from the Republic of Ireland into Northern Ireland? To what extent will personal imports be limited? Will someone who is travelling from the Republic to Northern Ireland once a day, week, month or year be subject to a restriction on the number of personal imports that he can bring into Northern Ireland, and from Northern Ireland into the rest of the United Kingdom?

Is it a fact that the price of vehicles in Northern Ireland could change fairly radically? A number of Northern Ireland citizens are expressing this fear. The Northern Ireland Car Importers Association has suggested that car prices in Northern Ireland will be increased if competition is stifled. It will be helpful if the Minister will express a view on the substance of the association's claims.

In common with the hon. Member for Londonderry, East and many in Northern Ireland, I welcome this measure, even though it is late in appearing before us. I do not want to delay its passage further.

10.41 pm

Mr. J. Enoch Powell (South Down): I find myself somewhat weirdly reminded by the order and the debate of Sir Robert Peel, the corn laws and the potato famine. The House will recall that Sir Robert was always intending to do something about the corn laws. When there was a potato famine in Northern Ireland—it had nothing to do with the corn laws and it would not have been alleviated by their repeal—he seized upon that event and, without arguing too nicely the logical relationship between the two, put forward the famine as a reason for repeal. It was one which no decent person could resist in co-operating with the proposed legislation, which he desired strongly upon other grounds.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) has generously recalled, I was one of those who were in correspondence with the Minister's predecessor three years ago about certain difficulties which were arising both for consumers and the trade in Northern Ireland as a result of imports from the Irish Republic. In the subsequent year or two, and for various reasons, the majority of which my hon. Friend touched upon, the problem put itself right. However, in the course of the examination of it, the fact that Northern Ireland was destitute of type approval legislation came to attention, and properly the Minister's predecessor recognised that this was something which should be put right. Certainly we should have some law in Northern Ireland in this respect, and we should always have had it, as on the mainland. It is welcome that the omission is now being made good. I thought that it should be recorded that the connection between the happy event occurring tonight and the difficulties of the year 1982 is anything but direct.

10.44 pm

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): It is always a pleasure to take up the remarks of the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell), who managed to deliver a small but pertinent history lesson in the course of discussing the order.

The Minister referred to consumer protection and road safety and the order seems to marry the two issues. The Opposition have noted that the purpose of the order is to ensure that new vehicles offered for sale are constructed to accepted international standards. We take on board the comment of the hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) that the order has been some time coming. The right hon. Member for South Down described how it came to the attention of the Government in 1982. Nevertheless, we now have it. It offers protection and tries to guarantee to purchasers that vehicles, whatever their country of origin, comply fully with the requirements of road traffic law.

There was some severe criticism from the Independent Car Importers Association, which was worried about free trade in the European Community, in case the order would be in breach of the treaty of Rome, that it might increase the price of vehicles to consumers, about redundancies and about the possibility of inflated prices. Those anxieties were communicated to the Government through the Assembly, and the Environment Select Committee asked that the Government chat to the Independent Car Importers Association again. That happened and, through the Minister, the Government took cognisance of the association's views. There were further discussions.

A memorandum in the file that has been prepared by the Department of the Environment answers some of the criticisms. One paragraph of the memorandum states:

"If members of the Car Importers Association import vehicles which do not have type approval and wish to continue to sell those vehicles they will probably incur expenditure in arranging for type approval; whether those costs are passed on to the purchaser is a matter for the importer."

The Opposition have followed this debate with some care. The speeches have not lost any of their lucidity in their brevity. The Minister carefully said what the order was about. We offer our support for it, as do the other parties in the House.

10.47 pm

Mr. Chris Patten: I shall try to be as brief as others have been, even if I cannot manage to be so lucid.

The hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) referred to the delay since a certain amount of dignified pressure was applied to my distinguished predecessor, now the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport, in 1982. There are several reasons for the delay on this important matter, and I do not believe that we can be accused of being too dilatory. It was necessary to engage in some fairly protracted consultations to try to satisfy — not wholly successfully I must admit — the conflicting interests in this issue. There has also been a great deal of Northern Ireland legislation in the past couple of years, as right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House will know. Some has been regarded as having higher priority than this, not least by the parliamentary draftsman. Nevertheless, I am sorry that we have not been able to act before. None of us is perfect, but at least we have the order before us now.

The hon. Member for Londonderry, East asked about prosecutions. The users of imported vehicles which do not conform to the construction and use regulations and/ or the lighting regulations are not being prosecuted, mainly because it is thought that the purchasers of imported vehicles would find it difficult or impossible to obtain information on whether their cars conformed to each of the relevant provisions of the construction, use and lighting regulations. For example, vehicles imported from or built for sale in the Republic of Ireland might not carry the appropriate markings to demonstrate compliance. The implementation of the order will substantially remove the need for future prosecution of this type.

Mr. William Ross: I apologise for interrupting the Minister, but I am curious about whether he had a word with the insurance companies. If somebody who has bought a vehicle which does not comply with the type regulations has an accident resulting from a fault, what will happen about his insurance?

Mr. Patten: If such an accident has already happened, as the legislation is not retrospective the driver of the

[Mr. Patten]

vehicle will be in no difficulty after the legislation is passed. To get the vehicle licensed, the purchaser will have to go to the centre at Coleraine, and since his warranty will not show that type approval has been granted he will be unable to get a licence for the vehicle. I very much hope that such a situation will not arise.

The hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) asked whether somebody purchasing cars in the Republic and bringing considerable numbers into Northern Ireland would or would not satisfy the conditions for genuine personal imports. Personal imports have to satisfy fairly clear conditions. The vehicle must have been purchased outside the United Kingdom for the personal use of the individual importing it, or for his dependants. Secondly, the vehicle has to be shown to have been used by that individual or his dependants on roads outside the United Kingdom before it was imported. Thirdly, the vehicle has to be imported solely for personal use in the United Kingdom. Finally, the individual importing the vehicle has to show that he intends at the time when the vehicle is imported to remain in the United Kingdom for not less than 12 months from that time.

The second point raised by the hon. Member for Belfast, East related to car prices. I do not believe that car prices should be affected by the order. While the cost of type approval can be substantial, it is minimised when costs are spread over a long production run. Therefore, the introduction of type approval should not lead to increased prices. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will be comforted by that fact. A recent House of Lords study of the European Commission's proposals on car pricing showed that car prices are determined by a complex series of factors; for example, the policies of individual Governments, price control, taxation policy, exchange rates and so on.

The right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell), who deserves much of the credit for this order, reminded us of the 19th century and in particular of Robert Peel. Putting recent controversy on one side, I think he demonstrated that Robert Peel was indeed a very proper Tory.

The hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) referred to the importance of the order both in terms of consumer protection and in terms of the improvement of road safety. It was doubtless for those reasons that, as the hon. Member for Belfast, East pointed out, the draft order was not only approved and accepted enthusiastically by the Assembly but was supported by the Automobile Association, the Royal Automobile Club and the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents. Following their support, I hope that the order will be supported by the House and that in doing so the House will recognise how much we owe to those right hon. and hon. Members representing Northern Ireland constituencies who have laboured in this particular vineyard and brought forth this particular crop.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Road Traffic (Type Approval) (Northern Ireland) Order 1985, which was laid before this House on 18th February, be approved.

AGRICULTURAL TRAINING BOARD BILL [MONEY]

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Agricultural Training Board Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any increase attributable to that Act in the sums so payable under any other enactment—*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

RATING AND VALUATION

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 79(5) (Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

That the draft Docks and Harbours (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1985, which was laid before this House on 18th March, be approved—*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

Question agreed to.

RESERVE FORCES (SAFEGUARD OF EMPLOYMENT) BILL *[Lords]*

Resolved,

That in respect of the Reserve Forces (Safeguard of Employment) Bill *[Lords]*, Notices of Amendments, new Clauses and new Schedules to be moved in Committee may be accepted by the Clerks at the Table before the Bill has been read a second time.—*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

HOUSE OF COMMONS MEMBERS' FUND

Resolved,

That in pursuance of section 2 of the House of Commons Members' Fund Act 1939, Sir Geoffrey Finsberg be appointed a Managing Trustee of the House of Commons Members' Fund in the room of the late Sir Anthony Berry.—*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

PARLIAMENTARY CONTRIBUTORY PENSIONS FUND

Resolved,

That in pursuance of section 1 of the Parliamentary and Other Pensions Act 1972, Mr. Peter Hordern be appointed a Managing Trustee of the Parliamentary Contributory Pensions Fund in the room of the late Sir Anthony Berry.—*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

Public Service (Morale)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—[*Mr. Lennox-Boyd.*]

10.55 pm

Mr. Robert Jackson (Wantage): Last weekend, the *Sunday Telegraph* quoted Mr. Keith Hall of the Institution of Professional Civil Servants at the Agricultural and Food Research Council Letcombe laboratory in my constituency as saying that

"scientists are leaving the service because they are so unhappy with the way it is now being run. Morale is very low, and some people moving from here to other establishments know that their jobs might be at risk".

I was not thinking of Letcombe when I first applied three months ago to raise on the Adjournment the matter of morale in the public service. Nor do I have in mind exclusively the thousands of scientists and scientific staff working in the public sector in my constituency at Harwell, at the Rutherford laboratory, at the Royal College of Military Science at Shrivenham and just over the constituency border at Oxford university and the Culham laboratories. Rather, I want to consider the state of morale in the public service in its widest aspects. I want to look at the situation of all those in the civil employment of the Government, working in what economists describe as the non-market sector. Here I am thinking of all the hundreds of thousands of central Government civil and scientific servants and the employees of health authorities and local authorities, including teachers—in short, all the hundreds of thousands of people who make up such a large proportion of our constituents.

Let the Letcombe story, however, serve as an illustration of my theme because it illustrates the issues very well. In a nutshell, the closure of the Letcombe laboratory, which I did not criticise or oppose, came about as a result of a reappraisal by Government and their agencies of the costs and benefits of a whole line of policy — in this case, that of the public provision of agricultural research, especially in the production of cereals. What has happened—a fact which the *Sunday Telegraph* failed to mention in its criticism of the closure — is that Dow, a private sector firm engaged in agricultural research, has bought the Letcombe site and proposes to expand there.

At Letcombe we see the particular manifestation of a general phenomenon, that of Government deliberately reducing the commitments of the non-market public service to make room—quite literally in the case of Letcombe — for the expansion of market-oriented business, chiefly in the private sector. That is a strategy which I and all Conservative Members support and which has the approval of some of the saner Labour Members, not to mention the alliance—at least when it is turning its tough rather than its tender face towards the electorate. Moreover, it is at least arguable that the strategy was approved by the country in 1979 and 1983 when this revision of the role of Government was the fundamental issue in two general elections.

At the heart of the matter is the fact that the nation, or at least the major part of it, seems to have arrived at lower expectations of what can be achieved through the agency of Government and hence of the public service. Moreover, in all the activities of the public sector it is looking for the closer relationship between costs and benefits that is experienced under market disciplines and by the use of managerial techniques developed in the private sector.

For those employed in the public sector, this change has had profound implications. I wish to spell out just three of those which I consider to be most important.

First, the Government's efforts to create the conditions for a market-led British economic renaissance through tax cuts and the reduction of public borrowing has had a powerful impact on public sector employment. Between 1979 and 1984, the number employed by central Government fell from 732,000 to 617,000, and in local government the number fell by a similar but lesser order. As a result of these changes, whose implementation, it must be admitted, has involved an inescapable arbitrariness, the work loads on individuals have undoubtedly increased, promotion prospects have been reduced and at the same time in many areas the scope and interest of the work has diminished.

As to wages and salaries, the position is more complicated, because so much depends upon the choice of a base year for comparisons. Undoubtedly some sections of the public service have seen real cuts — I think particularly of university teachers — while for most, including school teachers, the real value of their incomes has at least been sustained since 1979. Broadly, however, the picture seems to me to be one of a movement from an historic pattern, which lasted until the late 1950s, of relatively low salaries in the public sector bound up with greater job security, through a period in the 1960s and early 1970s when public service salaries rose relative to the private sector, but with no loss of job security, to a trend since the mid-1970s back towards the original pattern. While no doubt this is a more sustainable position, the return to it has certainly disturbed the exaggerated expectations built up in previous years.

There is a second implication of the new approach, the effects of the programme of privatisation and "contractorisation", together with the introduction of new management techniques which emphasise direct responsibility and accountability.

By the end of the 1980s, privatisation, coupled with the growth of trading funds in the public sector and the reduction of direct labour, will have removed hundreds of thousands of public employees from what they have often felt to be the security and stability of the public service to the perceived insecurity and risks of the market place. Within the central Civil Service, in the Health Service and, as we see, in the current teachers' dispute, there is a new emphasis on stronger line management and on performance, and this new emphasis is also disturbing traditional hierarchies and exposing the public service to unfamiliar and disturbing pressures.

Then there are the implications of the Government's efforts to promote a revived enterprise culture. This emphasis on the role and value of the wealth-creating entrepreneur is bound to have some impact on the self-regard of public servants and the esteem in which they are held by society at large.

Here we are in the difficult realm of psychology, and sometimes irrational psychology at that. Nevertheless, it is a real question what conclusions a public servant, whether in Whitehall, county hall, in the schools, in hospitals or in government laboratories, should draw from

[Mr. Robert Jackson]

the idea—perhaps it is a caricature—that what matters most is the creation of new wealth by go-getting risk takers buying and selling in the market place.

Does this mean, some ask, that the rest of us are parasites? From the ethical point of view, does it mean that caring is less important than wealth creation? From the economic point of view, does it mean that the creation of wealth can be dissociated from the provision of those external public goods which sustain the framework of the market place and facilitate its workings? If one of the causes of the British disease is a culture hostile to enterprise, does this mean that the values imparted or reinforced in our schools and universities are wrong—that our teachers have the wrong values?

These are all good questions, and I dare say that all hon. Members are finding that they are questions which in one way or another are being asked with growing insistence every time we open our postbag or visit offices and schools in our constituencies.

It is these questions, this experience, which have prompted me to raise on the Adjournment the problem of morale in the public service. That there is a problem no one could doubt, although I guess that my analysis of its origins may be more controversial. What we can and should do about it is yet another matter.

For my part, I do not believe that the answer lies in an abandonment of the more rigorous approach to the purposes and cost-effectiveness of the public service that has prevailed since 1979 — or was it 1976? The diminished expectations of what can be achieved by Government and their servants, and the greater emphasis on value for money: those are not only welcomed by most of our people, including most public servants, but they represent a historical shift paralleled by trends in other advanced industrial countries of the First world.

The truth is that throughout the West we have come to the end of an exceptional period of some 40 years in which exaggerated hopes were placed in Government. We hoped for ever-expanding economic progress and for ever-rising standards of welfare and popular education. To secure those goods, we put our faith in a public administration growing in numbers, remuneration and prestige. After 40 years of that, we have everywhere in the West reached a more realistic sense of the limits of what Government can do. We know that the public service cannot create wealth directly and that it frequently consumes more than it produces. We know that in health and education more does not necessarily mean better. In all that, it follows that a Government with more modest aims implies a public service of more modest dimensions, receiving more modest rewards, and playing a generally more humble role in the scheme of things.

Therefore, the solution of the problem of morale in the public service does not lie in more pay or greater numbers. Rather, I believe that it lies in the more difficult and less tangible area of psychology to which I referred when I spoke about the implications for the public service of the attempt to rebuild an "enterprise culture" in Britain. The Government—my party—are right to perceive at the heart of our economic difficulties a problem of values. It is true that mid-20th century Britain—the Britain which wound up the empire and developed the welfare state—was a Britain that placed too much emphasis on distributing wealth rather than creating it.

However, I fear that in pursuing a cure based upon that diagnosis we may have narrowed our focus excessively and even perhaps lost something of that balance that is required in all things. Britain is, and will remain, a country in which the values of an enterprise culture must flourish alongside other values that are not necessarily opposed to them—the values of caring, healing, teaching and the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake. The Conservative party is, and must remain, a party in which the values of the businessman run in harness with the tradition of public service.

In conclusion, I return to Letcombe. In spite of the regrettable actions currently being undertaken by civil servants and teachers, from my experience of that closure I would say that the core of the ethos of public service —that willingness to put the wider interest first—still exists. The people concerned at Letcombe could and did understand the need for reduction and rationalisation, although in some cases it took place at the expense of their private interests. Many, indeed probably most, public servants understand the need for radical changes if Britain is to break out of her deep-rooted pattern of relative economic decline. However, that appreciation will be sustained only if as a Government and as a party we continue for our part to show our appreciation of the vital role in Britain's future of a committed and well-motivated public service.

11.8 pm

The Minister of State, Treasury (Mr. Barney Hayhoe): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson) on his wide-ranging and elegant speech, which deserves a better reply than he will get from me. It will be worth study by people who are concerned with the public service. The subject that he raises is of high importance. However, as he acknowledged, it covers a vast area. In a 30-minute debate it is difficult to deal adequately with the range of the subject.

As my hon. Friend acknowledged, the public service embraces over 5 million employees. Roughly one in five of the working population is employed full time or part time in the armed forces, the National Health Service, by local authorities, in the education service and the universities, and in the Civil Service. It is only the Civil Service for which I have particular and direct responsibilities, although I well recognise the importance of high morale in every area of the public service and at every level within it.

My hon. Friend referred to a few specific cases, and particularly to the Letcombe laboratory, which closed as from 31 March this year. I understand that the work that was being carried out at Letcombe will be maintained following the merger with Rothamsted. Indeed, the intention is that it should be strengthened by putting it alongside a wide range of related scientific disciplines and field experiments. I think that the comments made by the IPCS representative, to which my hon. Friend referred, were unduly exaggerated, taking account of the particular circumstances. I was, of course, delighted to hear from my hon. Friend that the site has now been taken over and is to be used. I hope that it will offer employment to people in the locality.

My hon. Friend also referred to the Royal Military College of Science at Shrivenham. I must be one of the few people who have never been in the armed forces but have nevertheless done a course at Shrivenham on atomic

energy. While I was there I also visited the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority establishment in Harwell, so I have many connections with the area of the country from which my hon. Friend comes.

Shrivenham has seen changes. It has moved towards the teaching staff being privatised by a contractual arrangement with the Cranfield Institute of Technology. From what I hear, that is going extremely well.

We need to remember that across the whole field of our public service we have some areas which have a quite remarkable worldwide reputation for scientific excellence. I mentioned Harwell a moment ago, which certainly would fall into that category. One sees a major and significant role in the years ahead for those parts of the public service.

We acknowledge the problems and difficulties of recent years, but looking particularly at the Civil Service, and thinking of the time when I, as a very junior member of the scientific and engineering parts of the Civil Service between 1944 and 1963, was occupied with technical matters, I see that enormous changes having taken place. These have occurred not least over the last six years, when a very determined effort has been made by the Government,—as was recognised by my hon. Friend—to change the patterns of thinking within the Civil Service, which had over the years developed a remarkable facility for carrying out the duties placed upon it by this Parliament and by the Executive, sometimes in such a way that the carrying out of the task or function appeared to be the absolute aim, without real concern for the costs of the operation. One of the great contributions which has come from my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and, particularly, from Lord Rayner, who aided her very much in the early years of her Government, has been in getting a much greater awareness of the need for cost-effectiveness in the operations within the public service, just as the discipline of the bottom line in private industry imposes that discipline on people in the private sector.

The changes that we have seen—and my hon. Friend mentioned privatisation, which at least in part has led to the reduction in numbers in the Civil Service, to which he referred, although most of that reduction has come from improved efficiency within the service—have brought a great deal of uncertainty, problems for management and understandable concern among the staff. Inevitably, morale has been affected. More effort must be made to achieve better communications and to improve management skills.

Good communications between management and staff have traditionally received too little attention within the Civil Service. But Departments have now identified them as a priority. Much is being done with welcome innovations in the communications methods and media used.

Effective communications can help civil servants understand how their work is used, why changes in procedures and methods are necessary, and how they will be affected by changes. In industry, studies show that the increased understanding that goes with better communications results in increased productivity, fewer industrial disputes, and better customer relations. We set similar targets within the Civil Service.

Individual Departments have carried out their own scrutinies of internal communications. Last year the Cabinet Office and Treasury commissioned a major study by specialist consultants of communications between management and staff across the whole of the Civil Service. The consultants are now completing their report and I look forward to seeing what improvements they recommend.

Centrally, we have tried to emphasise the importance attached to good communications in other ways: for example, by initiating a new series of newsletters for distribution to managers throughout the Civil Service; by circulating to a network of communications contacts in Departments examples of good practice, from both the public and private sectors; and by organising seminars and training courses for Civil Service managers at senior levels. Much greater emphasis is being put on management techniques and skills.

In the past, management information on, for example, pay or conditions of service often came to the staff via trade union channels rather than directly from management. It is no wonder that its presentation sometimes left much to be desired. Now management has better accepted, and is better carrying out, its essential task of keeping individual members of staff properly informed. I hope that it is also becoming more responsive to suggestions and ideas about improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the work done. Good management requires genuine two-way communications. This in turn helps keep morale high.

Of all parts of the public service, the Civil Service attracts the most unfair and ill-informed criticism generally, and particularly in the popular press. Yet the Civil Service does essential work for the community. It discharges tasks given it by Parliament and the Executive with a dedication and spirit of service which deserves high commendation.

It is a pity that some Civil Service union leaders are seeking to manipulate the staff of Her Majesty's Customs and Excise to inconvenience the public to attract publicity for their pay claim. It is unfortunate that on a day when this matter is being raised in such a broad and generous spirit in relation to the whole of the public service, some trade union leaders should behave so cynically by urging their members to disrupt holiday traffic over the bank holiday weekend.

It is not appropriate to discuss pay tonight. It is better that private talks and negotiations continue. I hope that a settlement of the present dispute within the Civil Service will be reached. Plans for strikes and disruptive action by the unions concerned are inappropriate at this time.

The Government believe that pay levels must be such as to recruit, retain and motivate sufficient staff of the quality needed to carry out the work asked of them. That approach has determined our attitude in the pay negotiations in recent years. Recruitment is generally satisfactory, although there are some problem areas—for example, among scientists, engineers, accountants, personal secretaries in London and executive officers, although it is worth noting that a much higher proportion of the new entrants to the executive officer grade are graduates than was the case in past years. I am delighted that recruitment of administrative trainees into the Civil Service—the high flyers for the future—was much more satisfactory in 1984 than in some other recent years.

The Civil Service competes with other employers in the public and private sectors, and so it should. I do not believe that the Civil Service should have some prior claim on the best talent, but it would be a bad and sad day if the Civil Service did not continue to attract people of high ability and great dedication. I share my hon. Friend's concern about the over-sharp distinction which is

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sometimes made between the public service and the private sector, as though one were good and the other were bad, and as though in some way, because the private sector was wealth creating and the public service was wealth consuming, one was superior to the other. That is a totally mistaken view.

Of course we must do just what my hon. Friend suggested. We must get the balance right, encouraging the enterprise culture, which must develop and expand if we are to get the jobs and the prosperity to which we all look forward, but doing so in a way that does not demean or detract from the essential contribution that must come from the great areas of public service within our society. If this debate has done no more than assert again the importance of the private and public sectors and the partnership and proper balance between them, it will have been well worth while.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-three minutes past Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 4 April 1985

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

NORTHERN IRELAND

Planning Applications (Representations)

1. **Mr. J. Enoch Powell** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proposals he has for facilitating representations on applications for planning permission by the owners or occupiers of contiguous land.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Chris Patten): I recently introduced a neighbour notification scheme in Northern Ireland. Under this scheme the occupiers of land adjoining a site which is the subject of a planning application are notified of that application and given the opportunity of making representations before the application is decided.

Mr. Powell: Will the Minister do his best to ensure that this welcome and desirable reform is given statutory force as soon as practicable, especially in the light of his disclosure last night that there is a bottleneck in the draftsmanship department of the Northern Ireland Office?

Mr. Patten: I shall certainly ensure that we get ahead and provide a statutory base as soon as possible. We are talking about an interim scheme. Work on the amending Order in Council has begun, but we will obviously want widely to consult right hon. and hon. Members about the precise terms of the legislation.

Mr. William Ross: Do the new notification procedures which the Minister mentioned cover the farming community and tenants of dwellinghouses, and, in particular, the tenants of Housing Executive dwellings?

Mr. Patten: For very good reasons the procedures cover occupiers rather than owners.

Mr. Peter Robinson: Is my hon. Friend the Minister, like me, encouraged to hear the right hon. Member for South Down, (Mr. Powell) welcoming a measure introduced at the behest of the Northern Ireland Assembly? Will my hon. Friend go one step further and consider site notification?

Mr. Patten: As my hon. Friend knows, we are also looking at site notification and experimenting in that direction. As for encouragement, I am always encouraged by the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell).

Mr. Alexander: Is there not an anomaly in the general law here? Is it not true that if someone is refused planning permission for his own property he can appeal, but that if something horrendous is happening next door, such as the erection of a fish and chip shop or a petrol station, he has no right of appeal? Should not the new provisions being applied to Northern Ireland be extended to the general law in this country?

Mr. Patten: We are also considering the whole question of third party appeals. It is often the case that the things that we do in Northern Ireland could well be transplanted elsewhere.

Security

2. **Mr. Molyneaux** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the security situation in Northern Ireland.

10. **Mr. Proctor** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the current security situation.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Hurd): Since I last answered questions in the House on 7 March, one soldier, two police officers and one civilian have died in incidents arising from the security situation in the Province, making a total of four. As the House will be aware, two of these deaths occurred yesterday morning when a car bomb exploded outside Newry courthouse. The Provisional IRA has claimed responsibility for all these brutal murders. The House will want to join me in expressing abhorrence and extending deep sympathy to the families of all who have died.

So far this year a total of 120 people have been charged with serious offences, including 15 with murder and 11 with attempted murder; and 54 weapons, 2,160 rounds of ammunition and 3 lb of explosives have been recovered.

Mr. Molyneaux: May I join the Secretary of State in his condemnation of yesterday's atrocity and in extending our sympathy to the bereaved? As it is human nature to slip into predictable routines, could certain individuals be given the duty of alerting their colleagues to the dangers of following fixed patterns? Those individuals could perhaps regard it as their task to suggest variations in those routines.

Mr. Hurd: It is certainly a principle of good security policy that that policy and its procedures should be varied and kept under review. There are a number of legitimate questions arising out of what happened yesterday that need investigation.

Mr. Proctor: The whole House will wish to join in the sentiments expressed by my right hon. Friend. Will he confirm that the SAS and other undercover security forces are active in the frontier area, and that those forces will be increased in and around Newry and South Armagh in the light of yesterday's events?

Mr. Hurd: I can confirm that the General Officer Commanding has at his disposal in Northern Ireland specialist Army units which he deploys to meet operational needs throughout the Province. My hon. Friend will understand why it would not be sensible for me to go further than that.

Mr. Nicholson: I join the Secretary of State and my right hon. Friend the Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) in offering sympathy to those who have been

bereaved. Yesterday saw the death of the 10th member of the RUC to be murdered in my constituency in the past five weeks, and a civilian was also murdered. Will the Secretary of State assure the House that he will give further consideration to more security measures in the Newry area, which in the past nine months has been the subject of continuous bombings and murder attacks? We appear to be getting nowhere, despite all the assurances. However, will the right hon. Gentleman assure me, the House and my constituents that a firm security policy will be adopted and maintained in the Newry area?

Mr. Hurd: There is a firm security policy, but I share the hon. Gentleman's feelings of outrage about what has been going on in his constituency. As I said to the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux), I agree that security policy and the emphasis on deployment in different parts of the Province need to be constantly examined and should be examined again in the light of what happened yesterday.

Rev. William McCrea: Does the Secretary of State agree with Ulster Members that the present security policy has been proved to be a failure, and that it ensures only that the constituents of the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Nicholson) and other hon. Members are put into coffins--the coffins of good Ulster, decent British citizens?

Mr. Hurd: That is not a worthy comment at this time. I do not believe that the security policy has failed. It is given a high priority and attention, as must be right in the circumstances of the Province, and we defend it robustly against attacks and criticisms, as is also our duty. The hon. Gentleman makes no constructive suggestion. I am always open, as are the Chief Constable and the General Officer Commanding, to constructive suggestions, particularly from elected representatives in Northern Ireland.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell: On the general background to the security situation in Northern Ireland, and acknowledging that, from time to time, it is perceived to be in the national interest that we should humbug the Americans, will the Secretary of State constantly recall the old wartime adage "Careless talk costs lives", and realise that words that are seen to be flannel in other contexts can be misunderstood in certain different places, with disastrous consequences?

Mr. Hurd: I have spent a large part of the last week or so trying to explain in the United States of America the complexities of the situation in Northern Ireland and Ireland, and trying to discourage the idea that there is a single key that will turn a single lock and solve the problem.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: I welcome the condemnation of terrorist outrages by the Catholic hierarchy and the splendid statements of Catholic priests, which are so seldom publicised. Is my right hon. Friend aware that many Catholics on both sides of the water would be grateful if we could have an end to all equivocation in these matters, and an appeal from the Catholic church to Catholics to join security forces and replace those Catholics who have been murdered doing their duty?

Mr. Hurd: It is desirable that representatives of all Churches should underline to those who listen to them that the role of the security forces in Northern Ireland is basically to protect the simplest human right of all—the right of the citizen to go about his daily lawful occasions in peace and security.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: May I be associated with the Secretary of State's sentiments about yesterday's atrocities? Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that the allegations of torture by Paul Caruana, held under the Prevention of Terrorism Act, have a dramatic effect on the minority community and their feelings about the security forces? I do not expect the Secretary of State to comment today on the details of the case, but will he guarantee that the detailed questions asked by Amnesty International will be answered in time?

Mr. Hurd: Mr. Caruana's allegations are being fully investigated through the normal procedures. An investigation has been conducted by the RUC complaints and discipline branch. Its report was forwarded to the Director of Public Prosecutions, who decided, after careful examination of all the evidence, including the medical evidence, that the prosecution of any of those involved was not warranted. The RUC is now following the usual procedures and submitting its report to the Police Complaints Board for consideration.

Dr. Mawhinney: In the widely reported discussions which my right hon. Friend is having with Irish Ministers about security in the Province and the possibility of a consultative role for Irish Ministers, is he also discussing the possibility of a consultative role for himself and his colleagues in security arrangements in the Republic, particularly in areas close to the border?

Mr. Hurd: We discuss all aspects of security co-operation with the authorities in the Republic. That discussion continued under different Irish and British Governments long before the current dialogue with the Irish Government stemming from the recent Chequers communiqué. I agree that in practice — in terms of money, arms, explosives and policing — our security effort depends to a considerable extent for its effectiveness on a matching effort by the Republic.

Mr. Archer: I do not ask the right hon. Gentleman to comment on the facts of the Caruana case, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) referred, but will he declare clearly that the rule of law is one and indivisible and that it cannot be preserved by invoking Satan to cast out Satan? Will he assure the House that the report by the Police Complaints Board will be made public? Will he then make a statement to the House on the recommendations in the Bennett report and to what extent they have been implemented?

Mr. Hurd: The security forces—both the police and the Army—in Northern Ireland operate under the rule of law. That is what distinguishes them from an army of occupation operating under military law. The normal procedures of investigation, and review of that investigation, by independent bodies—the DPP and the Police Complaints Board — are being followed in the Caruana case. The Bennett report has often been discussed in the House and everyone agrees that the situation has markedly improved in recent years. The case will continue to be followed through in accordance with the usual procedures.

Broadcasting Authorities

3. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he last met the broadcasting authorities in Northern Ireland; and what subjects were discussed.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Nicholas Scott): My right hon. Friend would not expect to have formal meetings with the broadcasting authorities, which are not responsible to him. However, he met both the BBC's Northern Ireland governor and the IBA's national member for Northern Ireland socially during February.

Mr. Bruinvels: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply. When he next meets representatives of the BBC and ITV, will he convey to them the worrying anxiety felt throughout Britain and Northern Ireland about the filming of IRA funerals at which rifles are fired? Is my hon. Friend aware that it is grossly offensive and thoroughly unhelpful? People are sickened when the BBC interviews IRA terrorists who threaten our country. Should not both the broadcasting authorities respond more actively and responsibly?

Mr. Scott: I recognise the widespread offence that is caused by the televising of funerals which are turned into propaganda exercises by the paramilitaries. However, it would be wrong for the Government to try to prohibit the reporting by the media of such funerals. The media must use their own editorial judgment about such matters, just as the security forces have to use their judgment on the ground when paramilitary displays take place at such funerals. I am sure that those responsible will have noted my hon. Friend's remarks.

Mr. McCusker: Will the Minister also discuss with the authorities in Northern Ireland the disquiet felt by my colleagues and I and many others about the investigative follow-up by the BBC in the aftermath of a number of sensitive security issues? I believe that that has virtually prejudiced any prospect of a police or UDR man getting a fair hearing or a fair trial in any subsequent action.

If the authorities in Northern Ireland deny what I am saying, perhaps the Minister will ask them why they refused to give me a transcript of one particular incident?

Mr. Scott: If the hon. Gentleman would care to write to me about that incident, we shall see whether there is an opportunity to raise it. The best way to handle these matters is for elected representatives and members of the public to make their views known direct to the broadcasting authorities.

Unemployment

4. **Mr. Parry** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to reduce unemployment in the Province.

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Dr. Rhodes Boyson): I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave yesterday to his written question.

Mr. Parry: Is not the Government's record on unemployment in the Province absolutely disgraceful? When the Government took power in June 1979 there were 59,600 people unemployed in the Province. In February this year the number had risen to 122,157—an increase from 10·3 to 21·2 per cent. Does the Minister agree that the additional 6p tax on cigarettes announced in the Budget will lead to further job losses in the tobacco industry in the Province?

Dr. Boyson: The rate of unemployment in Northern Ireland was increasing before 1979, when the Labour Government were in power, and that applies also to Great Britain. However, no one here welcomes unemployment in Northern Ireland any more than does the hon. Gentleman. Between 1960 and 1983 unemployment rose by 84,000, but the actual drop in the number of people employed was only 6,000. Therefore, 78,000 were accounted for by increased personnel in the Province, a birth rate 50 per cent. higher than in Great Britain and women wishing to return to work——

Mr. Canavan: That has nothing to do with it.

Dr. Boyson: The hon. Gentleman may say that, but if he speaks to the parents in the Province he will find that they notice when they have more children.

The actual increase in the rate of unemployment has decreased tremendously in recent years and we all look forward to the time when employment increases. In 1982 unemployment was increasing by 1,100 a month, in 1983 by 600 a month and last year by only 200 a month. However, between July and December last year there was an increase in employment in the Province of 4,100.

Mr. Beggs: Does the Minister agree that it is important that new products should be found to create new job opportunities in Northern Ireland? Is he aware that Antrim Creameries in Ballynure has successfully produced a new product which it wishes to market as a cheese spread? However, under present food labelling regulations, because it has a fat content of less than 10 per cent., the product cannot be marketed as such. Will the Minister endeavour to have the food labelling regulations changed as quickly as possible so that new jobs can be created?

Dr. Boyson: I agree that it is vital to find new products to replace those lost with the decline of the old industries. I shall investigate the matter of Antrim Creameries. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I know from a recent visit, the Milk Marketing Board is active in that area and products from the MMB and farms in Northern Ireland are being sold throughout the world.

Mr. Warren: Is my hon. Friend aware that I am the chairman of the Select Committee on Trade and Industry, which recently had two opportunities to visit Northern Ireland to study industrial and commercial development? Is he further aware of how impressed we were with the efficiency and enterprise of all workers in the Province? Does he accept that while there may be a lot of nuts in Noraid trying to make the Province as dangerous a place as New York city, Ulster is certainly a good place in which to invest?

Dr. Boyson: I am sure that hon. Members in all parts of the House will agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Hastings and Rye (Mr. Warren). Twice he has been to the Province with the members of that Select Committee, and I have had the privilege of meeting him and his fellow members on each occasion. Undoubtedly, employers in Ulster, and employers from outside who have invested there, pay tribute to the conscientiousness and reliability of the members of both communities working in the factories of Northern Ireland. The more that that can be

made known in Britain and throughout the world, the better. We must do our best to build up tourism in that beautiful Province. Great opportunities exist there. Hon. Members who take all possible steps to publicise the advantages of Northern Ireland, in relation to sport and in many other ways, do a great service to the Province.

Mr. Hume: The Minister will be aware of the parliamentary answer that he gave me last week containing the unemployment figures for each of the 17 constituencies in Northern Ireland. Has he noted that the two constituencies whose unemployment figures exceed all others are Foyle and Belfast, West? Does he draw any political conclusions from that, for example, about the relationship between the rate of unemployment and violence? Does he agree that special attention should be given to the unemployment problems of those constituencies? Why is his Department making cuts in the valuable work of the youth and community workshop in Derry?

Dr. Boyson: The answer to the second part of that supplementary question is that we have cut back only where all the places have not been filled. The figures show that 77 vacancies exist in the Foyle area. It is highly expensive to have places in community and other centres involved in youth programmes that are not filled. We are relating demand to supply.

The answer to the first part is that I am aware of the high rates of unemployment in Belfast, West and in Foyle. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that I have been concerned to assist with the continuance of employment, for example, at Molins and at other works. Clearly, a decline in violence would help to bring other employers in. I am making arrangements to meet people in May from West Belfast, including priests and the bishop of the area, to see what can be done by way of co-operation between the Government, trade unions, employers and the people of the area to improve employment prospects.

Rev. William McCrea: Is the Minister aware that a certain hypocrisy is shown by Opposition Members when we debate unemployment, in that the creation of jobs is not encouraged when leading members of the Labour party associate with members of Sinn Fein and the Provisional IRA, who are blasting jobs out of existence in the Province?

Dr. Boyson: There is a degree of truth in that, although many Opposition Members would not agree. To invite members of Sinn Fein to this House and to speak to them here undermines the whole issue of confidence in the Province. Nor is it helpful to the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Bell: Her Majesty's official Opposition will not be distracted by the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea), and I assure him and the House that, as we have said on many occasions, the Opposition have no truck with and do not support violence in any form. It is hypocritical of the hon. Gentleman to seek to distract attention from the important issue of unemployment.

With the hon. Member for Hastings and Rye (Mr. Warren), I compliment the efficiency and enterprise of the workers of Ulster. I spent yesterday with trade unionists and industrialists there. Does the Minister share the widespread feeling that I found yesterday that Northern Ireland is a low-wage, unemployment economy? If so, does he acquiesce in it? If not, what steps does he propose to change that sentiment, which is abroad in the province?

Dr. Boyson: I am sure that every hon. Member welcomes the hon. Gentleman's frank statement about Sinn Fein and violence in the Province. I welcome the hon. Gentleman's agreement with my hon. Friend the Member for Hastings and Rye (Mr. Warren). The Government do not lay down the wages that are paid throughout the economy — that is done by agreement between employers and workers. It is difficult for employers and employees to have a high-wage economy in view of the fact that firms in Northern Ireland have to compete with firms in Southern Ireland, which are near the increasing markets of Europe and because of the costs of energy and transport. I share the hon. Gentleman's desire that we should develop full employment with good wages and good conditions in factories to encourage other people to come to the Province.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Shorter questions may lead to shorter answers.

Short Brothers, Belfast

5. **Mr. William Ross** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has any plans to meet representatives of Short Brothers, Belfast.

Mr. Hurd: I have no immediate plans to meet representatives of Shorts, but I keep in regular contact with the chairman of the company.

Mr. Ross: Should not the right hon. Gentleman change his mind and meet representatives of Shorts to receive the congratulations of workers and management because the Government have finally followed the American military establishment and the commercial world in ordering a high-quality product from Shorts? Will the right hon. Gentleman encourage the management of Shorts to ensure future high quality work by continuing to engage a large number of young apprentices and giving them the proper training that is required to keep the firm in the forefront of this technology?

Mr. Hurd: I agree with the hon. Gentleman. I was delighted that the contract for the RAF trainer went to Shorts. I was especially delighted because there was no need for any special pleading or special subsidy in that regard. *[Interruption.]* I can tell the House from certain knowledge that the contract was clearly awarded on merit, simply because Shorts beat the competition. I agree with the hon. Gentleman's point about apprentices. Since becoming Secretary of State, one of the most heartening sights that I have seen is the apprentice shop at Shorts. I have seen how engineers of the future from both communities in the Province are working together.

Mr. Stephen Ross: The words of the Secretary of State are slightly hard to swallow for one who was involved with one of the three other contenders for the contract. I remind the right hon. Gentleman that the wings for the Short 330 and 360 are made in my constituency, where there is unemployment of 17·3 per cent. When the right hon. Gentleman sees Sir Philip Foreman—I congratulate him on his success—will he remind him that any crumbs from his table will be gratefully received in the Isle of Wight?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman is a graceful loser. We have unemployment of between 21 and 22 per cent.

Mr. Peter Robinson: Does the right hon. Gentleman not think it strange that the Liberal party spokesman for

Northern Ireland has done his best to ensure that Northern Ireland does not get jobs for the Shorts aircraft industry? Does he further agree that the best encouragement that can be given to the work force at Shorts is for him to announce that the will not proceed with the privatisation of the company?

Mr. Hurd: I do not agree with the hon. Member's last point. If Shorts could be successfully privatised—this is still an "if"—that would be a considerable tonic for the private sector in Northern Ireland. It certainly was unfortunate that the official Liberal and Labour party spokesmen seemed to be against the fact that Shorts won this defence contract. That does not in any way diminish our pleasure.

Mr. Archer: In order not to mar a joyful and, I should have thought, unanimous occasion, will the right hon. Gentleman, if he meets representatives of Shorts, extend to them the warm congratulations of those on the Labour Benches on the successful outcome of the Tucano project? Will he assure them that the Government will not, by any doctrinaire privatisation manoeuvres, destroy the company's successful progress, dismember the enterprise and endanger the employment of those who work there?

Mr. Hurd: There will be nothing doctrinaire in our approach. I am delighted that the right hon. and learned Gentleman and the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) rejoice in Shorts' success.

Maze Prison (Special Category Prisoners)

6. **Sir John Biggs-Davison** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many special category prisoners remain in Her Majesty's prison, Maze, or elsewhere; and how many prisoners are held at the Secretary of State's pleasure.

Mr. Scott: There are 162 special category prisoners, all of whom are in Maze compound prison. Sixty-one persons are currently detained at the pleasure of the Secretary of State.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: Will the Northern Ireland Office seek the fullest possible particulars of the extent to which prisoners convicted of terrorism do or do not return to paramilitary activity afterwards? In the light of such particulars, will the Secretary of State review the position of the young offenders held at his pleasure?

Mr. Scott: We are engaged now in the procedure of reviewing all those serving indeterminate sentences, as the appropriate time in their sentence is reached. The prisoners have the chance to put in written representations, and their cases are eventually discussed by a life sentence review board before being considered by Ministers. Already under that procedure 10 young prisoners have had dates fixed for their release, as well as three life sentence prisoners. That procedure will continue.

My hon. Friend has put his finger on a very important matter. In coming to these decisions, the possibility of re-offence, and thus the safety of the public, has to be at the forefront of our minds.

Mr. Hume: The Minister is no doubt aware that the process that he mentioned for the setting of release dates for young prisoners held at the pleasure of the Secretary of State has been welcomed by representatives of all sides of the community. In the light of that, will he do his best to speed up the process?

Mr. Scott: We have to consider each of the cases very carefully on its merits, bearing in mind the time that the person has served, the degree of involvement in the original crime, and the behaviour of the prisoner while in prison. The final, and in many ways the paramount, consideration has to be the likelihood of re-offence.

SDLP (Security Forces)

7. **Dr. Mawhinney** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has recently discussed with leaders of the Social Democratic and Labour Party their attitude towards the security forces in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: I have had a number of recent discussions on security issues with representatives of the Social Democratic and Labour party. I have made clear in particular my hope that the constitutional representatives of the minority community will take full advantage of the various opportunities that exist at local and provincial level to make their views known on policing matters to the Royal Ulster Constabulary.

Dr. Mawhinney: Does my right hon. Friend agree that there is unlikely to be a stable security position in Northern Ireland while the minority community neither supports nor even recognises the security forces, and if that view is also the reflected view of the leaders of the Social Democratic and Labour party? Will my right hon. Friend encourage the SDLP, if it wishes to be viewed as a constitutional party, and if its members wish to be viewed as constitutional politicians, to offer its support and recognition to the security forces? Then we could discuss other matters which are of security interest to it and to the Province.

Mr. Hurd: It is true that many members of the minority community serve in and fully support the security forces, as the casualty figures show. I agree with my hon. Friend that it is highly desirable that the representatives of the minority community should, in word and in deed, make their criticisms where they think criticisms are justified but, having done that, should join in understanding and proclaiming the fact that the security forces exist to protect the rights of the citizen, Catholic and Protestant, throughout Northern Ireland.

Mr. Hume: Will the Secretary of State, in replying to questions about the SDLP from the hon. Member for Peterborough (Dr. Mawhinney), take account of the well-known antipathy of that hon. Member to the SDLP and his well-known capacity for distorting the views and attitudes of that party? Will the Secretary of State tell his hon. Friend to find out what the position is before putting forward his views on our position with regard to the security forces and before making definitive statements in this House?

I remind the Secretary of State of what I have said very often — that we fully support the security forces in impartially seeking out anybody who commits a crime in Northern Ireland. We have said that repeatedly, but we have gone on to mention the sort of community confidence that is required to deal with the security situation in Northern Ireland. It must be the community confidence that applies in every democratic society. It must be based on consensus about government, which is the basis of order in any democratic society.

Mr. Hurd: I thought that my hon. Friend's question was helpful in intention and in effect. I am familiar with the attitude displayed by the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume). I hope that he will encourage his friends in Northern Ireland to take advantage of the opportunities which exist, and other opportunities which might be brought into existence inside the Province, to express their views in groups and places where those views can have influence.

Mr. John Mark Taylor: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the SDLP would also enhance its constitutional status if it were to take part in the workings of the Assembly and express those constitutional views there?

Mr. Hurd: Indeed, I wish that that were possible.

Mr. William Ross: Despite the words of the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume), is the Secretary of State not aware that the perception in Northern Ireland is that the SDLP does not support the security forces? Does that not lead to a situation in which that evident lack of support means that people whom the SDLP claims to represent are unwilling to come forward to give evidence in cases of murder, even when those murdered are leaving mass?

Mr. Hurd: I hope that everybody in Northern Ireland, regardless of community, will encourage people who are witnesses of crime or have evidence that could lead to the prosecution and conviction of criminals, to come forward without fear.

Mr. Hirst: Notwithstanding the views of the SDLP, may I ask my right hon. Friend whether he is satisfied with the levels of overtime currently being worked by members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary?

Mr. Hurd: I am sure that my hon. Friend will understand this. It is a mistake, which is quite often made in Northern Ireland, to suppose that overtime is a measure of the effectiveness of the police force. Indeed, too much overtime is obviously not a sign of a healthy and effective force. A much better measure of police activity is the man hours worked. I am glad to be able to tell the House that the figures for the year just ended show that police man hours worked in Northern Ireland were up to 23·8 million in 1984-85 compared with 23·3 million in 1983-84—a substantial increase.

A26 (Antrim-Ballymena)

8. **Mr. Clifford Forsythe** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he is in a position to report on the progress of the public inquiry into the proposed dualling of the A26 between Antrim and Ballymena.

Mr. Chris Patten: The inquiry closed on 19 March this year, and I now await the inspector's report.

Mr. Forsythe: Because the inquiry has lasted considerably longer than the three days confidently predicted by the Department at the outset, will the Minister now look at ways of compensating objectors because of the additional legal costs involved, bearing in mind that the delays were caused by the Department in the presentation of its evidence and, on some occasions, by the non-presentation of its evidence?

Mr. Patten: I realise that the length of the inquiry—I think that in all it sat for 16 days over a couple of months—raised certain problems. We shall consider as rapidly as we can any claims as soon as we have received the inspector's report.

Ancillary Health Workers

9. **Mr. Randall** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will indicate the number of ancillary workers currently employed by the Eastern Health and Social Services Board in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Chris Patten: At the end of last year 6,451 ancillary workers were employed by the Eastern Health and Social Services Board.

Mr. Randall: Will the Minister confirm that the Eastern Health and Social Services Board budget has been slashed by the Government to the tune of £4·6 million? Will he tell the House what that will mean in terms of job losses? Is the hon. Gentleman aware that if we get the 600 job losses that have been speculated about in various newspaper reports, that will mean the cancellation of new services, a reduction of beds and longer waiting lists? Would that not be regarded as a serious blow to the people of Northern Ireland?

Mr. Patten: I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman's question is based on something that is not true. The budget of the Eastern Health and Social Services Board will be going up next year, on the figures for this year. Therefore, I am afraid that what the hon. Gentleman referred to cannot qualify as a cut.

Youth Training

11. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many youngsters leaving the youth training programme go on to full-time employment.

Dr. Boyson: Since the youth training programme began in 1982, 9,552—53·3 per cent.—of the young people who have left the programme went directly into employment and 393—2 per cent.—returned to full-time education. The figures for the last six months were 2,768—55·8 per cent. and 164—3 per cent. Information is collected only with regard to trainees' immediate destinations on leaving the programme, so those who experienced any delay in entering full-time employment are not included in the employment figures.

Mr. Nellist: Is that answer not a warning to young school leavers in Northern Ireland that the Government's youth training programme there has about the same success rate as the programme in the rest of Britain and offers no real future for young people? Why does the Minister not propose a real training programme, on trade union rates of pay, with an allowance of at least £55, and a guarantee of a job at the end? Does the Minister accept that the fall by a third in manufacturing employment under the present Government in the past six years, to a level that is half the real rate of unemployment in Northern Ireland, shows that the Government do not care for the youth of Northern Ireland and cannot offer them a future?

Dr. Boyson: Over 16,000 young people and adults are in training in Northern Ireland, out of a population of 1·5 million. That shows how concerned the Government are about the matter. Three out of five of those who join the youth training programme either obtain employment

immediately afterwards or embark on higher education. That shows that the programme is a great advantage to those who take part in it.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Thurnham** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 4 April.

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend is travelling to south-east Asia for an official visit.

Mr. Thurnham: Tomorrow is the end of the tax year. Will my right hon. Friend assure the House that there will be no special Easter eggs for any over-zealous tax inspectors who take too many second looks at the books of small business men?

Mr. Biffen: I can happily give that assurance. There is no question of tax inspectors being offered bonuses for increasing tax revenue from small businesses.

Mr. Hattersley: The Leader of the House will know that yesterday, after they had fixed their rates, many shire counties discovered that the rate support grant was again to be cut from the level of which they had previously been notified. What advice are the Government giving those counties about how they should accommodate the new cuts?

Mr. Biffen: It has always been made clear, and local authorities have always understood, that the initial RSG figure given to them by the Department is an estimate and is subject to change in the light of council spending plans.

Mr. Hattersley: I hope that that carefully prepared answer will be gleefully accepted in the shire counties which are to be penalised. Apart from that answer, which the right hon. Gentleman read with such precision, can he comment on the absurdity of rate legislation which, simply because the GLC has fixed a rate lower than the statutory maximum, requires cuts in shire county allocation? The figure for Lancashire has fallen by £4·2 million, the figure for Cleveland by £1·3 million and that for Kent by £3·25 million. How will the right hon. Gentleman explain to those counties that their grant is to be cut simply because the GLC has levied a rate lower than that which the Government anticipated?

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Gentleman describes a set of situations on which I cannot confidently comment—[HON. MEMBERS:"Oh."] I will commit the great solecism in this House of refusing to comment on what I cannot comment on accurately. There is no doubt that the shire counties will contrast their own prudent financial management with what is happening in many other areas of the country, including that covered by the GLC.

Mr. Hattersley: The right hon. Gentleman fails to grasp the essential point. What he describes as prudent financial management in the shire counties has resulted in the shire counties receiving further cuts in RSG.

Mr. Biffen: I have indicated to the right hon. Gentleman that I will not follow him down that path because I am not certain of my ground.

Mr. Greenway: Is my right hon. Friend aware that I understand that to save overtime, no searcher dogs were used in the VIP departure lounge at Heathrow today before the departure of the Prime Minister to the far east? Will he look into this, bearing in mind the fact that the country is concerned about the Prime Minister's security above all things and would not mind paying for the overtime required?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend is right to underline the great national concern that our leaders and the Prime Minister should always have the utmost security in their movements when undertaking national duties, but I have no doubt that the necessary standards have been fulfilled.

Mr. Steel: Although the Lord Privy Seal is right not to comment with confidence, or even without confidence, on the detailed figures of the cuts imposed on local authorities, how does he expect local government officials or elected members to cope with the constantly changing barriers against which the Government place them?

Mr. Biffen: The right hon. Gentleman must know that the rate support grant figures are always issued on a provisional basis. On this occasion they have been revised, and revisions must be expected.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend: Will my right hon. Friend take time during the recess to consult his right hon. Friends on what new initiatives the Government might take to patch up our quarrel with Argentina, bearing in mind that the conflict started nearly three and a half years ago? Does he agree that, while it is all too easy for both countries to blame each other, there would be considerable long-term benefits for Britain and the Falkland Islands in having proper diplomatic and commercial links with Argentina and its new democratic Government? Would that not be in the interests of the long-term future of the region?

Mr. Biffen: I accept that it must be in our ultimate interests to restore satisfactory relationships with Argentina, but that will be the consequence of a detailed and closely argued process of negotiation. We are at the beginning of that now, and we shall have to fight our corner.

Q2. **Mr. Canavan** asked the Prime Minister what are her official engagements for 4 April.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave a few moments ago.

Mr. Canavan: Is it just coincidence that almost every time I hit the jackpot at Prime Minister's Question Time she does a bunk to the far east or somewhere else? In the Prime Minister's absence, will the Leader of the House ensure that approporiate Government action is taken to compensate Scottish football fans after the Government's intervention to switch the venue of the Scotland-England football international from Wembley to Hampden? Will they compensate the Scottish football fans, including some of my constituents, who have spent hundreds of pounds in non-refundable deposits for hotel bookings in London, only to discover that the great dictatorial referee in Downing street has blown the whistle and moved the goal posts from London to Glasgow?

Mr. Biffen: I have a lively sympathy with the hon. Gentleman with regard to his discovery that I am here to

answer his questions rather than the Prime Minister. I no more wish to answer his question than he wishes to ask it of me, but we are chained together by circumstance. As I am sure he will realise, my hon. Friend the Minister with responsibility for sport asked the Football Association to reconsider the date of the international. The change in the venue was a judgment of the Football Association and the Scottish Football Association. But I have left the worse news until last. Although there is much sympathy, there is no question of the Government accepting any liability such as the hon. Gentleman suggests.

Q3. **Mr. Hirst** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 4 April.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hirst: Is my right hon. Friend aware that, at its conference in Inverness last weekend, the Liberal party voted to remove all United States bases from Britain? Does he agree that this is yet another example of a glaring inconsistency in the policy of the alliance on a critical issue? Apart from offering sympathy to the Social Democratic party for its curious bedfellows, will my right hon. Friend take this opportunity to reaffirm the Government's support for the other Alliance—NATO—which is the ultimate guarantor of the peace and security of British people?

Mr. Biffen: I am happy to affirm the Government's commitment to the NATO Alliance and to say that all parties which affirm their support for NATO cannot have it both ways. They cannot want the Alliance and its nuclear implications, but deny that Alliance the nuclear bases.

Mr. MacKenzie: Will the Leader of the House answer more sympathetically the question put to him by my hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan)? If the Government so arrange sporting fixtures that it will cost sporting fans a great deal of money, and if they take the responsibility for changing the dates, they must take some responsibility for compensating those people for the many hundreds of pounds that they have lost. We will not have this. The Government must take either one line or the other.

Mr. Biffen: The right hon. Gentleman is advancing a most contentious proposition: that the Government should undertake financial responsibilities and liabilities in this instance. This would be a major policy departure. It is simply not on.

Q4. **Mr. Pawsey** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 4 April.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Pawsey: Is my right hon. Friend aware that there are many Conservative Members who, since 1979, have been urging rate reform? Is he further aware that we very much welcome the initiative of our right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in this matter? However, can he say when a fairer system that will better reflect people's ability to pay will come before the House? Indeed, will it come during the lifetime of this Parliament?

Mr. Biffen: That would be a fairly fundamental reply to let slip out on a Thursday morning before we depart for Easter. I accept at once the good wishes that my hon. Friend conveys, but this is a very tangled problem and the sooner it can be dispatched the better. However, it would be just as well if we got the answer right rather than produced it quickly.

Q7. **Mr. Andrew MacKay** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 4 April.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Mackay: Will my right hon. Friend find some time today further to consider the newspaper report in last Sunday's *Observer* about substantial ballot-rigging in the Transport and General Workers Union, which apparently led to the election of Mr. Ron Todd as the general secretary? Will he reflect upon the fact that our trade union legislation which passed through the House last year, is very important in the light of this ballot-rigging, and will he further reflect that no Labour party spokesman has condemned this action, taken by one of its major paymasters?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend has very generously asked me to do not much more than reflect, and I am very happy to reflect on all the various aspects of the issue that he mentioned. I join him in saying that I believe it underlines the considerable importance that we might attach to the postal ballot provisions in our recent trade union legislation.

Ms. Harman: Why have the Government, against the advice of their own quango, Playboard, made massive cuts in urban programme funding for holiday play schemes? Does the right hon. Gentleman not realise that without safe, constructive play, school holidays for many children will spell boredom and that for many parents, particularly working parents, they involve the worry that, instead of playing safely, their children might end up either in hospital or the juvenile court? Will he reinstate these important funds?

Mr. Biffen: I have no authority to reinstate these programmes, but I shall of course draw the attention of the relevant Secretary of State to the point made by the hon. Lady. However, I suspect that these and all other public spending provisions have to be carefully assessed against need and value for money.

Q9. **Sir John Biggs-Davison** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 4 April.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: Did the First Lord of the Treasury, for whom my right hon. Friend is replying, know of—I cannot believe that she can have approved of—the discontinuance of the £10 paid every year since the reign of Henry VII by the Exchequer to a certain university—not mine? Should not a Tory Government cherish harmless anomalies and pleasant traditions?

Mr. Biffen: I must admit that that is not even a technical knock-out. I have been floored in round one. I have not the faintest idea of what it is to which my hon.

Friend refers. I know that it is of national significance, otherwise the words would not be on his lips. I shall see that my right hon. Friend is informed of it the moment that she returns from the far east.

Mr. Tony Banks: Will the right hon. Gentleman care to tell the House how many right hon. or hon. Members have had their phones tapped since the Prime Minister was elected in 1979?

Mr. Biffen: I did not hear the question.

Mr. Banks: Clearly there would be little point in tapping the right hon. Gentleman's telephone. I asked him whether he could tell us how many hon. Members have had their telephones tapped since 1979.

Mr. Biffen: As I understand it, undertakings have been given in the House by previous Prime Ministers, and have since been reinforced, that no hon. Members have had their telephones tapped.

Mr. Flannery: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will have noticed that my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs) and I have been here throughout Question Time, including Northern Ireland Question Time, but we did not reach the highly topical question on political discussions on Northern Ireland. A considerable number of hon. Members who had not tabled any questions were called more than once. We waited and stayed behind precisely for those highly political questions. They were not reached because hon. Members who had not tabled questions, and others, were called many times.

Mr. Speaker: There is always a difficult balance to strike, but the hon. Gentleman is well aware of the fact that I seek to balance questions between Northern Ireland Members and those from the rest of the United Kingdom. I am sorry that we did not get as far as the hon. Gentleman's question. If he had risen on question No. 6 he would probably have got in, but he did not do so. His question was No. 17.

Business of the House

10.32 am

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): Will the Leader of the House state the business for the week after the recess?

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): Yes, Sir. The business for the first week after the Adjournment will be as follows:

MONDAY 15 APRIL—Second Reading of the Surrogacy Arrangements Bill.

Remaining stages of the Education (Corporal Punishment) Bill.

Proceedings on the Reserve Forces (Safeguard of Employment) Bill [*Lords*], which is a consolidation measure.

TUESDAY 16 APRIL — Second Reading of the Prosecution of Offences Bill [*Lords*].

Motions on the Police (Anonymous, Repetitious etc Complaints) Regulations, the Police (Complaints) (Mandatory Referrals etc) Regulations, and on the Police (Complaints) (Informal Resolution) Regulations.

WEDNESDAY 17 APRIL — Conclusion of remaining stages of the Interception of Communications Bill.

Motion relating to the Wireless and Telegraphy (Broadcast Licence Charges and Exemption) (Amendment) Regulations.

THURSDAY 18 APRIL—Remaining stages of the Social Security Bill.

FRIDAY 19 APRIL—Private Members' Bills.

MONDAY 22 APRIL — Opposition day (10th allotted day).

Mr. Hattersley: May I ask the right hon. Gentleman three specific questions? First, he knows very well that there is increasing concern on both sides of the House about the mounting tragedy in South Africa. Are we soon to have a debate on that subject?

Secondly, the right hon. Gentleman knows that last night the Prime Minister announced, through a written answer, additional powers that Ministers are taking to influence the career of civil servants whom those Ministers designate as subversives or security risks. Clearly that statement ought to have been made to the House and been subject to questions in the House. May we have a statement on the subject next week?

Thirdly, are we to have a debate on this week's several White Papers on employment? If the Government intend to preserve the pretence that those documents are anything other than Conservative propaganda financed out of the taxes, there has to be a debate so that the implications of the Government's policy can be examined.

Mr. Biffen: With regard to the general foreign affairs situation, which of course will encompass South Africa, it is my hope that we shall very shortly have a debate on that topic.

The powers announced by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister yesterday are derived from a report by the Security Commission in 1981 and the definition of subversion is that recommended by the Security Commission. Of course, we will look at this matter through the usual channels, as requested.

Finally, as will be evident, I have provided no time for an employment debate in the week of our return. Thereafter we will see how we go, but there will be plenty of economic debates related to the Budget and doubtless it could be incorporated in one of them.

Mr. Mark Carlisle (Warrington, South): On Tuesday's business on the Second Reading of the Prosecution of Offences Bill, will my right hon. Friend pass on to the Home Secretary the hope that he will make it clear during his speech that the Government do not intend to reinstate the clause defeated in the House of Lords about the right of the prosecution to appeal to the Court of Appeal in sentence matters?

Mr. Biffen: This is a contentious issue, but of course I will pass on to my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary the point that my right hon. and learned Friend made.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): Has the Leader of the House seen early-day motion 558, which draws attention to the unacceptable and improper cash offer made by Political Research and Communication International Limited on behalf of Lead Manufacturers Limited to pay the travelling expenses to Sweden of the Select Committee on the Environment?

[That this House strongly deprecates the action of Political Research and Communication International Limited in offering to bear the travelling expenses of the Environment Committee so that the Committee can examine an advanced system for disposing of radioactive waste in Sweden; and considers that this offer by a financially interested party is, or may be seen as, an attempt improperly to influence and subvert the Committee.]

This is an important matter involving a commercially motivated attempt to influence the work of a Select Committee and the activities of a PR firm of which an hon. Member of the House is chairman. Will the Leader of the House, bearing in mind his special responsibilities to the House as a whole, arrange for an early debate or statement so that the issues raised can be fully explored and rules of conduct properly established for the future?

Mr. Biffen: The right hon. Gentleman raises an evidently serious point. I am sure that the whole House would agree that it would be improper for any Select Committee conducting an independent inquiry on behalf of the House to accept funding from an interested private party. Any further action arising on this matter would be for the Liaison Committee to consider in the first instance. Perhaps we may see how matters proceed from there.

Mr. Gerrard Neale (Cornwall, North): In view of the fact that interminable delays are suffered in public inquiries, and, in particular, in view of the extraordinary and lamentable decision by a Committee of both Houses yesterday to overrule the decision of a public inquiry on the Okehampton bypass, will my hon. Friend consider providing time for a debate in the near future to enable the House to consider how the public inquiry system can be reviewed so as to give all parties a full and fair chance of presenting their case but at the same time enable an early end date to such inquiries which also include the granting of planning consent to be set?

Mr. Biffen: The Government will now study the Joint Committee's report and consider what can best be done. In the meantime. I will bear in mind what my hon. Friend has just said.

Mr Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): Does the Leader of the House recall that after the last general election many hon. Members on both sides of the House were concerned about the methods and procedures of the Boundary Commission, exemplified in a small way — but it emphasised the daftness of it—by the silly names that were given to some constituencies? I have raised the matter on a number of occasions and quite properly, my suggestion that there should be an inquiry was guided to the Home Secretary. It was put to me that it might be a good subject for a Select Committee of the House. However that may be, it is now two years since the general election; the boundary setting was done badly; the procedures were often much too short. Can something be done about it? Nothing much needs to be done for about 10 years, but something ought to be done because there is concern.

Mr. Biffen: I have every sympathy with that observation. The time honoured and civic traditions of Oswestry are now extinct and have been replaced by a mere geographic abstraction called Shropshire, North. Many right hon. and hon. Members must feel exactly the same way. If I had the constituency title that the right hon. Gentleman has, I would bear it very heavily. However, I shall look into the matter and see what further progress can be made.

Mr. Ian Lloyd (Havant): My right hon. Friend will be aware that it is nearly four months, if not more, since the Computer Sub-Committee undertook a wide-ranging survey of the information technology needs of Parliament and, with the unanimous support of the House of Commons (Services) Committee, presented a report containing specific recommendations about what should be done. Is anything to be done, or will the report simply lurk in a pigeon hole for ever?

Mr. Biffen: I shall certainly be in touch with my hon. Friend, and I hope that I can give him some assistance.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): How long does the right hon. Gentleman expect Wednesday's motion on the broadcast licence fee to last? Would not a one and a half hour debate on such an important subject be inappropriate? I understand that under the Social Security Bll, which will be disussed on Thursday, the Government propose to introduce some of the national insurance contribution changes presaged in the Budget. If that is so, will the right hon. Gentleman guarantee that those amendments will be tabled by the Government on Monday 15 April?

Mr. Biffen: With regard to the hon. Gentleman's second point, I take at once the force of what he says and shall see what can be done. He asked about Wednesday's business, but it is not in my gift to say when one item of business will conclude and the next begin. However, such decisions on licence fees have previously been resolved in 90 minutes.

Mr. David Crouch (Canterbury): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the business that he has announced for the week after the Easter break — short as it is — is relatively light and not terribly important? I hope to be in my place then, but that will not be true of all hon. Members after the Easter break. Will my right hon. Friend consider sending our right hon. Friend the Prime Minister a message, supported by the whole Cabinet, suggesting that she might like to take a few days off on her return from the far east, and perhaps go to the Mediterranean, to some nice quiet spot beside a golf course?

Mr. Biffen: I am not sure what would happen to me if I conveyed the second part of that message. But I have a message for my hon. Friend, and that is, that for my hon. Friend to describe the surrogacy legislation, the Second Reading of the Prosecution of Offences Bill and the Interception of Communications Bill as falling into a somewhat second league category shows that he has fallen slightly below his normally acute vision.

Mr. James Lamond (Oldham, Central and Royton): Did the Leader of the House pluck up the courage to have a word with the Prime Minister before she left about the need for a debate, or at least a statement, on star wars? She went to the United States and recklessly pledged our support for that, although research costing $26 billion is involved. When the Prime Minister returns from her tour of the far east, she will no doubt make a statement boasting about what she has achieved there, and highlighting the opening of a dam that was built with money given by the Labour Government. It cost just over £100 million. That will merit a statement from the Dispatch Box, but $26 billion which could have been gone on much-needed aid for the far east will be spent without even any mention of it being made in the House.

Mr. Biffen: Governments come and go, but taxpayers are the constant factor. They supply the public funds, whether that money is spent, overseas or at home. However, I shall of course draw the attention of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to the hon. Gentleman's point.

Mr. Richard Hickmet (Glanford and Scunthorpe): My right hon. Friend will be aware that since before Christmas right hon. and hon. Members have been subjected to organised lobbying campaigns in relation to badger baiting, the possible extension of VAT, the taxation of pensions, the limited list, tuition fees and so on. Most of that lobbying has been carried out courtesy of a word processor. Members of Parliament have received threatening letters from, for example, the Roche drug company. Has not the time come for a debate to be held on the nature of the lobbying of Members of Parliament and the manner in which it is carried out, as well as on how we should respond to such organised campaigns?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend raises a point of widespread interest to the House. We have to learn to live with this, but I am not sure that we would make living with it that much easier if we shared our collective agonies with each other in a debate.

Mr. Alf Dubs (Battersea): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that his approach tends to be that when requests are made to him either too meekly or too aggressively he resists them? Therefore, will he take note of the fact that I am trying to steer a middle course in asking him yet again what the chances are of having a debate on the Commission for Racial Equality report on immigration control procedures?

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Gentleman is being terribly moderate. I did not think that he was a great devotee of the middle of the road. Doubtless he, like me, holds to

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heart Aneurin Bevan's strictures on the subject. There is no likelihood of an early debate on the topic, but I shall continue to bear in mind the hon. Gentleman's claims.

Mr. J. F. Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): Is my right hon. Friend aware that since the security arrangements for admission into the House have been tightened there have been outside long queues of parties coming into the House? I am particularly concerned about the effect that this has on children, the elderly and the disabled in bad weather. Could he find time for an early debate on this matter to discuss other ways of admitting visitors to the House?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend raises a matter that gives concern to a considerable number of hon. Members, and causes inconvenience for a number of constituents. However, I suggest that, in the first instance, my hon. Friend elaborates his complaints so that they can be considered by the Services Committee.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): Following the Government's panic actions to keep blameless Scottish football supporters away from London, may we expect urgent steps to protect the population from young Conservative hooligans?

Mr. Biffen: There must be some sharp rejoinder that buries that subject once and for all, but I regret to say that I cannot think of it.

Mr. Kenneth Warren (Hastings and Rye): Over the Easter recess, will my right hon. Friend look at the way in which the work of Select Committees is being persistently held up by the dog-in-the-manger attitude of the alliance in not allowing the replacement of members on Select Committees?

Mr. Biffen: I take note of what my hon. Friend says. I know that it causes deep concern among the Chairmen of the Select Committees.

Mr. John Ryman (Blyth Valley): In arranging the parliamentary business, has the Leader of the House been discussing with the Prime Minister the appointment of peers announced in the newspapers today? In view of the immense talent on the Government Benches, why have no Conservative Members been elevated to the other House? Does not the fear of consequent by-elections and the Government's knowledge that they will be defeated at such by-elections mean that they are not willing to risk them?

Mr. Biffen: These are always matters that lie in the eye of the beholder. I looked at the list, and I thought what a fascinating social change it showed, when the Labour Benches in the House of Lords are being stuffed with stockbrokers and merchant bankers.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): My right hon. Friend will be aware of the concern that I have felt since November that the House is sitting later and later into the night, and in correspondence and questions I have asked my right hon. Friend whether he will consider looking at Standing Order No. 2 and bringing in morning sittings. On Tuesday 16 April, there is the Prosecution of Offences Bill and other Bills, which will certainly go on late into the night as usual. Therefore, will my right hon. Friend look favourably at the possibility of morning sittings, at least experimentally?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend is already a noted Member after but a few months' service. However, I have been here long enough to remember morning sittings, and, although they were hilarious for the small number of hon. Members who took part in the proceedings, hardly anybody turned up, hardly any business of substance was transacted, and the whole thing crumbled into farce.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that there is great anxiety in Scotland about the delay of the announcement of the result of the unnecessary review of Scottish lowland airport policy? I am told, in a little letter from the Secretary of State for Transport today, that, like many other important Scottish announcements, this is to be made by means of a written answer so that we shall not be able to question him. I do not want to delay the announcement any further, but should not the Leader of the House arrange for the Secretary of State for Transport to make an oral statement to the House today so that we can question him?

Mr. Biffen: I shall certainly pass that request to my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Will my right hon. Friend arrange for the Minister responsible for sport to come to the House immediately after the recess to make a statement about sporting fixtures? Will he ask the Minister to include in that statement the challenge by six British girl jockeys of six American girl jockeys to a race at York on 14 June? Will he be backing the British fillies all the way?

Mr. Biffen: That question would be more appropriately directed to the Minister responsible for sport. I shall explain to him the virtues of going to see my hon. Friend after the recess.

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): Will the Leader of the House tear himself away from the subject of jockeys and turn his attention to the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority at Risley and the sacking by Exclusive Cleaners of the cleaning staff who refused to accept a wage cut?

Will the right hon. Gentleman examine in particular the security aspect, because the trade unions claim that normal security procedures are being weakened to allow temporary staff in? Will he explain to the Secretary of State for the Environment that the company has cleaning contracts for the Houses of Parliament? Despite the firm being a massive contributor to the Conservative party, will he consider removing the contract from the firm?

Mr. Biffen: I shall try to moderate my reply, despite the sententious terms of the question. I shall draw attention to what has been said. The hon. Gentleman might seek to raise the matter on the Adjournment since it seems that its wider ventilation would be of advantage.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): When the Prime Minister returns in a fortnight's time from the far east, will the Leader of the House ensure that her statement describes in particular her visit to Sri Lanka a week today? Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that for a large minority of the population there the visit will be seen as condoning President Jayawardene's policy of virtual extermination of

the Tamil-speaking peoples of the north-eastern provinces, his ban on opposition public meetings and his recent lengthy detention of opposition and trade union leaders? Will the right hon. Gentleman ensure that the Prime Minister's statement deals with those matters?

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Gentleman has formally identified himself with the Tamil cause in Sri Lanka. I shall draw the Prime Minister's attention to his comments.

Sir John Wells (Maidstone): Can my right hon. Friend offer an early debate on alternative medicine which was debated in the other place recently? Is he aware of the great national interest in the subject, and has he heard about the recently formed council? Does he agree that views from all parts of the House on this important topic should be voiced?

Mr. Biffen: I shall certainly bear in mind my hon. Friend's pertinent point, but we are moving to a time of the year when time is tight, particularly in view of the Finance Bill. However, I shall consider my hon. Friend's request.

PETITION

Transport Services

10.54 am

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): I beg to ask leave to present a petition from the Walsall metropolitan borough council which is strongly opposed to the Transport Bill. The petition states that the proposals in the Bill would cause tremendous damage to existing passenger transport provision, and that is certainly so in the West Midlands.

The petition concludes:

> Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your honourable House reject any legislation to implement the proposals of the White Paper on buses and the Transport Bill and commit itself instead to the further development of an integrated local rail and bus network under direct control of locally elected representatives.

I totally agree with the sentiments expressed in the petition. It gives me much pleasure to present it to the House.

To lie upon the Table.

Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (Newark)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Donald Thompson.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Since the start of the debate has been somewhat delayed, I suggest that the hon. Member for Newark (Mr. Alexander) and the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) split the time left for their two debates, so that the first debate will end just after 11.25 am.

10.55 am

Mr. Richard Alexander (Newark): On 25 June last year I was advised by Lord Trefgarne in a letter that it was proposed to close Newark's static workshops of the royal Electricial and Mechanical Engineers with a loss of 193 posts in Newark. This is part of a much larger review and my comments relate to the Newark closure only.

I very much regret the way in which this has been done. Leaving aside for a moment the lack of consultation with those most intimately involved—the men and women who work there—I find it astonishing that proposals of this nature and magnitude were taken without any statement or debate on the Floor of the House. Until this moment, I have been unable to make any meaningful representations to a Minister in this Chamber. I was able to make a protest to my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House when requesting a debate on this subject during Business Questions.

My astonishment and regret have been shared by the workers at the workshops who find it incredible that their Member of Parliament could not raise a matter of such fundamental importance — namely, a decision by a Government Department to close their workshop — unless he was fortunate in the ballot for an Adjournment debate, which I have been. Such a debate has been refused many times before today.

This regret has been compounded by the tactics of my political opponents in my constituency who have milked the matter for all it is worth. The Labour party on the Newark district council proposed a motion of no confidence in me because I had not been able to raise the matter here. I received an unpleasant letter from the district secretary of the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers who, after a meeting of his members, wrote:

> "I was instructed to write a letter to yourself voicing their criticism and disgust at your total lack of practical help where it matters—in the Commons."

That sort of offensive stuff and party political capital being made out of a difficult position may be par for the course for the individuals concerned, but it is unfair that I should have been put in the position where this is publicly stated.

Before the proposals were announced on 25 June, I understand that there had been no prior consultation with the work force. They had been given no opportunity to explain to those conducting the review the importance of their work, the skills they exercise and the hardship that the closure would bring to them and their families. Yet the REME workshops are the fourth largest employer of labour in the town of Newark.

Newark's unemployment is high—at the last count 14·7 per cent. in the Newark travel-to-work area. Of that, 16·8 per cent. is male unemployment. Therefore, the

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proposal, if implemented, will be disastrous for those involved. There was clearly no thought of the effect on the unemployment situation when the proposals were formulated, and I regret that very much. The decision was an enormous shock to all concerned. The proposal is that the work force can get work at the Old Dalby workshops, which are in a different county and easily an hour's drive away, each way, when the weather and the road conditions are good. That is not practical for most people, and in bad weather it will mean three hours added to a person's working day. It will prohibit most women with families from even contemplating the move.

The people involved are not clerks or semi-skilled manual workers; the work done is the repair of Clansman radios. The workshop has been certified to the same standards as are applied to civilian contractors who manufacture or repair equipment for the services. I understand that it is the only unit in the country to be so certified.

The work force must be specially trained, and the training takes up to four years. Emergencies often occur. The vastly increased travel to work requirement would mean that it would not be possible for those travelling those distances to carry out emergency work or to do short notice priority work. The local technical college is geared to meet this specialist training requirement. That would be lost if the proposals were put into practice.

Nor would it be wise to have all this work done at one location and at one workshop. If there were a fire or other disaster at the Old Dalby works, no other place would have the expertise and equipment to do the necessary emergency work. In any event, why should the work be transferred from an area of high unemployment such as Newark to a prosperous area such as Old Dalby in Leicestershire?

If there had to be rationalisation, it would have been more equitable to bring the work to an area of high unemployment rather than to take it away. It has all been so unfair. Newark may have a high unemployment rate, but it can offer excellent transport access, which Old Dalby cannot. We are in a prime communications position, virtually on the A1 and on the east coast main rail line. REME makes sense at Newark. It does not make sense to move it away.

We shall be told that money will be saved. In relation to some of the other closures, that may be the case, but I have seen no figures to show that closing Newark will save money. There are 193 people involved and redundancy and unemployment benefit will follow if the closure takes place. Even if some jobs are taken up at Old Dalby, there will be relocation costs.

If there will be savings—I dispute that there will be—we should be told precisely what they are and how they are made up before the decision to close is implemented. At present, we do not have that information.

I submit that there are no proper grounds on which the proposal should be implemented. From the point of view of the skills that will be lost if No. 33 central workshop closes and of ease of communications, and from the taxpayers' point of view and, not least, from that of the many loyal workers there, these workshops should not be closed. It will be a crying shame if they are, and I urge the Minister not to allow it to happen.

11.4 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. John Lee): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Newark (Mr. Alexander) on securing this Adjournment debate. I am grateful to him for providing me with this opportunity to explain—more fully perhaps than in earlier answers given in the House—the reasons that have led us to reduce the Army's overall static workshop capacity and, thus, to the closure of No. 33 central workshop at Newark.

Before dealing with the specific issues raised by my hon. Friend, I want the House to be clear about three points of principle which underlie our decision, announced last December, to proceed with the measures that we proposed in June 1984. The first and paramount point of principle is that we have a duty to the taxpayer to see that defence funds are spent only on essential defence needs and are spent in the most cost-effective manner. The review of the REME static workshops in 1982 showed that, overall, we had substantially more capacity than our operational needs could really justify—nearly 20 per cent. more at that time. Recognising that some reduction was thus inevitable, we allowed some slimming of the work force through not replacing many of those who left it in the normal course of events. But this is not an economic answer in the long term, because it merely converts the over-capacity problem into one of under-utilised capital assets.

Plainly, retaining excess capacity is not efficient; but nor is it efficient to retain under-utilised facilites, since that just pushes up the overhead costs of the operation. We really have to reduce overheads, and this means concentrating our programmed base repair activities into fewer, better designed, and better located workshops.

The Army, and the other services too, for that matter, should not be retaining in-house workshop capacity to do work that can be done quite satisfactorily, and less expensively, by industry or the motor trade—provided this involves no operational penalty. We have looked closely at the scope we have for putting out to contract repair work on—for the most part—what we call "commercial equivalent" equipments. Since these tend to be equipments such as Landrovers or hydraulic vehicle jacks, which are more readily replaced off the shelf, it is less vital that they are repaired by the Army. By having these repairs or overhauls performed under competitive contract, we can save money where the private sector is able to give a more cost-effective service because it can spread its overheads across both its military and its commerical work load.

Having started the study of the REME static workshop organisation in 1981, we found it necessary to recast its terms of reference in early 1982, following the report of the Public Accounts Committee "Repair of B Vehicle Assemblies". This widened the scope of the review quite substantially; moreover, the review team's main report was in turn followed by subsidiary studies dealing with separate functional and geographical problems, with the result that the full report was not considered by the Army Board until June 1983.

The submission to Ministers in July 1983 proposed reductions at a number of base and command workshops and the closure of No. 33 central workshop at Newark and No. 38 central workshop at Chilwell. It also envisaged doubling the amount of base repair work put out to

contract. The combined effect of these measures would eliminate the 20 per cent. over-capacity in static workshops, redress the imbalance of trades and skills between workshops and allow significant savings in manpower, capital expenditure and running costs.

Ministers asked for further research to validate the proposed enhancements at certain workshops and for examination in greater depth of the potential for increased repair by contract. The final proposals, summarised in the consultative memorandum referred to in my answer of 28 June 1984 to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, South (Viscount Cranborne), involved the same closures, a raising of contract repair to 36 per cent. of the base repair load, and net manpower reductions of 504 posts on the 1 December 1984 strength figures and 1,071 posts on the 1 January 1983 strength figures.

The benefits that we expected from restructuring the static workshops along these lines were not only a tauter and more cost-effective organisation, but one that would still be able to fulfil its operational tasks quickly and competently and residual workshops that would be well sited to perform their respective roles in both the United Kingdom and in Germany. The proposals assumed less backloading of armoured vehicles from BAOR for repair in the United Kingdom, but a compensating increase in the number of B vehicle assemblies to be backloaded for this purpose, since this was more economical and less operationally undesirable.

The Ministry of Defence recognised the far-reaching nature of these proposals, and especially the consequence for a large number of its employees. It therefore made every effort to ensure that ample time was afforded for consultation with the work force and its trade union representatives. Indeed, the initial period for such consultation was twice extended at the trade unions' request. Furthermore, various delegations and representations were received by Ministers and their officials well after the 1 October conclusion of the formal consultation period, and delegations continue to be seen. My noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces visited Newark on 26 November 1984. The decision that we announced on 10 December was therefore taken after full consideration of all the points that had been made to us during the consultation phase.

Let me now turn to the specific points made by my hon. Friend and contained in the petition from Newark town council.

The consequences for Newark of the closure of 33 central workshop REME are fully appreciated by Ministers, not least because they have been underlined very clearly both in various written representations and by the delegation which accompanied my hon. Friend when he visited my noble Friend on 17 October 1984.

I can also assure the House that the economic implications of the rundown of the REME organisation as a whole have been considered most carefully, and that the decision arrived at provides the optimum solution for increasing the effectiveness of repair support for the Army within the resources available to us.

I am very conscious of the disappointment that will be felt by the people of Newark—not to mention the work force itself—as a result of the closure of 33 central workshop. The fact remains that the Army as a whole now finds itself with more base repair capacity than it can justifiably retain. Wherever the ensuing closures or reductions were effected, our employees and the local community would be certain to question it, and to remonstrate with us accordingly. But the Ministry of Defence, having identified excess capacity and the inefficiencies that that would produce, is bound to look for the most cost-effective way to put the problem right for the longer term, even if it involves unpalatable decisions. At least in this instance many of our people will, we hope, feel able to apply for jobs in 35 central workshop at Old Dalby—which I think must mean that this closure will prove to have much less of a profound effect than might otherwise have been the case.

A number of points relate to questions of cost. The costs estimate supplied with the consultative document that I mentioned earlier—an expanded version of which has been passed to the trade unions—has been queried by various parties. It has been observed that there is no figure for redundancy compensation in our estimates. Redundancy costs are excluded from all Government investment appraisals, in conformity with Treasury instructions.

Some doubt has also been expressed about the validity of estimates for the transfer of existing plant from Chilwell and Newark to other workshops. Our estimates were based on the best available information at the time they were made, bearing in mind that detailed on-site studies of, for instance, new workshop layout, were not possible before the conclusion of consultations. Moreover, I think there has been inadequate recognition of the fact that much existing plant is now nearing the end of its economic life. The costs of maintaining and repairing it in the future would mean that its transport to the appropriate new location would not really be a sound investment—and, of course, some new plant for the surviving locations has already been in the pipeline for a considerable time.

Another area questioned is our costing of future repair by contract. It should not be forgotten that REME has quite a lot of experience in this field already—contracting out repair work is not a novel practice. Our estimates for this have aimed to be conservative, since we clearly did not wish to be accused later of having viewed the problem through rose-tinted spectacles. However, we would expect that, as the level of repair work put to contract rises, so will the competition to tender. That in turn should lead to keener pricing. Additionally, firms undertaking this kind of work will see it as being more regular and more plentiful, and therefore deserving of their investment in improving their plant which, in due course, will help to reduce their overheads. It will remain our responsibility, naturally, to ensure that the quality of repair work produced under contract remains fully acceptable to the armed services.

I am sorry if this has been a disappointing reply for my hon. Friend. No one could have done more than he has for Newark's retention, and I am sorry to hear of some of the personal criticisms that he has suffered in this regard. They are wholly unfounded and unwarranted. But it would be wrong of me to suggest in any way that the decision will be changed. I hope that I have been able to explain to the House the reasons for our decision.

Primary Education (Scotland)

11.13 am

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): I am grateful for the opportunity to raise the subject of primary education in rural Scotland. It is a considerable change from the last subject, and those following the debate from the Public Gallery must be wondering what on earth is going on.

I hope that the Minister will take the opportunity to give a clear statement of the Government's policy on village schools throughout Scotland. I say that because there is widespread belief that the Scottish Education Department has abdicated all responsibility for policy and guidance in that field, and that local education authorities have been left to muddle through in the context of Government spending cuts and the general upheaval that is going on in Scottish education at present.

I shall resist the temptation to go into the case for an independent review of teachers' pay and conditions in this debate, except perhaps to say that I have not yet met anyone in my constituency or elsewhere who supports the Secretary of State for Scotland's refusal to settle the dispute by setting up an independent review.

Many of us hoped that the recent fall in pupil numbers in Scotland would be used as an opportunity to raise standards in schools, but instead the Government have chosen to use falling rolls as an excuse to slash funds for education in Scotland. Indeed, I understand that in 1980-81 the Secretary of State for Scotland specifically told the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, during the course of the rate support grant negotiations in that year, that more primary schools should be closed.

When regional and islands councils are compelled to cut their budgets, as they have been by the Government, it is, I suppose, inevitable that they see small peripheral services such as village schools as convenient targets for cuts. That is what has been happening in rural Scotland, and all over Scotland. Between 1980 and 1984, no fewer than 102 primary schools were closed in Scotland, and councils of all political complexions have been considering the closure of village schools.

The independent councillors in the Western Isles and Highland region were at it last year. The Tories in Tayside and Lothian region were taking steps to close rural primary schools. The Labour council in Fife is seeking to close schools. The Liberal chairman of the Borders region education committee has the most ambitious scheme of all, with a hit list of 25 village schools.

I notice that the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) is here. I know that he is concerned about the closures, as well he ought to be, because many of his constituents, including myself, are involved. I hope that we make some headway on the issue during the debate. I put it to the hon. Member, and to his friend, councillor Tom Burnham, a Liberal councillor in the Borders region, and to the Minister, that the whole principle of community-based primary education is now under threat in the Borders region. That could be repeated elsewhere in Scotland. It has been suggested that no fewer than a quarter of the total number of primary schools in the Borders region could be subject to review, and that is a matter of acute concern.

Policies in different areas are varying wildly. Some authorities are seeking to close schools with 50 pupils; others are retaining schools with as few as 10 children in them. I stress that I am a passionate believer in local democracy and local decision making, but since the whole matter is inspired by Government spending cuts, I believe that the Government have a duty at least to express a view on how those cuts should be applied.

There is a place for Government guidance on policies which have national implications, and I put it to the Minister that the Secretary of State for Scotland has a duty to take an interest in village schools, not only in the context of national education policy but in the context of the need for a national rural social policy.

We in the Labour party are currently working on rural policy for the next Government, but for the time being a Conservative Government are in power, and people in rural Scotland are entitled to know the Government's thoughts on the matter. As he approaches the subject, I hope that the Minister will not object to me, as a Catholic, reminding him that John Knox wrote in 1570 that

"there should be a school in every parish"

in Scotland. So the Minister is attacking principles that run very deep.

I want to illustrate the state of alarm and despondency that has been caused in rural areas in Scotland by the closure threats before I go on to analyse the case for preserving and developing community-based primary education.

In my constituency of East Lothian, four village schools, at Dirleton, East Saltoun, Humbie and Whitekirk, all came under threat of closure last year. Obviously, that threat had a disruptive effect on everybody concerned. Long-term planning and development had to be abandoned in the face of the immediate threat. The children, teachers and parents faced six months of uncertainty while they considered their position and put their case to Lothian regional council. Initially, the two smallest communities thought that they could not possibly resist a decision taken by big brother in Edinburgh, but we got our act together. We demonstrated that the parents and the wider community supported their local primary schools. We proved that those villages could and would sustain adequate pupil numbers to justify at least a single teacher school and, thanks to the steadfast support of the Labour group on Lothian regional council, those schools were saved.

However, that was neither the beginning nor the end of the story. One of those four schools had had to go through the same review procedure one year previously, and there is no guarantee that those schools will not face another closure threat next year. That constant atmosphere of crisis is bad for the education of the children and bad for the confidence of the teachers and parents. The time has come for a clear policy to resolve the issue on a permanent basis.

I have strong personal feelings on the subject. My own five-year-old son recently started his education in the village school at Hutton in Berwickshire, represented by the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire. That school was threatened with closure last year and the Borders regional council is now putting us through the mill again. That council's current proposals could mean that my son will be made to move to four different schools in the course of eight years of his primary education. That demonstrates the disruptive effect of uncertainty and closures in rural primary education on my own son. I hope

that the House will understand why I feel particularly concerned about what is going on in that region and, indeed, in other regions.

I now refer to the detailed case for community-based primary schools in rural areas. The real case for closures is usually based on financial considerations, although the argument is usually dressed up in educational jargon. However, even the economic case for closures is deceptive. There may be a short-term gain from shutting a village school and selling the building, but at the end of the day the local education authority is still responsible for educating the same number of children. On top of that, it will have to face a permanent commitment to substantial and rising additional transport costs. That has a knock-on effect on educational considerations because extended journeys to school for young children are bound to have an effect on their concentration and ability to make progress in school. One of the proposals currently under consideration in the borders could mean that some primary school pupils in the Lammermuir area in my constituency will face 50-minute journeys every morning and evening on their way to and from primary school. That is when the roads are not blocked by snow, as they frequently are in winter. That illustrates the extreme nature of some of the proposals that are being considered.

The economic case for closures is debatable, but the community case for retaining village schools is overwhelming. It is related to the glaring need for a positive rural social policy, and has to be seen against the background of the disastrous effect of the Government's free market economic policies in rural Scotland. We know what is happening to village shops, village telephone kiosks, bus services and small businesses throughout rural Scotland. The local school is a vital component in any community. It is a focus for community activity. It helps to encourage children to identify with their home neighbourhood. The closure of the school can be a mortal blow to a fragile village community.

Apart from anything else, the lack of a local primary school has been shown to deter young families from staying in a village, which does permanent damage to the social structure and economy of that community. I can think of examples in my constituency of two comparable villages. In one village the school has been closed and it has turned into a sleepy village to which people retire. In the other village, the school has been kept open, and it now supports a mixed and active community.

However, the economic and community considerations are side issues. The real priority must be the quality of education for children. It seems to be fashionable for educational bureaucrats to run down small schools, but that attitude is not shared by teachers or parents of children at village schools in Scotland. There are certain disadvantages when a single teacher has to cope with the full range of primary 1-7 in one school, in what is in effect an extended composite class. However, there are also well substantiated advantages in the environment of a rural village school. The idea that schools with fewer than three teachers were a bad thing originated in the Plowden report of 1967, but the report failed to substantiate that case. Lady Plowden herself put the following question in a letter to *The Times* in 1978:

"Is it right to take the heart out of a community by taking away the children, Pied Piper like, thus losing the bond which is created within and between families through a common interest in the school, involving parents and even grandparents, which is both socially and educationally desirable?"

The closers of village schools do not get much comfort from Lady Plowden.

No doubt the Minister will have heard of Rural Forum, the umbrella organisation that represents the whole range of Scottish rural organisations, including trade unions, women's institutes, farmers and even landowners. Rural Forum held a conference on rural schools last month in Edinburgh, at which the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire spoke. The clear message from that conference was that the educational benefits of village schools far outweighed the disadvantage. What are those advantages? Small pupil numbers make it possible to adopt a more flexible approach to teaching. Project work is a feature in those schools, and in that sort of extended family environment it has been shown that children develop social skills much more readily, learning to share the attention of the teacher. Older children develop a sense of responsibility towards the younger children. All in all, experience has shown that the system can work well. I have spoken to most of the secondary school heads in my constituency about the matter, and all of them without exception have confirmed that children from the smaller primary schools perform at least as well as those from bigger schools when they go on to the secondary school.

I accept that there is no room for complacency about the quality of education in small schools. I should like to see developments related to the special circumstances of rural schools. There is something to be said for clustering schools and sharing teachers and equipment, as has been done in some other areas. It is obvious that teachers who will have to deal with mixed age classes in a rural environment probably need special training. There is scope for developing parental involvement in those schools. Of course, we should continue to learn from the experience gained elsewhere, whether in England, Wales or further afield in places such as Sweden or Finland where people have been working on the subject.

I stress that I am not saying that every tiny rural school must be retained regardless of all the circumstances. Where a school roll has collapsed irrevocably below 15, it is obviously sensible to review the situation, although I would tend to concentrate on the possibility of attracting more young families into such an area as part of a broader rural development policy rather than taking the negative approach of closing the school and therefore shutting down the community.

There is something awfully final about a school closure. Closed village schools are never reopened, so the crop of closures that is now under consideration in Scotland could have permanent and serious effects on the neighbourhoods concerned. It is worth mentioning that the most recent figures published by the Scottish Office show a rise in projected primary school rolls in Scotland, so we must stop and think before the process goes any further.

Above all, there must be a genuine and credible consultation process directly involving parents and the wider community. People have no confidence in the present consultation procedure. At present the regional or islands council concerned is the combined prosecutor, judge and jury in the consultation process on the future of rural schools. Until 1981 the Secretary of State for Scotland had to sanction the closure of any school, but section 23(6A) of the Education (Scotland) Act 1981 and

[Mr. John Home Robertson]

the associated regulations mean that local authorities can close schools that are within five miles of the alternative school without ministerial approval. That is despite the fact that the journeys for many pupils may be much longer than five miles in places where such amalgamations take place.

That is in marked contrast to the situation in England, where ministerial responsibility is still acknowledged. In a written reply on 17 March 1983 the Prime Minister herself said:

"We recognise the value of rural schools to their communities. This is reflected in the calculations underlying rate support grant to take account of the additional costs of provision in sparsely populated areas, in the advice of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science to local education authorities about falling school rolls, and in his detailed consideration of all closure proposals that fall to him to decide, which takes account in each case of local circumstances, the views of the local community, and the educational needs of the children concerned."—[*Official Report*, 17 March 1983, Vol. 39 c. *234*.].

We have no such guarantees or safeguards in rural Scotland. Indeed, one Scottish village community threatened with the closure of its school is considering an appeal to the European Court of Human Rights. That should not be necessary.

I conclude by appealing to the Minister to acknowledge the case for rural schools in Scotland and to consider establishing a new review procedure that will be seen by all concerned to be fair. I should like to wish the Minister a happy Easter, but I shall refrain from doing so until I have received from him a response that I hope will be positive.

11.31 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Allan Stewart): First, in case I forget to do so at the end of my speech, I wish the hon. Member for East Lothian a happy Easter, and the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood), whose interest in these matters we all acknowledge.

We should place the question of rural schools in the context of the improvements that we have made in general to primary education in Scotland, which apply to rural as well as urban schools. We have embarked upon a primary education development project, stemming from the report "Learning and Teaching in P4 and P7" by the inspectorate That report followed a survey that revealed shortcomings in the primary school curriculum, including, especially, the failure to establish the relevance of skills and knowledge acquired at school to the real world.

In planning the national development programmes and the annual programme of inspection of schools by Her Majesty's inspectors we are always concerned to ensure that schools in different environments and of different sizes are given their proper place. In that way, in practical terms, we ensure that the interests of small rural schools are always covered.

Mr. Home Robertson: The Minister refers to the inspectorate. The inspectorate is not always much help. Dirleton school in my constituency received a glowing report from the inspectors last year but, almost in the same post, it also received a closure threat. I wish that the inspectors could save the schools, but they cannot.

Mr. Stewart: Yes, but the authorities have to take many factors into account when considering the question of school closure.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned resources. The Government's public expenditure plans make generous provision for primary school staffing. There is a flexibility factor of 8 per cent. over the basic staff complements recommended in Scottish Education Department circular 1029. The hon. Gentleman referred to expenditure. Resources are always limited. However, we have increased expenditure per pupil in real terms in each of the past few years. We have also introduced all-graduate entry into primary school teaching. Those measures will have beneficial effects in rural as well as urban areas.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the present teachers' pay dispute. The feature of the dispute that is of special relevance to the debate is the threat by the Educational Institute of Scotland of selective action in primary schools to replace, for a short period at least, targeted action on secondary schools in Conservative-held constituencies. It would be wrong for me to devote too much time to the dispute, but the management, the Scottish Secondary Teachers' Association and the Professional Association of Teachers all recognise that the sensible way forward would be to undertake a review of pay and conditions within the Scottish joint negotiating council. The third union, the National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers, wants to enter the normal annual pay negotiations. Only the EIS is not prepared to take either route. I hope that the planned selective action will not be widespread in rural schools, because of the effects on the schools and the communities to which the hon. Gentleman has referred.

The hon. Gentleman concentrated on the implications for rural communities when small schools close. He referred to the statutory framework which, as he said, is different north of the border. The legislation has been revised by the present Government. I will spell out the reasons for the present legislative framework in Scotland. Before 1981, the consent of the Secretary of State was required for every school closure in Scotland. In some cases there was no opposition to closure. There was a consensus that the school, for one reason or another, had outlived its usefulness or the original need. The hon. Gentleman has told us that it is not the essence of his case that there should never be any school closures in rural areas.

Education authorities had no option but to seek the Secretary of State's permission to close. The procedure was wasteful of resources, and bureaucratic. It was also wrong in principle, for it had the effect of passing to central Government a local matter that would more properly have been left to local discretion.

I found some of the hon. Gentleman's comments surprising. My impression was that the Labour party favoured the decentralising of decisions to local authorities. I believe that it was right that the Education (Scotland) Act 1981 transferred the responsiblity for closure to the education authority. However, it is quite wrong to suggest that local authorities were left—I believe that this was the hon. Gentleman's phrase—to their own devices. The Government recognised that some types of school would entail special circumstances. Safeguards were therefore introduced, especially in respect of proposing to close schools in more remote areas. The regulations made in 1981 require that the Secretary of

State's consent be obtained before the implementation of any primary school closure proposal that would result in pupils having to transfer to another school five or more miles away. In the case of secondary schools, the distance is 10 miles. It was envisaged at that time that a significant proportion of closure proposals affecting rural schools would continue to require the formal consent of the Secretary of State. The 1981 Act did much more than that. One of its main features was the parents' charter, the objective of which was to give parents more say in deciding which schools their children should attend.

The education authorities are now required, before reaching a decision on any school closure proposal, to consult many people including the parents of all children in attendance at the school and of all children who, while not yet of school age, could be expected to attend the school concerned within two years of the date of the closure proposal. Those consultations are an important part of the process. They are taken seriously by all concerned, as witnessed by the hon. Gentleman, who gave examples of two cases where local communities succeeded in persuading their education authorities to abandon proposals to close rural schools.

Mr. Home Robertson: I am grateful to the Minister for attempting to cover this point, but I hope that he accepts that it is deeply unsatisfactory that the future of something as important to a village community as its school should be left entirely in the hands of the authority which has a pecuniary interest in closing it. Indeed, the interest has been imposed on it by the Secretary of State. Is there not a case for an independent inquiry procedure to be set up? I understand why the Minister may not wish to take back the responsibility for reviewing such matters, but there must be a case for setting up an independent inquiry system in areas where there are closure threats.

Mr. Stewart: I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's anxiety, but I believe that the decision must be made by the local authority. It must take account of all the factors involved, and it is responsible to the electorate of the area. However, as I emphasised, it is not an unfettered choice, because if the closure will involve transfer to schools more than five miles away, the decision must be made by Ministers.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I am grateful to the Minister for giving way and to the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson), whose interest in the matter is well known, for introducing the debate. Could I press the Minister on the importance of the framework in which the consultations take place. I accept that the decision should be devolved and that the regional authorities must make the ultimate decision in each case. No one has argued against that; if we did, we should be charged with being anti-devolution, whereas most Opposition Members are in favour of it. In many of their structure plans, the regional authorities lay heavy emphasis on the fact that rural areas should be supported in a very conceivable sense, yet some of their policies, especially the primary school closure programme, go against that.

Have the Government any interest or are they taking any part in the promulgation of the ideas contained in the Armitage Norton report, which was the genesis of the present round of closures started by my local authority in the Borders region? Is it the Government's intention to encourage other regional authorities to adopt the cost-benefit analysis contained in that report? If it is, the Minister will have to answer many such debates in the future.

The Government have a duty to set out the framework in which they believe consultation should take place. They need not bring forward a statutory instrument; they could simply give guidance to local authorities, especially about consultation with community councils and with the public in general, as well as the statutory duties that are imposed on them by the 1981 Act, which, at the end of the day, amount to nothing more than writing to parents and saying what they propose to do.

Mr. Stewart: Of course, we have issued circulars to local education authorities setting out their duties and responsibilities under the Act, and no doubt local authorities will take into account the factors mentioned by the hon. Gentleman. But, ultimately, within the framework set out in the Act, this should be a matter of local discretion.

A delicate and difficult balance must be struck in relation to the use of resources. An education authority has a responsibility to the entire area that it serves, and money saved in one part of the service could be used to improve the service elsewhere. As the hon. Member for East Lothian fairly acknowledged, a balance must also be struck on the purely educational merits. On the one hand, the pupil moving from a small village school to a larger school benefits from the wider educational opportunities that become available and the social benefits likely to accrue from contact with larger peer groups. On the other hand, I do not deny the hon. Gentleman's point that a small school can have an educational richness all its own. Increased travelling time makes the child's day longer and thereby detracts from the educational advantages of attendance at a larger school.

Mr. Home Robertson: Has the Minister said that to local authorities?

Mr. Stewart: Certainly, and I assure the House that where a case is referred to my right hon. Friend for decision, the factors of educational advantage and travelling distance, including travel arrangements, and the length of the school day are carefully examined.

The position is different north and south of the border, but the different responsibilities of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science do not mean that there are no rural school closures in England and Wales. The hon. Gentleman may be interested to know that since the new Scottish arrangements were introduced in 1981, 18 schools have closed in Scotland and 390 have closed in England. The hon. Gentleman should not place too much emphasis on the different statutory provisions north and south of the border.

The hon. Gentleman referred to Hutton primary school, which his children attend and which is in the constituency of the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire. He will know the position on the consultations about that closure.

I must emphasise that we always have the interests of rural communities very much in mind. We are undertaking a research project on the parental choice provisions of the Education (Scotland) Act 1981, which will include an examination of parental choice in six areas of Scotland,

[Mr. Stewart]

including a rural district, and I await with interest the result of that part of the project, which is expected within the next few months.

We all appreciate the difficulties faced by education authorities and communities about school closures. The hon. Gentleman recognised that school rolls have been falling, and he referred to the uncertainty for the future. Beyond the immediate period, there is much uncertainty about the trends in school rolls. If education authorities are properly to fulfil their accountability to the public, they must take whatever steps they consider necessary to rationalise the provision of school education. Therefore, school closures, which occur in urban as well as in rural areas, should be considered as part of a larger canvas and should not be seen as a discriminating or random measure.

We are committed to the principle of reducing direction from the centre, but we have acknowledged that, on some occasions, local discretion cannot be completely unfettered. The present legislative framework in Scotland provides the correct balance between the rights of the local authority responsible to local people to take decisions and to take account of wider considerations, which is why, under certain conditions, school closure proposals still come to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for consideration. When the closure proposals come to my right hon. Friend we shall be conscious of the basic theme of the hon. Member's speech: the special and important role that small rural schools play in the fabric of rural life.

National Institute for Research in Dairying, Shinfield

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Dr. Gerard Vaughan.

11.50 am

Sir Gerard Vaughan (Reading, East): I am grateful for this opportunity to draw attention to the unsatisfactory redundancy and re-employment terms offered to staff employed at the National Institute for Research in Dairying at Shinfield, Reading, in my constituency. The institute was closed last week. I am grateful for the support given by Lord Sherfield, chancellor of Reading university, who has put down questions in another place, and by my hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham (Sir W. van Straubenzee). With your permission, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and the consent of the Minister, my hon. Friend will join in this debate.

It seems that there may have been a serious misunderstanding about the nature of the employment of the staff of NIRD. The NIRD is administered by a delegacy of Reading university under their ordinance No. 24 and also under the terms of a trust that was set up in 1963. The effect is that the staff hold contracts with the university. A number of them are listed in the university calendar as university staff, some—this is important—as academic staff. It is quite clear that they are employed by the university, but the university does not manage the finances of NIRD. They are provided by the Agricultural and Food Research Council, which also set out the conditions of service. This seems to me to be a very complicated and, I should have thought, unsatisfactory arrangement, but it has worked very well over the years until now.

In 1974, the delegacy decided that all new staff should retire at the age of 60, not, as previously, at 65, but the existing staff—this is also important—were given an option to continue under their contracts until the age of 65. In the delegacy minutes of February 1974 it is noted

"that the existing male staff will prefer to retain their present contractual age of 65."

This was accepted by the AFRC.

In 1975, a further change was offered: to lower the pension age from 65 to 60. Again, this was an important option for the staff and no change was made to their contracts; it was a pension change. In April 1984 they were told, somewhat unexpectedly, that the NIRD at Reading would be closed in March of this year and that in its place there would be the Animals and Grassland Research Institute, mainly at Hurley and at Arborfield, and a completely new Food Research Institute Reading at Shinfield. But—and this is the unsatisfactory aspect to which I wish to draw the Minister's attention—staff under 60 were to be offered new posts on clearly less good terms, since they would be compelled to retire at the age of 60. Staff over 60 were to be made redundant without compensation.

In the intervening period since 1974 a number of the staff have refused other jobs, while some have not made pension arrangements which would have been beneficial to them had they known that they would be faced with this situation. There is also the aspect that quite large earnings will be lost because of the loss of five years of expected

work. In one man's case—he is at the upper end—it will be in the region of £97,530, as well as the loss of part of the pension which he would have expected to receive.

This is clearly a matter of great concern to the approximately 160 staff who are involved. These people are employed by the university. The 1963 trust lays down that the institute can be closed down only by a decision of the council of the university, not by the delegacy, nor by the AFRC. This was not done. So far as I can ascertain, no decision was made by the council to this effect. There was merely a decision by the delegacy. Furthermore, under the trust two years' written notice has to be given to the AFRC.

Since these people were employed by the university, many of them had expected that if their employment was to be terminated it would be terminated under the procedures of the university. These are clearly set out in the university statute 32(4), in the university ordinance 24(3)(I) and in ordinance 32. This has not happened. Many of these staff are highly skilled and have given very long and devoted service to the NIRD.

There is absolutely no doubt that the reputation and standing of the institute not only contributed to agricultural research in this country but is one of the reasons why the staff retained their loyalty and stayed there over the years. They fully expected that their contracts would be honoured or that they would be compensated. They did not expect the Government to direct the AFRC not to pay them compensation.

The Minister, I am sure, recognises the justice of their case. He is a fair-minded and impartial Minister and I ask him to look at this again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with your agreement and the Minister's consent. I give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: At the beginning of the debate I failed to call the hon. Member for Reading, East by his correct title—Sir Gerard Vaughan. I apologise and beg his pardon.

11.58 am

Sir William van Straubenzee (Wokingham): Your courtesy, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is typical of that which you show the House whenever you are in the Chair. I am very grateful to you and to my hon. Friend the Member for Reading, East (Sir G. Vaughan) for making it possible for me to intervene for a few moments to support the campaign which he has correctly led, because the institute of which we speak is in his constituency. He has led that campaign in defence of his constituents' rights with the pertinacity which we all associate with him. I, too, have a number of constituents who are involved. For some years the institute lay within the boundaries of the Wokingham constituency. I know that I share with many others admiration for the past work of the NIRD, now coming to its end.

I shall concentrate on one point only. I am grateful for the presence of the Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science and also for the conscientious and exhaustive way in which he personally has looked at this matter, as he always does when human matters are involved. It could be put like this. His view—of course it is upon advice and having looked at the matter carefully—is that staff entitlement was explicitly agreed when the current Agricultural and Food Research Council's pension scheme was introduced with a retirement age of 60. I think that that is a fair summary of the view that he has expressed to my hon. Friend and to me. I do not question the sincerity with which that view is put, but it is not a correct reflection of the position of those who are 60 or older or were on a contract that gave them certain rights when they reached 60.

I have drawn to the Minister's attention a letter to a constituent of mine from the secretary of the institute. So that the references are on the record, I should say that the letter is dated 14 March 1974. The letter was written to bring the then existing arrangements at the institute into line with the institutes of what was called the Agricultural Research Council. One can see the reasoning, purpose and rationalisation behind that in 1974.

However, as we have been reminded, the delegacy of the institute agreed in 1974 that the retirement age should be 60 in future contracts and that existing staff should have that option offered to them. That rule was reasonable, civilised and proper and I take no exception to it. However, a number of senior men, including the constituent in whose name I have provided documentation, did not take up that option in 1974. There is no dispute about that.

Furthermore, the Employment Protection Act 1978 requires that all employees should receive a statement of their terms and conditions of employment. I shall not weary the House by reading the statement and conditions of employment issued to those of whom we are speaking. I shall quote only paragraph 13 of the statement that was given to my constituent and, I have every reason to believe, to all others involved:

> "Although the retirement age for staff is 60, you are allowed to retain a retirement age of 65, but you may choose to retire at 60 with immediate payment of any benefits to which you are entitled under the ARC superannuation scheme."

That shows that the retirement age for my constituents and others was 65, and all compensation should be based on that age. However genuinely and sincerely the Minister states that he is satisfied that the retirement age is 60, he is not correct. I ask him to recognise that fact.

The House always likes matters such as these to be reduced to their effect on individuals. I have been a willingly loyal supporter of the Government's policy on universities, involving, as it has in recent years, severe reductions and retrenchments of personnel. However, we have always said—and, as far as I know, we have always honoured the commitment—that the rights of individuals are protected. If the House has interfered with the reasonable expectations of those employed in universities, we have recompensed them accordingly.

In this case, the amount involved is minuscule in terms of national expenditure, but for one of my constituents it represents a pension right of £1,000 a year. I know that the Minister accepts that that is a major change in the reasonable expectations of a person's professional life when he has been working for one of the most prestigious academic and practical institutions in its field.

I repeat my gratitude to my hon. Friend the Member for Reading, East for permitting me time in his debate to support his forceful advocacy. I feel deeply that, unwittingly I am sure, the Government are doing an injustice to some fine people. Such actions always leave me with a sense of deep unease and that is why I am grateful for the opportunity to help to raise the matter on the Floor of the House.

12.6 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Peter Brooke): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Reading, East (Sir G. Vaughan) for providing the House with an opportunity to debate the closure of the NIRD at Shinfield, Reading and the circumstances of the termination of service of people formerly employed by the institute. I am also grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham (Sir W. van Straubenzee) for having joined in the debate and I thank both my hon. Friends for the way in which they put the issues. I recognise that the matter is one of particular concern to their constituents. We have had some correspondence about it and had the pleasure of meetings on the issue. I pay tribute to my hon. Friends, because no constituents could ask for more diligent hon. Members on their behalf.

Until its formal winding-up on 31 March, the NIRD was a state-aided agricultural research institute funded by the Agricultural and Food Research Council. The AFRC funds 14 such state-aided institutes in England and Wales, which, together with the council's own establishments and the state-aided institutes funded by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland, constitute the Agricultural and Food Research Service. With the agreement of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, which provides about half the AFRC's income through payments for commissioned research, and DAFS, the AFRC undertakes corporate planning for the whole of the AFRS. I note that because the changes at the NIRD need to be understood in the context of the research service as a whole.

In its first corporate plan, published in December 1983, the AFRC identified as an important objective the achievement of more specific remits for individual institutions. It wishes to move towards a simpler and more integral management and structuring of research programmes. In line with that objective, the first plan gave notice of the council's intention to bring the NIRD and Grassland Research Institute programmes on nutrition and production studies in cattle, sheep and pigs under single management, with the possibility of a progressive concentration of the work at the GRI site at Hurley, near Maidenhead. The plan also envisaged expanding the programme of food research at the existing sites at Bristol, Norwich and at Shinfield, and to convert that part of the NIRD programme at Shinfield which has concentrated on milk utilisation to the study of a wider range of commodities.

These proposals in the plan are now well on the way to implementation. The closure of NIRD and the Grassland Research Institute at the end of last month coincided with the establishment of a new Animals and Grassland Research Institute based at Hurley and of a new Food Research Institute, Reading, which will continue to use some of the former NIRD premises. The initial staff of both institutes have been found by transfers from the former institutes, although inevitably in a rationalisation of this kind jobs could not be found for all the former members of staff. I should say in this connection that the council's planning and redirection of activity is being carried out in the context of a significant reduction of income from the Department of Education and Science, following advice from the Advisory Board for the Research Councils in 1982, and the prospect of equally serious reductions in commissioned research income. The council's second corporate plan, published in March, speaks of 550 posts having been lost in 1984-85—100 by compulsory redundancy—with at least 650 more to go by 1988, a significant proportion of whom will inevitably be made compulsorily redundant.

I turn now to the position of the staff at NIRD. In doing so I must stress that the AFRC acts in these matters as an independent body in receipt of its own legal advice. My Department is not necessarily privy to that advice, and in any case it has no power to intervene. Under the council's Royal Charter, the pay and pensions of its officers are subject to the approval of the Secretary of State for Education and Science and the Treasury. Details of conditions of service, however, are matters for the council to determine.

The NIRD was technically a constituent institution of the University of Reading and was administered by a delegacy of the university. Its staff were employed by the university, as my hon. Friend said, but it was a condition of the AFRC's grant to the university to run NIRD that their terms and conditions should be essentially the same as those of other staff in the AFRS. The AFRC told the university when the time for closure came that the grant was being withdrawn. Thereafter the university procedures to which my hon. Friend referred are essentially for the university. The staff concerned are members of the AFRC pension scheme and are employed on Civil Service rather than university salaries. That is why the decisions relating to the staff were taken by the AFRC rather than by the university. Effectively they were members of the Agricultural and Food Research Service. For many purposes that is treated as a unified service. For example, it is covered by a single Whitley council, a single redundancy agreement and unified disciplinary and promotion procedures.

The normal retirement age for AFRS staff has for a long time been 60. However, a number of staff at NIRD who were appointed before February 1974 had a specific provision in their contracts from the university, their employer, that their retirement age was 65. My hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham specifically referred to an individual.

When the decision was taken to close NIRD all its staff were given notice that their contracts would be terminated, as was allowed for in their terms and conditions. I understand that all staff below the age of 60 have been offered contracts at the new institutes, apart from eight industrial staff who left under the redundancy agreement. Those contracts specify a retirement age of 60 in all cases, including those of staff whose previous contracts specified retirement at 65.

Although I know that my hon. Friend is specifically referring to the group aged between 60 and 65, because he quoted the larger group I will dwell on them for a moment. It is obviously for individuals to decide whether to accept those new contracts—I am talking of those under 60. If they do so, they also accept the change in retirement age. If they reject the new contracts it is for AFRC to decide whether that rejection is reasonable. If the rejection is reasonable, the individual is treated as redundant and compensated accordingly. If it is not, he is treated as resigning and receives no immediate benefits. In the latter circumstances, it is open to an individual to take his case

to an industrial tribunal. I understand, however, that the AFRC trade unions advised their staff to accept the new contracts and that as of yesterday all but one had done so.

Staff at NIRD who were aged 60 or more on 1 April 1985 have not been offered new contracts of employment and are therefore redundant. I shall come to the question of compensation in a moment, but it is important to realise why the AFRC has acted in this way. Its purpose of course is to apply across its whole service, including the new institutes, its retirement age of 60. This concern is given particular force by the fact that the AFRC is currently having to make a significant number of compulsory redundancies to stay within the Government's expenditure constraints. To retain former NIRD staff up to age 65 would, therefore, in effect mean that more younger staff in other institutes would have to be made redundant instead. It may be helpful if I give the House some idea of the numbers involved. When NIRD closed there were some 405 staff there. Of these, about 364 have accepted the offer of new contracts of employment at other AFRS institutes. For about a third of those this means accepting a contract with a different retiring age. Thirty-three staff are already aged 60 or more and are therefore not being offered new contracts and, as I mentioned earlier, eight industrial staff have been made redundant.

In considering the question of compensation for staff aged 60 or more who have been made redundant — which formed the nucleus of my hon. Friend's case—it is necessary to look back to 1975 when the AFRC introduced a new pension scheme. That scheme is essentially the same as the principal Civil Service pension scheme, which has a normal retirement age of 60. When its introduction was discussed the position of staff with a contractual entitlement to work until age 65 was looked into very carefully. It was explicitly accepted by all parties, including, I understand, the AFRC trade unions, that if such staff were made redundant after age 60 they should receive only immediate payment of their pension entitlement. Certainly there is a letter to the unions setting out these terms and there is a letter to the secretaries of all the institutes stating the circumstances of the case.

This was part of the agreed package for introducing pension arrangements which were in many ways an improvement on those that the staff concerned had before. The only exception would be if that was less than their statutory entitlement under redundancy compensation legislation, in which case it would be made up to the latter figure. This is the basis on which the NIRD staff are being compensated, since the situation envisaged back in 1975 has now arisen. It was, of course, the AFRC's decision in 1975 to allow staff to retain a right to work until age 65 while joining a pension scheme with a normal retirement age of 60. It gave them the option to do this because it wished to encourage as many staff as possible to join the new scheme. However, I understand that if NIRD staff now being made redundant had stayed in their previous pension scheme they would not have been any better off, and might have been worse off.

Despite all this, the Government have considered carefully the possibility of allowing AFRC to pay additional compensation to NIRD staff aged 60 or more. We have not yet felt able to do so. The starting point must be that there is no legal entitlement to such compensation. The staff concerned have had their contracts terminated, are therefore redundant and have been compensated for this in line with arrangements made with their representatives in 1975. I am afraid that that is a fairly normal course of events in both the private and the public sector. They are receiving a Civil Service pension, which is not normally regarded as ungenerous. They were in many ways in a favourable position with a pension scheme posited on a retirement age of 60, a right to retire at 60, and yet a right to stay on until 65. In using the expresssion "a right", I am, of course, implying that it was subject to the provisions of the contracts of employment which allowed for termination by notice, and that observation applies both before and after 60. I acknowledge, nevertheless, their genuine concern that their expectation of working until 65 has been removed with a consequent reduction in their pensions. I can only say that this is by no means the only area where Government policy involves retrenchment and a requirement on staff to leave before the age to which they had hoped to serve.

I understand and sympathise with the concern of my hon. Friends the Members for Reading, East and for Wokingham for their constituents. The position is not one that any of us would have chosen. As has been kindly said, I have looked into it in some detail. I hope that I have demonstrated that none of the staff of the former NIRD has been unfairly or unreasonably treated. It is, of course, unpleasant for people who have given good and useful service to their employers, and who believe that they still have much to contribute, to have their service terminated or, as they see it, truncated. However, the AFRC, which has the responsibility for managing the service and deciding on the allocation of the funds entrusted to it must be free to make the changes which it regards as necessary for the proper development of the scientific work that it supports, bearing in mind resources and priorities.

Security Services (Ministerial Control)

12.21 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Yesterday's announcement by the Prime Minister of a large extension of ministerial powers in suspending public servants—and not only civil servants—on the ground of being subversive is bound to cause further anxiety about security matters.

We must be very careful not to allow a climate of intolerance to grow. We know what happened in the United States in the late 1940s and early 1950s, and the tremendous damage that McCarthyism and the like did there. I think that we can say with some justification that even at the height of the cold war hysteria, we did not, under either Labour or Conservative Governments, allow ourselves to follow quite that path in the 1950s. When the Prime Minister returns to the House after the Easter break, she will be expected to make an announcement. She should have made an oral statement to the House instead of using the device of a written reply.

The security services are rarely debated in the House. They might be touched on, as happened, for example, in the debates held only this week during the Committee stage of the Interception of Communications Bill, but that is about all. It is not possible for me or any other hon. Member to table questions about the security services, because the Table Office will tell us that such questions are not allowed. I accept straight away that the same argument has been put by Ministers in successive Governments, and no doubt we shall hear the same argument from the Minister today. It is argued that it is necessary to protect the work undertaken by bodies such as MI5, and so it would not be in the public interest for such state agencies to be the subject of parliamentary questions and scrutiny.

However, there is a growing feeling in the House, and even among some Conservative Members I understand that that attitude is no longer acceptable. The allegations that have been made, particularly in the film shown on Channel 4, "MI5's Official Secrets", have strengthened the case for saying that some degree of parliamentary accountability on the part of the security services is now more than justified. Indeed, I do not accept that such accountability would endanger the safety of the country. I shall illustrate that by reference to the Select Committee of which I am a member.

When the Home Affairs Committee decided to look into the special branch of the police force, one or two Conservative Members and some people outside expressed the fear that we would endanger the safety of the state. What happened? We agreed to inquire into the special branch and that all our sessions would be held in public. The inquiry has now come to an end. Does the Minister or any Conservative Member suggest that as a result of that inquiry, with public sessions—just as there should be—the country has been in any way endangered? Have secrets been revealed? The answer is perfectly clear. Therefore, the fears expressed at the time about the Select Committee's inquiry were not justified. The leak that occurred was about a draft report, and I hope that that will not be used as ammunition in arguing against parliamentary scrutiny.

In a recent answer, the Prime Minister informed me that she would not agree to the Director General of MI5 appearing before the Select Committee if at any time he was invited to do so. When I put another question to the Home Secretary, I was informed that it would not be possible for the newly appointed Director General of MI5 to meet hon. Members in this House, say, once a year. But what would be wrong with that? Indeed, what would be wrong with the Director General of MI5, who is a public servant, paid out of public funds, appearing, if so requested, before the Home Affairs Committee?

I cannot for the life of me see how the state would be endangered if the Director General came before the Select Committee. Nowadays, everyone knows who he is. Only two or three weeks ago a profile appeared in *The Observer*. So the nonsense that the public are not supposed to know the identity of such people has fortunately ended. Before the film, "MI5's Official Secrets", was shown, disturbing reports had appeared in the press about the way in which MI5 collects information on people.

There is, apparently, an F Branch of MI5, which is very important. It is sub-divided: F2 investigates not the stock exchange, the City or the Conservative party but trade unions, while F7 looks at various other political groups. In an article that appeared in *The Guardian* in April 1984 we were told that F7 also looks at Members of Parliament, teachers, lawyers and journalists. If that is so, how many people are the subject of investigation? How many files are open on Members of Parliament, teachers, lawyers and journalists, and perhaps others as well? Who decides who should be investigated by F branch of MI5? Since the publicity over F branch, the title might have changed.

It is perhaps surprising—although I do not know—that those Conservative Members who are always on about state interference and the need to cut the number of civil servants do not seem to be particularly worried about state surveillance activities. The article also mentions FX. Apparently, it is responsible for long-term infiltration. Moreover, F4 puts agents into political parties and organisations. We are told that F6 puts agents into trade unions. If I had mentioned all this at the time, or shortly afterwards, the ministerial response might have been—and might still be today—that we should not believe all that we read in the press. Of course when an organisation such as MI5 has such immense powers, and there is no parliamentary scrutiny, there is bound to be unease about whether abuses occur.

In the film "MI5's Official Secrets", a former employee of MI5, Miss Cathy Massiter, claimed that the late Mr. Harry Newton was an agent of MI5 and had been put by MI5 into CND and other organisations. This point may not be covered by the Minister's brief, but I hope that he will take note of it. Would it not be right to clear up this allegation? Mr. Newton is dead, and the allegation has caused considerable distress to his family and friends.

If the allegation made by Miss Massiter is correct, what justification would there be for the security service to plant agents in organisations that no reasonable person could consider to be subversive? I do not know whether Mr. Newton was an agent—I am trying to seek information through this debate. If he was not an agent, what possible reason could there be for Miss Massiter to claim that he was? What would be her motive? Many of us believe that she is an honourable woman, who has done the country good by revealing what has been happening in MI5.

Is CND subversive in the eyes of security service? The Home Secretary told us in the House and in the Select

Committee when it was examining the special branch that the CND is perfectly legal. Therefore, why is it subject to all these investigations?

In March this year, I read in *The Observer* that the former editor of the CND newspaper, a journalist of some 30 years experience, a Mr. Bonnett, fell out with CND. When he left the organisation, he was asked all sorts of questions by the special branch, about gossip, such as who lives with whom, and about the leadership style of the general secretary of CND. What justification is there for asking such questions? He is quoted as saying that the special branch was interested in everybody. There is understandable and justifiable concern over this matter.

Is the Institute for Workers' Control, of which Mr. Newton was treasurer, considered subversive? If it is not, why was Mr. Newton, if he was an agent, planted in that organisation, and no doubt encouraged to become its treasurer? Are MI5's planted agents instructed to act in the most provocative way possible, carrying out the traditional role of agents provacateurs? Is putting agents into such organisations the right way to spend taxpayer's money?

Yesterday in Committee on the Interception of Communications Bill, I was asked by a Conservative member whether I believed that a security service was necessary. Obviously, I answered in the affirmative. I went on to say that much of the work undertaken by the security service is no doubt justified, but if the feeling continues to grow that some part of the security service is out of control, and many people fully committed to the parliamentary and democratic system are or have been the subject of unjustified surveillance by MI5, then confidence in the impartiality of the service will become eroded. Why should CND, the National Council for Civil Liberties and the Institute for Workers' Control be targeted by the security service and the special branch?

Miss Massiter said about the NCCL:

"Anyone who was on the National Executive of NCCL, who worked for NCCL, who was an active member to the degree of being, say, a branch secretary of NCCL, would be placed on permanent record and the routine enquiries were instituted to identify such people and police inquiries were sought."

I am sure that the Minister will say that he is not in a position to talk about such matters, but is it not a matter of concern to the House that an organisation that no one could reasonably consider to be subversive should be subject to such detailed and unjustified inquiries? How far does this extend to other organisations?

Why was my hon. Friend the Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman), before she came to the House, the subject of such surveillance? Is she a subversive? Is it argued that she wanted somehow to overthrow parliamentary democracy? Taxpayers' money was used to carry out investigations into her and many like her. I should have thought that every hon. Member should be concerned about such abuses being practised by the security service. What kind of intelligence officer in MI5 could have been so stupid or prejudiced as to believe that my hon. Friend the Member for Peckham was some kind of danger or threat to the state?

Are there some people in MI5—if there are, I trust that there are not many—who are so partial in their own political views that they would find it difficult to carry out objectively the directive given to the security service in 1952?

The matters that I raise will continue to be raised, certainly by Labour Members. The feeling grows that it is wrong for the security service not to be subject to any form of control by Parliament. The definition of subversive, which anyway is far too wide and needs changing, refers to those who want to overthrow parliamentary democracy by various means. The irony is that Parliament itself has no say in these matters. We can have the occasional debate, but we are not likely to get much information. The director-general of MI5 is banned from appearing before the Select Committee and questions are banned in the House. The announcement by the Prime Minister yesterday means that anxiety is bound to grow, as is the feeling that some changes are necessary.

Yesterday, in Committee on the Interception of Communications Bill, one or two Conservative Members argued for an ombudsman for telephone tapping, but more is required. If we are to have confidence in the security service we have to be persuaded that it carries out its function in a proper manner and not by such practices as targeting organisations such as the NCCL and the CND, and carrying out inquiries into my hon. Friend the Member for Peckham. We have to be persuaded that the security service will carry out its functions in a proper manner. It should not do so in a way that many of us would consider, in the light of the allegations made by Miss Massiter, to be near-subversive in themselves.

12.37 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Waddington): The subject of this debate reflects the close interest that the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) takes in security matters, and that has been demonstrated by his contributions, among other things, to the recent inquiry of the Home Affairs Select Committee into special branches, and to debates on the Interception of Communications Bill. There is no dispute that questions of national security, touching as they do both on the most vital interests of the nation and upon the rights and freedoms of the individual citizen, are ones which need to be taken very seriously by the House, and I have no quarrel with the hon. Gentleman for raising these matters. However, I am sorry that he did not pay tribute to the vital work that the security service carries out in protecting the community as a whole from threats such as espionage and terrorism.

Mr. Winnick: I said that much of the work was justified.

Mr. Waddington: The hon. Gentleman referred to yesterday's announcement, which he said represented a large extension of ministerial power to suspend people in the public service who are security risks. I am sure that all hon. Members will agree with the basic proposition that when the reliability of an individual in public service is in doubt it may be necessary to remove him from work the nature of which is vital to the security of the state, or to bar him from moving to such work. When there is doubt because of alleged subversive tendencies or associations a formal procedure is used which has existed since 1948. Under it the individual has the right of appeal to an independent panel of three advisers.

Last night the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) engaged in his usual extravagant language and made a statement to the press which was reported this morning. If the right hon. Gentleman works

[Mr. Waddington]

himself into a lather like that over such a non-event he is likely to be well and truly dead before he is deselected for Gorton.

I must go into some detail to put into perspective the substance of the reply given yesterday.

Mr. Winnick: I appreciate that it is right for the Minister to refer to such matters, because I referred to them, but does he intend to find time to refer to other matters that I raised?

Mr. Waddington: I have every intention of referring to a number of other matters raised by the hon. Gentleman.

The terms of reference of the three advisers were last published by the Financial Secretary to the Treasury in 1957. The Security Commission, in its report on security procedures and practices in the public service in 1982 observed that these had become out of date in the light of the changes in the nature of the threat to security. I am advised that my right hon. and learned Friend has decided, in the light of that, that the Government, in consultation with the three advisers—Lord Justice Lloyd, Sir Patrick Nairne and Mr. Edward Hewlett — should revise the terms of reference and the statement of procedures to be followed. That decision, which was announced yesterday, does not alter the definition of subversion from that given by Lord Harris of Greenwich, a Labour Minister, in 1975.

The new terms of reference now include membership of subversive groups, other than Communists, which are acknowledged by the Minister concerned to fall within the definition of

"activities which threaten the safety or wellbeing of the state and which are intended to undermine or overthrow parliamentary democracy by political, industrial or violent means."

The only other changes in the terms of reference of the three advisers are concerned with procedure. I therefore hope that the hon. Member for Walsall, North will recognise that this really is "much ado about nothing". It would have been highly irresponsible if the terms of reference had not been brought up to date in the light of the report by the Security Commission.

Safeguarding national security is in a real sense the highest trust which parliament places upon Ministers and, in the area which we are now discussing, particularly upon the Prime Minister and the Home Secretary of the day. If that trust is neglected, the nation's safety is imperilled.

However, two things are particularly worth noting about the debates which have recently taken place on the Interception of Communications Bill. Nobody anywhere in the House, with the possible exception of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), who on 12 March at column 215 had some rather extraordinary things to say about his former Prime Minister Lord Wilson of Rievaulx, has suggested that Prime Ministers and Home Secretaries of successive Administrations, of whichever political party, have not discharged the trust confided in them in these matters with all the care and integrity that Parliament has rightly expected and demanded of them. No one has suggested that questions of national security can be discussed in public in any detail.

Those who threaten society with terrorism, espionage and subversion use stealth and secrecy as their weapons. Those who have to counter these threats must be able to operate with similar secrecy and their operations cannot be put at risk by public disclosure of their methods and tactics. It is this consideration, and this consideration alone, which has led successive Governments over a very long period to adhere to the policy of not commenting on security matters.

This means that false or misleading reports and allegations have to go unanswered. Far better that, than to give those who threaten our society clues as to the nature of the security service's operations against them by comparing the answer which is given to one allegation with that which is given to another. It is for that reason that I shall not comment on any of the particular allegations that have recently been made.

I cannot possibly oblige the hon. Gentleman in his request about Mr. Harry Newton. However, I shall indulge myself in a comment upon it. I am aware that the allegations about Mr. Newton have caused distress and anxiety to him, his family and those who knew him. My right hon. and learned Friend has said how irresponsible it is for such allegations to be made about someone who cannot respond to them himself. However, responsibility for the allegations rests with those who made them. I cannot depart from the usual policy of not confirming or denying allegations about the operations of the security service. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman recognises fully why that is so.

I remind the House that the Home Secretary covered all aspects of the allegations made in the programme. First, the allegations of improperly authorised interception were examined by Lord Bridge, who found that no warrant relevant to those named in the programme had been issued in contravention of the appropriate criteria. Secondly, my right hon. and learned Friend indicated that he had taken steps to examine the allegations that the security service had acted improperly in carrying out investigations and surveillance in relation to subversive activity, and had concluded, in the light of the allegations and of his inquiries into them, that the security service had carried out no operation, investigation, surveillance or action against any individual other than for the purposes laid down in its directive and with the propriety which successive Governments have rightly demanded of it.

My right hon. and learned Friend also said that he was satisfied that members of the security service had not carried out any interception without the authority of the Secretary of State, and that the Director of Public Prosecutions had asked the Metropolitan police to look into the allegations in the film which suggested that criminal offences may have been committed. This was a complete and conclusive answer to that set of allegations.

The hon. Member for Walsall, North made some remarks about CND. My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has made it abundantly plain that political campaigning to change the mind of the Government or of people generally about political issues cannot constitute subversion under the definition given by Lord Harris in 1975. Similar considerations apply to trade unions and their members.

No individual need fear that he is the subject of investigation by the security authorities on the ground of subversion unless his actions and intentions bring him within the strict criteria set out in the definition. That definition was discussed at length in evidence to the Home Affairs Select Committee in its recent inquiry. My right hon. and learned Friend explained its effect fully and carefully. He also explained the reasons for the Government's belief that this definition — which was

applied by the previous Labour Government—sets the right boundaries for investigations into subversion without transgressing into interference with legitimate political or trade union activity.

On ministerial control of the security service, we must take as our starting point the directive issued to the director general by the then Home Secretary, Sir David Maxwell Fyfe, in 1952, and referred to in paragraph 238 of Lord Denning's Report Cmnd. 2152.

This directive makes the director general personally responsible directly to the Home Secretary for the proper and efficient implementation of the tasks set out in the directive. It is through this relationship that ministerial control is exercised. The Government appoint the director general, and he holds office only so long as he has the confidence of the Home Secretary and the Prime Minister.

The director general is expected to seek direction and guidance from the Home Secretary as to the way the service goes about its business. With but one exception, the Home Secretary does not concern himself with particular operations. That one exception is when an interception warrant is sought, when of course the Home Secretary must be given sufficient supporting information for him to judge whether the application comes within the established criteria. But in general the Home Secretary is not concerned with particular cases, as paragraph 6 of the directive makes clear when it states:

"Ministers do not concern themselves with the detailed information which may be obtained by the Security Service in particular cases, but are furnished with such information only as may be necessary for the determination of any issue on which guidance is sought."

There are good reasons for that policy. The security service is not—as some have alleged—in the business of obtaining information on behalf of the Government. It is there to protect all of us and the state against external and internal dangers, and must, as the directive makes clear, do that in a way that avoids any suggestion that it is concerned with any matter other than the defence of the realm as a whole or that there is any political bias or influence in its work. The operational judgments must be for the director general to make. If he gets them wrong, and the safety of the state is jeopardised or civil liberties unjustifiably infringed, he must answer to the Home Secretary.

In that way the chain of responsibility and control is clear and unequivocal. It enables Ministers to discharge their responsibility to Parliament for security matters without involving themselves in the detailed operations of the security service.

Mr. Winnick: I appreciate that the Minister does not intend to respond to any of the allegations made by Miss Massiter. If it is true that my hon. Friend the Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman), when she was the legal officer for the National Council for Civil Liberties, was the subject of surveillance, and if it is true that many other people involved in that one organisation had files on them for no other reason than that they were active in that organisation, would not the Minister agree that that was indeed a serious erosion of civil liberties and in itself to be deplored?

Mr. Waddington: The hon. Gentleman knows better than that. It has been the custom for years and years never to comment on national security matters. It has certainly been the practice never to answer hypothetical questions.

The hon. Gentleman needs to think for only a moment to realise that if Ministers were actually to answer questions framed in that way, over a period of time there could be questions so framed and answers so given that eventually obvious damage would be done to the security services.

I am not, therefore, impugning anybody. It is nothing except common sense to say that it is nonsense to put questions framed in that way and ask Ministers of the Crown to answer them. I am not departing from the practice that has been followed by Governments for as long as I can remember, and certainly the practice followed by the last Labour Government.

The hon. Gentleman, who is so ready to make all these criticisms, never mentions one of the most salient factors in the "20:20 Vision" film, which was that the bulk of the allegations related to matters that were alleged to have happened during the period of the Labour Government. All the hon. Gentleman's attacks are directed as though somehow under this Government the prison gates are closing and practices are being changed. He knows the position perfectly well and he should make that plain if he wants to make a fair speech to the House—which it is obvious he does not.

I am sure that the House would not want the position to arise where any Home Secretary was directing particular operations against subversives or others who might threaten our society. However great was the honour and integrity of the Home Secretary of the day, the suspicion would always exist that political influence might be brought to bear on the conduct of these operations, and it is therefore right that through the structure of responsibility established by the directive, the service should be under the operational control of its director general, and that he should account to the Home Secretary for its proper and efficient working.

So the Home Secretary is necessarily distanced from the detailed workings of the security service, but that does not mean that there is any lack of ministerial control. As my right hon. and learned Friend has made clear, he and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister take very seriously their responsibility for satisfying themselves that the service operates within the letter and spirit of its directive. They take the utmost care to ensure that the person appointed as director general has the necessary qualities of ability and judgment to guide the service properly and effectively in the performance of the tasks set for it. My right hon. and learned Friend maintains regular contact with the director general, though the House will not expect me to go into details about the nature of those contacts or the matters discussed.

However, the House can be assured that my right hon. and learned Friend takes great care—as I am sure did his predecessors—to inform himself of the matters of which he must be aware in order to satisfy his responsibility to Parliament for the maintenance of a security service that is efficient in the protection of our national security and vigilant in its upholding of the civil liberties of the citizens of this country. This is an effective exercise of ministerial control in a difficult and sensitive area. I believe that the balance is right, as indeed have all the Governments of both parties who have exercised these responsibilities since 1952 when the directive was issued.

Royal Assent

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): I have to inform the House, in accordance with the Royal Assent Act 1967, that the Queen has signified Her Royal Assent to the following Acts:

1. Hong Kong Act 1985.
2. National Heritage (Scotland) Act 1985.
3. Lerwick Harbour Order Confirmation Act 1985.
4. Bournemouth Borough Council Act 1985.
5. London Docklands Railway Act 1985.

European Economic Community (Enlargement)

12.57 pm

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): The subject for debate has not been dealt with by the House since 1978, which was the last occasion on which we had an opportunity to discuss the vital matter of the enlargement of the EEC, which will have, as I hope to show the House, very profound effects for the United Kingdom and the EEC as a whole.

Since 1978 we have had the opportunity to examine the effects of an enlargement of the Community with the accession of Greece. As a Member of the European Parliament from 1979 to 1984, I have had the opportunity to examine the effect of an enlargement of the Community and to consider at close quarters the operation of the institutions of the Community.

The rationale that is given by the Government for supporting the accession of Spain and Portugal to the EEC tends — my hon. Friend the Minister will no doubt confirm this later — to be based on three principal arguments. One could be summarised as the completion of western democratic Europe, another related to that would be the consolidation of democracy in the applicant countries — Spain and Portugal — and the third has a strategic or defence element and relates to the encouragement of Spain to take part in or to join NATO.

The completion or extension of democratic Europe is a very tempting argument, although it should be noted that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said as recently as 2 April — *Hansard* reference column 1066, perhaps appropriately:

> "I think it likely that 12 will be the limit of the Community for a very long time."—[*Offical Report*, 2 April 1985; Vol. 76, c. 1066.]

I regret that in a sense because, quite apart from the merits or otherwise of the case being made for Spain and Portugal to join the Community, I would be very interested in the possibility of countries such as Austria and Switzerland — were it not for their curious political position — and Norway and Sweden looking again at the Community as prospective members. Apparently that is not in the mind of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, which I regret.

Therefore, the argument about the completion of western democratic Europe can at best be only a rather temporary one because we are not, apparently, contemplating its full completion. In that sense, the related argument about the consolidation of democracy is somewhat dubious because we are not told in what sense mere membership of the EEC would guarantee the continuation of democracy in any member country, never mind Spain and Portugal. Nor does the Community have a satisfactory definition of "democracy", and I believe that it would be unable to judge whether a country was, in that sense, sufficienty democratic to merit membership. The Minister of State might wish to expand on that when he replies to the debate.

In relation to the argument relating to strategy, defence and NATO, an intriguing prospect emerges because the Spanish people will have a referendum next year about their membership of NATO. Are we being told that we are, in effect, bribing the Spaniards into agreeing to stay in NATO by their membership of the EEC? Or do we not

welcome wholehearted membership of NATO, regardless of whether moneyes are paid or membership of other organisations is extended?

That must be considered in the context of the fact that Ireland, which is a member of the EEC, is not in NATO — indeed, Ireland declares itself to be neutral — that France is not a full member of NATO in any case, and that, more importantly, the country which is arguably the single most important member of NATO, certainly on the eastern flank—Turkey—will apparently be expected to continue to support NATO without being offered the bribe or inducement of membership of the EEC. It is beyond me why we must offer Spain, but not Turkey, that inducement.

Will the Minister comment on the position of Turkey as a loyal member of NATO and as a country which is moving rapidly towards the restoration of democracy, and say whether we would welcome Turkey as a member of the EEC? That is highly relevant to the question under consideration, which is the enlargement of the Community, in this case to take in Spain and Portugal.

Politics is, among other things, the assessment of the judgment of costs and benefits. What I have outlined so far have been the principal arguments about the claimed benefits of the enlargment of the EEC bringing in Spain and Portugal. The costs argument is much less clear than hon. Members might believe. Surprisingly little information is to hand about the costs of enlargement. The Prime Minister said:

"We shall, of course, put as many of the details of the costs"—

of enlargement—

"as we can before the House". — [*Official Report*, 2 April 1985; Vol. 76, c. 1070.]

However, she had said about the enlargement of the EEC in a written reply to me:

"It is not yet possible to estimate actual costs and benefits to the United Kingdom"—[*Official Report*, 29 March 1985, Vol. 76, c. 365.]

We are left in the peculiar position of being asked to sign a blank cheque. We shall be asked by Her Majesty's Government to agree to the entry of Spain and Portugal without, I fear, being told the costs of that exercise, either to the Community or to the United Kingdom. I hope that that will be rectified before the treaty is brought to this House for ratification.

I hope that the Minister will consider several heads of cost and give the Government's position on them. Two of the main sources of benefit to Britain from the EC are the regional fund and the social fund. It would be interesting to know whether those funds will be increased in size and, if so, what other elements of the budget of the EC might be reduced as a result. In any case, it is not inevitable, given the fact that two countries which are less prosperous than the United Kingdom will join the Community, that our position in, as it were, the league table of claims on funds, such as the regional and social funds will be reduced.

Shall we not find ourselves benefiting less than we have from such funds? Either we shall benefit less, in the sense that we shall get less of an existing fund, or, if the funds are increased in size, we shall get less than we would have got were Spain and Portugal not members. I am sure that the Minister will have followed that logic—I hope that it has not been too confused—in his usual impeccable way.

My first area of concern, therefore, could be put broadly as the redistribution of wealth from the richer to the poorer. It is often said that one argument for bringing Spain and Portugal into the Community is that we could help them as less prosperous countries. The honest answer to be given by those who support the entry of Spain and Portugal must be that, if that is the case, the more prosperous must inevitably pay some of the bill. It is the size of that bill that we must be told before we are expected to approve the entry of Spain and Portugal into the Community.

A much bigger issue is the common agricultural policy, and here we enter the real big money arguments of the EC. The CAP still takes by far the largest part of the resources of the Community and there is, regrettably, no sign of that changing. How much worse will it be when we get the entry of these two new countries into the Community, with their production of wine, olive oil and tomatoes, to say nothing of their other products, and the demands that they will make on the CAP?

The questions that arise from that include not only what we shall do to deal with the control of expenditure on those important items, which will be much increased in output within the Community, but what will happen to the whole orientation of the CAP. I have been asked to comment on behalf of Britain's horticultural industry. I have been sent a document by the National Farmers Union, and the extracts I quote from it show the depth of concern of the industry in this country. The NFU says:

"realisation of Spain's enormous agricultural potential could add to the Community's existing surplus problems with further adverse budgetary consequences. The Unions believe that EC funds should not be made available to Spain or Portugal from the Guidance Section of FEOGA if this would lead to increased production of products already in surplus."

The NFU goes on to say with specific reference to horticulture:

"The accession of Spain and Portugal would increase EC fruit production by almost 50 per cent. and vegetable production by 25 per cent. Existing Community growers"——

including those in the United Kingdom—

"would face a major increase in competition, as well as the possible disruption and destabilisation of sensitive and already adequately supplied markets."

There is, therefore, concern among the members of the agricultural community in Britain that the effects of Spain and Portugal coming in will be far-reaching, because the southern countries—I refer to Greece, Italy, Spain and Portugal all in alliance, and France when it suited her—would be in a position to swing the whole emphasis of the agricultural policy away from the direction that it has taken in the past — dairy products, cereals, beef, sheepmeat and the like—towards the southern products.

I hope that the Minister will address himself to that difficulty because if we are to be honest with ourselves and our citizens, and particularly with our farmers, we must tell them what we estimate the effect will be of the entry of two new countries to the Community, which would form a new emphasis or power bloc to the south of the Community, when those countries would, in their own interests, want to draw more of the CAP funds towards themselves.

Again we are faced with the difficulty either that the funds will be increased overall or that the existing funds will be redistributed. One way or the other, the bill must be picked up. It is the size of that bill about which we need to hear more today. Why is it assumed that a sector as vital as our automobile industry will prosper by easier access

[Mr. Eric Forth]

to Spanish markets, when the Spanish automobile industry is one of the most modern and efficient in Europe and when, if anything, we shall face an increased stiffening of competition from that source?

I am aware of, and pay tribute to, the attempts by Her Majesty's Government, and in particular by the Minister of State, to try to make sense out of the institutional arrangements of the Community, particularly in terms of the position that would be created if Spain and Portugal were to join. The Minister will, I am sure, confirm that up to now our efforts in that direction have, alas, failed. We shall see an increase in the membership of the Commission of the Community from 14 to 17. There is already a problem in finding enough meaningful work for the present 14 commissioners to do. It remains to be seen what 17 members will do. That is bad enough, but I am told that the European Parliament will increase from 434 members to 518 members. There will also be two official new Community languages. The costs of travel—Madrid and Lisbon will be centres of activity in the Community, and those of us who have been Members of the European Parliament know what that involves—and of interpretation and translation of documents must impose a heavy burden on the Community's institutions. There will also be significant effects on voting in the Council of Ministers.

I add in passing, because I agree that it is only a temporary argument in a sense, that the political complexion of the two countries, but especially the larger country, Spain, which has a Socialist Government, will have a potentially profound and unfortunate effect on the political balance within the Community and its institutions. How will the political decision-making process in the Community be affected by the accession of Spain and Portugal?

I am dubious about the claimed benefits of the enlargement to bring in Spain and Portugal. I do not believe that the arguments have the strength and validity which we have been asked to accept as unarguable and beyond dispute or doubt. I am concerned that the full cost of this exercise has never been laid before us, in terms of the internal budgetary working of the Community and, more importantly, in terms of the effects on the balance of decision-making and influence within the Community and the extent to which funds will be reorientated or redirected from the northern part of the Community, of which we are a part, to the south, in which the two applicant countries will be such an important element.

I remain extremely sceptical about the benefits of this exercise. I look to my hon. Friend the Minister of State for reassurance. I hope that the House will take the opportunity that it is given, in terms of what my hon. Friend says as a background, to consider the position that it will take when the ratification of the treaty of accession comes before hon. Members later this year.

1.12 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) began his interesting comments by saying that this was the first time since 1978 that the subject of enlargement of the Community had been raised in the House. It is perhaps no coincidence that during that year Spain and Portugal applied to join the Community. The fact that it has taken a long and arduous seven years before the negotiations were satisfactorily concluded is an eloquent indication of the extent to which real problems had to be resolved and of the Community's determination to ensure that the accession of Spain and Portugal would be beneficial to the Community as a whole and would not bring in its wake some of the fundamental problems to which my hon. Friend referred.

Although the subject of the Community often divides the House in substantial ways, the enlargement of the Community has been welcomed by the overwhelming number of hon. Members from all parties. There is a deep realisation that the accession of democracy to Spain and Portugal not only benefits the people of those countries but makes an important contribution towards strengthening the Western world as a whole.

My hon. Friend mentioned the fact that both countries have left-of-centre Governments, but it is equally true that, in their first democratic elections after the return to democracy, right-of-centre Governments were elected. One hopes that, one day, the normal process of democracy will produce Governments with political complexions that are more acceptable to my hon. Friend.

My hon. Friend referred to the remark of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister about the size of the Community and about whether, with 12 states as members of the Community, that is likely to be the end of the road. My hon. Friend said that he regretted the fact that consideration did not seem to have been given to other Western democratic countries such as Austria and the Scandinavian countries joining the Community. The position is simple. As democratic, parliamentary countries in Europe, they would be eligible to be considered for membership, if they wished to apply. They have not done so, and that is entirely within their sovereign rights. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was simply saying that, at present, no further applications for membership of the Community have been made. If a European country which was a parliamentary democracy applied for membership, that would obviously be a matter to be negotiated within the existing Community.

That must be my answer with regard to Turkey. At the moment, there is a European Community-Turkey association agreement which was negotiated in 1963 and which recognised the possibility of Turkey's eventual membership of the Community. The Turkish Government have not made any application to the Community, so that matter does not need to be considered at present.

My hon. Friend attached great importance to how membership of the Community could enhance the democratic credentials of Spain and Portugal. He will appreciate that, in the first instance, that is a matter for Spain and Portugal. It is significant that all parties in Spain and Portugal have supported applications to join the Community and have emphasised their belief that accession will help to strengthen the democratic structures of their countries if they can be locked into a community that is, by its very nature, essentially a community of parliamentary democracies.

We are all conscious of the fact that, for many years, Spain and Portugal were both outside the mainstream of European thinking and were experiencing dictatorial regimes. When democratic systems were reintroduced into both countries, they both attached importance to the strong belief that any hankering by some people for a return to authoritarian systems would be much more unlikely to

make progress if Spain and Portugal were part of a wider community participating in the European Parliament, the Council of Ministers and the other democratic structures of western Europe.

Mr. Forth: Does my hon. Friend agree that there is no mechanism in the Community to judge whether a country is democratic or, more importantly, to reject from membership any country that is not democratic from time to time? I am at a loss to understand what would happen if any country that intends joining the Community or any country that is already in the Community became in some sense undemocratic.

Mr. Rifkind: I suggest that democracy is rather like the elephant—difficult to describe, but one knows one when one sees one. Although my hon. Friend is correct to draw attention to the theoretical possibility that an existing member of the Community may one day adopt an authoritarian system of government, and to the fact that the Community has no formal method of responding to that, there is, I believe, general acceptance of the fact that it is incompatible with full membership of the Community for a country that does not have democratic structures to participate fully. How could such a country participate in the European Parliament? How could it participate in an equal and acceptable way in the Council of Ministers? I believe that that point is widely acknowledged.

My hon. Friend asked about the implications for the regional and social funds of the accession of Spain and Portugal. Recently, it has been agreed that the regional and social funds should be significantly increased, with a view not simply to the consequences of enlargement but because of the widespread belief that agriculture should take an increasingly lower proportion of total expenditure and other Community activities should take a higher proportion. The particular quotas that will be available to Spain and Portugal from the regional development fund have not yet been decided. They will be determined later this year. The decisions that were taken at the European Council with regard to integrated Mediterranean programmes were taken firmly on the basis that additional criteria for determining entitlement to the regional fund should not be changed. One Commission proposal would have shifted regional funds towards the Mediterranean countries. That proposal has been withdrawn, and there is now no danger of such a development.

My hon. Friend referred to the institutional implications of enlargement of the Community, mentioning in particular the problems that could arise from a larger Commission of 17 members, as is presently proposed. As he knows, the British Government have been in the forefront in arguing that this is an appropriate time at which to look completely afresh at the whole question of the size of the Commission. We have said that for our own part we would find it acceptable that there should be one Commissioner per member state, rather than some of the larger states having two Commissioners, as at present.

My hon. Friend is correct in saying that there is as yet no agreement, but I have been heartened by the fact that in the ad hoc committee on institutions—the so-called Dooge committee — on which I am the British representative, I made a proposal to that effect, and there has been unanimous agreement in the final report that it would be desirable to reduce the size of the Commission. There is still continuing discussion as the exact figure, but there was unanimous agreement on the part of all the representatives on the committee—all of whom were personal representatives of their respective Prime Ministers—that the likely figure of 17, which would result from enlargement under the existing rule, would be highly undesirable and unsatisfactory, very much for the reasons referred to by my hon. Friend.

My hon. Friend properly drew attention to the cost implications of enlargement, and that clearly is an important matter. It was one of the most difficult issues to resolve in the negotiations. He may be aware that the agreement which has been proposed in regard to the traditional financial arrangements is that for Spain there should be broad financial neutrality for the first few years. If the assessments on which the proposal is based are correct, the direct budgetery costs of enlargement should be very limited in the early years at least.

With regard to Portugal, it has always been accepted by EC Governments, including the British Government, that it would be intolerable for Portugal to be a net contributor, in that it would be by far the poorest member of the Community. Therefore, there is an acceptance that, even during the transitional arrangements, there has to be some net benefit to the Portuguese economy, and that is highly appropriate.

With regard to costs, it is difficult at this stage to give any precise figures. As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said, we would hope to give the House the fullest details when it considers the treaty of accession. That would provide a full opportunity for a more detailed assessment and analysis of all the implications of membership, including the financial implications.

I think that the most important point to which my hon. Friend will wish to give attention is that, following the agreement reached at the Fontainebleau summit, the financial implications for the United Kingdom will be very modest—far more modest than would otherwise have been the case. As a result of the agreement, the additional cost to the Community arising from enlargement will involve the United Kingdom in paying only 7 per cent. of the costs, rather than its traditional share of approximately 21 per cent. France will have to bear 27 per cent. and the Federal Republic of Germany 32 per cent. of the total costs. Therefore, compared with either of those two countries, the United Kingdom, with only 7 per cent. will have a very modest additional burden. Obviously, that is very satisfactory for the House and the country.

Mr. Forth: While I accept what my hon. Friend says in this context, will he agree that there is a danger, with Spain and Portugal joining the Community, that in the future there will be much greater pressure for additional Community expenditure in total, largely as a result of the agricultural matters, on which my hon. Friend has not yet touched? Therefore, his figures, while reassuring for the immediate future, may well be under a good deal of pressure as time goes on and as the Community, with its enhanced membership, finds more and more ways to spend Community money.

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is correct about Spain and Portugal being likely to be beneficiaries of Community expenditure, and they may very well have an interest in pressing for greater expenditure. But my hon. Friend should bear in mind that, parallel with that development, France, which has traditionally been a net

[Mr. Rifkind]

beneficiary, is now in the process of becoming a very substantial net contributor. Therefore, in future the French financial interests will be likely to be much closer to those of Britain and West Germany, so the balance will indeed be preserved. As any increase in the own resources of the Community could be agreed only unanimously, there would be a constant ability to ensure proper accountability and responsibility in matters of this kind.

With regard to agriculture, the Community has agreed that there should be a very substantial transitional period before Spain should be entitled to full membership of the Community. There is agreement on a seven-year transitional period for all agricultural produce other than fresh fruit, vegetables and olive oil. In the case of certain sensitive products such as fruit and vegetables, the period for dismantling Community tariffs will be as long as 10 years. That will give substantial protection to our horticulture—a matter to which my hon. Friend rightly drew attention.

With regard to fisheries, which was one of the most important areas of negotiation, the outcome is extremely satisfactory for the United Kingdom. One of the areas about which we were most concerned was the possibility of Spanish access to the North sea. It is agreed that there should be no Spanish access whatever to the North sea. That has been warmly welcomed by Scottish fishermen and others who have an interest in those matters.

With regard to fisheries in other parts of Community waters, the access of Spain will be based largely on the traditional access which it has enjoyed under bilateral agreements with the European Community. There have been some increased quotas in certain areas, but not in those areas which are most sensitive for British fishermen, and that is very satisfactory.

With regard to industrial tariffs, my hon. Friend mentioned that he was far from certain that British exports in, for example, the motor vehicle industry would necessarily benefit as a result of the enlargement of the Community. It is certainly the case that Spain will be able to have the same duty-free access to the United Kingdom as the United Kingdom will ultimately have to Spain, but the question is much more complicated than that.

The problem at present—it has been for the past few years—is that Spain has far higher tariffs, which have enabled it to prevent penetration by British exports to Spain, whereas that has not been the case with the export of Spanish motor vehicles to the United Kingdom. Traditionally, Spain has had very high industrial tariffs, because historically its industry was relatively weak. It was given privileged access to the Community some years ago, and the Community has been increasingly concerned at the implications and unfairness of that in terms of reciprocal trading rights.

Under the arrangements which have been agreed, the Spanish have accepted that, in the first three years after accession, they must reduce their industrial tariffs against the rest of the Community by as much as 52 per cent. The remaining tariffs will be phased out in two or three years after that. That agreement provides very important and exciting opportunity for British exports. Particularly for motor vehicles the opportunities should be significant, because the reduced duty quota has permitted larger numbers of vehicles to be imported into Spain.

When there are two such countries as Spain and Portugal joining the Community, that does not simply involve marginal changes to the Community; it is a very significant change, of which we are all conscious. It is precisely for that reason that the negotiations were long and hard on both sides, but I believe that there is widespread agreement, not just in the United Kingdom but throughout the Community and in Spain and Portugal, that western Europe will be greatly strengthened by the addition of the Iberian peninsula to the European Community, that the democratic prospects for Western Europe are enhanced, and that as a consequence, not only at the political but at the economic level, there are challenges and opportunities for the United Kingdom which should result in our welcoming this excellent conclusion to the negotiations.

Dr. David Hemson (Detention)

1.29 pm

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Five weeks ago, during the first weekend of March, 15 trade unionists were arrested in Harare and Kwekwe in Zimbabwe under the emergency powers taken over from the white minority Rhodesian regime of Ian Smith. All those detained have been active in campaigning for democratic trade unions under workers' control, and in organising Socialist workers' education.

Among those detained were Mr. Rabi Down of the General Engineering and Metal Workers Union, whom I had the honour of showing round the House of Commons at Christmas, and Dr. David Hemson, a teacher and refugee from South Africa, who was a textile workers' union official in Natal in the early 1970s. After being banned by the South African regime, he became a constituent and a personal friend of mine. Of the original 15 detainees, 13 have now been released, but two remain incarcerated. In addition to Doctor Hemson is Mr. Darcy Du Toit, also a teacher, and also a refugee from South Africa. Like Dr. Hemson, he is a member of the British Labour party.

Those arrests are the first concerted attack on Zimbabwean trade unionists by the Government since independence. The sole activity of the 15 people detained has been to assist in the organisation of workers in Zimbabwe and in the promotion of Socialist ideas. In fact, they have been promoting the Socialist transformation of that society, the very promise that brought ZANU to power in 1980, but which that Government have not carried out. In their view and mine, the implementation of real Socialist policies will be the only way to preserve the unity of the country, solve the problems facing working people and put an end to the economic blackmail waged against Zimbabwe by South African and Western capitalism.

The recent ZANU youth congress, as well as some ZANU leaders, called publicly for Socialist study circles among workers to be established on the widest scale, yet trade unionists, including my constituent, who have organised precisely such study circles and education among workers have been detained by the security police. The recent ZANU congress adopted a "leadership code" in an attempt to combat corruption and privilege rife at the top levels of Government and party. But trade unionists who were organising opposition to undemocratic and corrupt leaders, including some who openly collaborated with the former Smith regime, have been cast into prison.

Last year many of those detained were involved in setting up a workers' campaign for a democratic General Engineering and Metal Workers Union. They organised workers' committees in the factories and rank and file members of the union to bring it under democratic control. Last year the security police intervened to defend the general secretary of the union, Mr. Chimusoro, when he was suspended from office for corruption and misconduct by the national council of GEMWU. That long-standing supporter of the former Muzorewa regime has continued to hold office in defiance of the workers, by courtesy of the security police. Therefore, it is not surprising that the recent ZANU youth congress resolved that the CIO—the security police—should be purged.

Those detentions have sparked off an enormous wave of protest in the labour movement across the whole of Europe. On 27 March, the Labour party national executive committee passed a resolution that said:

"This committee is disturbed at the arrest of a number of trades unionists in Zimbabwe including members of ZANU, former members of the British Labour party, one of those being a British citizen. We express our grave concern that the Socialist policies on which the Government was elected in 1980 should be tarnished by this attack on campaigning trades unionists. We recognise the damage such action will do to the reputation of ZANU. Therefore, we wish to record our protest, and agree to immediately write to the Zimbabwean High Commissioner and send a tele-message to Prime Minister Mugabe."

There have been similar protests from the Swedish metal workers union, the Dutch Trades Union Congress, the French Confédération Française Démocratique du Travail, the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions and the South African mineworkers union. There have been many more. Amnesty International has intervened. There have been protests and demonstrations in Britain, Belgium, Holland, Ireland, Sweden, Germany, Denmark, Greece and Spain.

However, for nearly four weeks there was an official silence from the Zimbabwean authorities. I know that officials from the British Foreign Office intervened on behalf of Dr. Hemson and his family, but there was no public statement from the Zimbabwean Government or the high commission in London until 26 March. When that statement came, it was full of what I can only describe as absurdities and contradictions. The detainees were accused of being Left-wing and of

"organising workers for a generalised insurrection against the Government and the state."

Yet at the same time there was

"no direct contact with the party or the trade unions."

That was a vain attempt at a cover-up. We now know that 13 of the 15 have been released precisely because the Zimbabwean Government were unable to bring such charges. Indeed, despite reports of beating and torture under interrogation, the Zimbabwean Government would not be able to produce a shred of credible evidence to support their claims. As for having no contact with the ZANU party or the trade unions, that was said to try to hide the deep debate going on inside ZANU and the trade union movement and the worry that many organised workers in Zimbabwe have that their Government might drift towards a Polish-style society.

One of those arrested was Mr. Nyamhunga, the president of the engineering union. Three others were on the regional executives of that union. Several are office-bearers of officially recognised workers committees. Several of those originally detained are leaders of ZANU in Kwekwe. One of those has been a ZANU(PF) member since he was 16, and was arrested 14 years ago in 1971 under the Smith white minority regime for leading opposition to the Pearce commission. His wife, also detained, is an elected leader of 10,000 ZANU members, yet the Zimbabwean information Minister claims they have no contact with ZANU or the trade unions.

All those detained gave wholehearted support to the liberation struggle against the white Rhodesian regime. For the information Minister to suggest that they support

"the installation of a neo-colonial coalition of reactionary tendencies in Zimbabwe"

is nothing short of the grossest slander.

Those detained, including my constituent and the constituent of my hon. Friend the Member for Hackney,

[Mr. Dave Nellist]

North and Stoke Newington (Mr. Roberts), have had no opportunity to speak in their own defence. That is why my hon. Friend and I, together with members of the families of those detained, and with the assistance of the South African Labour Education Project, with whom the 15 were co-workers, launched the Zimbabwean Trade Unionists Defence Campaign. The wide-ranging European and African support that that campaign has received shows the deep concern within the international labour and trade union movement about this attack on fellow trade unionists and the drawing back of the Zimbabwean Government from the Socialist tasks that they set themselves in 1980.

I have four specific questions for the Minister. In the early part of the detention, reports were reaching the families of the very bad conditions of Dr. Hemson, Mr. Du Toit, and the other 13 detainees. We have reports of lice-ridden sleeping bags in overcrowded cells, and inadequate sanitary arrangements. What are the Minister's latest reports about the conditions of detention in the security prison for those two detainees?

Secondly, have the Government demanded the immediate and unconditional release of Dr. Hemson? Will the Government make similar representations, at whatever level is possible, about Mr. Darcy Du Toit? Now that the 30 days detention without trial has passed, if the Zimbabwean Government decide to deport Dr. Hemson, Mr. Darcy Du Toit, their wives Trish and Anneke, and their three children, will the British Government honour the political asylum that they granted Mr. Du Toit several years ago and allow them, if they wish, to resettle in Hackney where they used to live before they went to Zimbabwe to become teachers?

In raising this debate, I am conscious of its international importance. Five weeks ago, when first hearing of the detention, I thought originally that it may have been the work of reactionary officials in the CIO—the security police—many of whom are hangovers from the Smith days. Perhaps it had been carried out without the strict control of the Government. My initial reaction, in early contacts with the Zimbabwean high commission, was to suggest that it should look to supporting the call of the ZANU youth congress for a purge of the CIO. Although that is still necessary, that is now no longer my main feeling.

The attempt by the Zimbabwean information Minister to smear those trade unionists with association with the Rhodesian regime of Ian Smith, the instructions from Harare to London to the high commission and the commissioner to give no statements and accept no delegations, and the fact that from Wednesday 13 March Prime Minister Mugabe took personal charge of those in detention—when all those things are taken together, the real reason for the detention becomes clear. A deep suspicion is growing among the workers and peasants in Zimbabwe against ZANU(PF)'s move towards a one-party state, the maintenance of much of the private sector and the huge tracts of prime farmland that have been left in white hands. In an interview with a magazine in recent weeks, a former guerrilla said:

> "We were the ones politicising the people during the war, but what the peasants see happening now is different from what we told them. We told the people they would have land and many things, but the people still have nothing."

In criticising that path, the 15 who were detained, including the two who remain incarcerated, are being used as scapegoats for the failure of ZANU(PF) to move towards genuine Socialism which, for those of us in the Labour party and internationally in the labour and trade union movement, is inseparable from full democracy, free trade union movement, the right to free speech and freedom from arbitrary detention.

I hope that in commenting on the specific case of my constituent Dr. David Hemson, his wife Trish and their one-year-old child the Minister will give reassurances about the conditions in which Dr. Hemson is being held and the likelihood of his early release. Are the Government demanding that he should be allowed to continue his normal life in Zimbabwe, where he was a teacher in a secondary school before he was detained by the security police? If the Zimbabwean Government were to deport Dr. Hemson and Mr. Du Toit, can the Minister assure me that the political asylum granted by the British Government several years ago to Mr. Du Toit will be honoured by the present Government and that, if the family so wish, they will be allowed to settle in Hackney?

1.41 pm

Mr. Ernie Roberts (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): I wish to add a few words to those of my hon. Friend the Member or Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist). I have already written to Mr. Mugabe on the matter because of my association with Mr. Mugabe before he became the leader of his country. I and others connected with the anti-apartheid movement and other movements were concerned about the need for Zimbabwe to have its independence. We hoped that it would achieve that independence, with our support. Having spoken with Mr. Mugabe at meetings in various parts of Britain, I felt that he would respond to a friendly approach from someone seeking to insure that justice was done and that those who had been detained would be released.

I have been advised that some of the detainees, including ex-constituents of mine, have been released and would be allowed to return to this country. As my hon. Friend has said, they will probably return to Hackney. Arrangements are already in hand to assist them with housing as far as we can, so that they can take up their lives again in this country.

Although I did not know them personally, I am advised by the members of my constituency party that the children were born in the United Kingdom and will therefore have the right to British citizenship. They should, therefore, have the special protection of the Government, and the Government's concern for their safe return to this country.

My constituency party has decided to apply all the pressure that it can to ensure that the detainees are released, and, in particular that Dr. Hemson should be released and allowed to return to the United Kingdom if he wishes. Those who will need help should receive help from us and, we trust, from the Government, on a humanitarian basis. On humanitarian grounds, whatever the legal situation may be, they should be allowed to return to this country if they wish. Hackney will be only too pleased to receive them.

We ask the Minister to use his good offices on behalf of the Government to ensure that Dr. Hemson and the others who wish to return to Britain are allowed to do so and receive the humanitarian respect to which they are entitled.

1.45 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): I wish to acknowledge the obvious concern of the hon. Members for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) and for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Mr. Roberts) about the position of their constituents presently in Zimbabwe.

It may be helpful if I set out the facts of this case as far as I am able. Mr. Hemson, a British subject, has been working in Zimbabwe since 1982 as an English teacher at a school in Harare. He was detained on 1 March under the emergency powers regulations. A number of other people, Zimbabwean and non-Zimbabwean, were detained at about the same time. Under the emergency powers regulations specific charges were not required or made, but we understand that Mr. Hemson's detention is in connection with an investigation by the Zimbabwean authorities into what they consider to be unacceptable political activities concerned with trade unions. A deportation order was served on Mr. Hemson on 13 March, but implementation of the order was subsequently suspended and Mr. Hemson is now held on an immigration warrant. The Zimbabwean authorities appear to be acting strictly in accordance with their law. We understand that their investigations into this case are not yet complete.

We have had full co-operation from the Zimbabwean authorities in discharging our consular responsibilities. Mr. Hemson is receiving regular visits, including visits from his wife and lawyer, and he was seen by our consul in Harare on 7, 14 and 21 March and on 2 April. He is in good health and made no complaints about his treatment in detention. He has received medical attention for a minor complaint. Our high commission is in frequent contact with the Zimbabwean authorities over the case. We know that they are aware of the public and parliamentary interest in it here, and of our hope that matters will be speedily resolved. In addition, we are keeping Mr. Hemson's relatives in Britain and South Africa informed on a regular basis.

Mr. Du Toit was also working as a teacher in Zimbabwe. Mr. Du Toit is a refugee from South Africa who has a British travel document issued under the 1951 United Nations convention on refugees. He is not a British subject and his travel document does not entitle him to formal British consular protection. Nevertheless our post has instructions to do what it properly can to help Mr. Du Toit as well as Mr. Hemson. Consular access to Mr. Du Toit has been granted informally on one occasion, on 14 March. He appeared to be fit and well.

Mr. Nellist: On behalf of Parliament, will the Minister now attempt to ensure that the consular officials may make a further visit? The last visit took place about three weeks ago. Some of the worst conditions reported referred to the cell in which Mr. Du Toit was being held. Will the Minister attempt to secure another informal visit so that we can reassure Mr. Du Toit's family about his well-being?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman will appreciate the difficulties. Mr. Du Toit does not have British status and we therefore have no right to claim consular access to him. However, we will do what we can to ensure that so long as he is in detention we have up-to-date information about his circumstances and the conditions in which he is living.

The hon. Gentleman asked whether, if Mr. Du Toit were released and able to leave Zimbabwe, he would be able to come to the United Kingdom. I understand that his permission to stay in the United Kingdom is currently valid until next October. Thereafter, he would have to apply to renew the permission, and that would be a matter for my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. However, he is at present entitled to come to the United Kingdom and could do so if he were released.

The question of the position of trade unions in Zimbabwe is one for the Zimbabweans themselves to resolve. We have no right to interfere. We can and do make our views known whenever appropriate and we try to help whenever we are asked. For example, within the framework of our aid programme for Zimbabwe, we hope to develop, in consultation with the Zimbabwean authorities, a limited programme of training courses in Britain as a way of providing some assistance to Zimbabwean trade unions. In addition, part of the funds allocated by the Overseas Development Administration to the TUC will be available for trade union training for Zimbabwe, again in consultation with the Zimbabwe Government. We are also involved in Commonwealth efforts to provide assistance within the framework of the Commonwealth Trade Union Council. Our assistance in this field, as in all others, is, of course, as it must be, given in consultation with, and with the agreement of, the Zimbabwean authorities.

One frequently hears, and no doubt the Zimbabweans themselves frequently hear, criticism of the Government in Harare for being too Socialist or not Socialist enough. I can only observe that that is a matter for the Zimbabwean Government and people. Zimbabwe is an independent country, free to determine its political and economic system for itself. It would not be right for Her Majesty's Government to express any opinion on what kind of Government Zimbabwe should have.

May I set out the Government's general policy on Zimbabwe. Our concern stems from our close historical ties with Zimbabwe, our shared membership of the Commonwealth, and the leading role played by the United Kingdom in bringing an end to the civil war in what was then Rhodesia and paving the way for an independent Zimbabwe. Important British interests are affected, in Zimbabwe itself and more widely as a result of Zimbabwe's influence in the region. Our aim now is to do what we can to encourage the development of stability and prosperity in a multiracial Zimbabwe. The purpose of our aid programme is to promote this objective, which we see as being in the interests of all Zimbabwean citizens and also important for the stability and prosperity of the wider area of southern Africa.

But it is important to recognise that this is a medium or even a long-term aim and that there are bound to be difficulties on the way. It is only five years since Zimbabwe emerged from a long and bitter civil war in which all sectors of society suffered greatly. Inevitably, progress since then has not been entirely smooth, but we think it important that the inevitable obstacles should not deter us from persevering with our longer-term efforts.

May I conclude by telling the hon. Gentleman and the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington that the Government recognise their full responsibility to provide what consular protection they can to any British citizen who is incarcerated in a foreign country. Where a British citizen is detained, we always make representations to the Government of that country that they should either bring charges and allow the person to be tried in

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open court, or he should be released if no charges are brought. We are applying exactly the same criteria to Mr. Hemson and, naturally, we hope that this matter will be satisfactorily resolved in the very near future.

Asbestos Waste (Vitrification)

1.51 pm

Mr. Sydney Chapman (Chipping Barnet): I am grateful for the opportunity of raising on the Adjournment what I believe to be an important subject, and I hope that the debate will give a wider platform to an exciting British technological breakthrough which renders an extremely harmful substance completely innocuous.

I need not remind the House that a most worrying problem in the building and other industries is the health hazard of asbestos products, not because those products are harmful in situ in a building, but because they are harmful when they are disturbed, damaged or dismantled, and when the waste products of asbestos are removed from a site, transported and disposed of.

It may be helpful if I briefly mention that there are three sorts of asbestos. There is white asbestos, whose principal use is in asbestos cement products, such as roofing, wall sheeting and down pipes. White asbestos, which is the least toxic sort, is generally safe until it is disturbed. The second type is brown asbestos, which was widely used in the 1960s as a fire safety spray on steel-framed buildings. Brown asbestos is not as hard as white asbestos; therefore, it is more easily disturbed. It is much more toxic.

The third type is blue asbestos, which is widely used for sound and thermal insulation in buildings, including the lining of air ducts. It is a very high temperature material and is used frequently in the insulation of boilers, not only in buildings but in ships. The House will know that ship breaking yards have a special problem, an example of which occurred at Faslane. Blue asbestos is the most toxic.

The current method of disposing of asbestos waste is that it must be double-bagged on the site and then transported to a suitable waste disposal site, where it is tipped and buried. The regulations state that it should be buried in 1 m of earth. Since for me imperial preference has a double meaning, I prefer to say that the regulations require that it be buried under 3 ft. 3⅜ in. of earth. The problem with the conventional method of double-bagging and dumping is that the asbestos waste remains toxic and is therefore still a health hazard. It is also in danger of being re-exposed or disturbed on the waste site at a later date. For example, during the construction of part of the M25 motorway, an asbestos waste site was discovered.

Recently, a new process was invented by the Sheffield firm of King, Taudevin and Gregson. I understand that it was invented by no less a person than the technical director of that firm, Dr. David Roberts, whom I had the great pleasure to meet in the House yesterday. Previously I had met the firm's finance director, Mr. Keith Hindle, and the managing director, Mr. Stuart Johnson.

The firm has invented a process which transforms asbestos waste into a completely harmless glass substance which is safe for all time. It is worth stating what that new process means. First, the harmful asbestos waste is vitrified on site. The vitrification of the waste makes it non-toxic and, therefore, completely harmless. The process removes any danger in the transporting and burying of asbestos waste. An added advantage is that there is no need to sterilise land when getting rid of the asbestos waste. Another gain is that the vitrification of the waste reduces its bulk. I am told that it reduces it to one fifth of its original size. If we allow for the volume and

area required for the double-bagging of asbestos waste, I am told that it can reduce the area needed for disposal to one tenth of the volume presently needed.

A further beneficial by-product of the process is that not only does it get rid of a harmful substance by making it non-toxic, but it produces something that can be used, albeit only as hard core for infill on a building site. Another small but significant advantage of the new process is that it can use, as part of the vitrification process, rejected, uncycled glass from bottle banks.

There is no doubt that this is a significant breakthrough. King, Taudevin and Gregson is the world's largest glass furnace manufacturer. It is worth pointing out that it not only won the Queen's award for export achievement in 1984, but that last month it was awarded the pollution abatement technology award for inventing the process. The award was organised by the CBI, the Department of the Environment and the Royal Society of Arts.

There is no need for me to do it, but it might be prudent now to say that I have no financial interest in that distinguished Sheffield company and, of course, it does not employ any of my constituents. I must declare an interest in such matters, because I qualified as an architect many years ago. Vanity — the placing of four extra letters after my name—requires me to remain a member of the Royal Institute of British Architects, and I am a fellow of the Royal Society of Arts.

This invention is a significant breakthrough. Cost must be a crucial factor in recommending that this process should be used. If the cost is very great, clearly it will inhibit the use of such a process. I recognise also that the cost assessment very much depends upon the amount of asbestos waste which has to be stripped and removed from a site. If, however, there is a large amount of asbestos on a building site or upon any other site—for example, a requirement to dispose of asbestos waste at the rate of 10 tonnes a day—there is no doubt that the cost of the vitrification process invented by KTG, including an assessment that the capital is on a four-year write-off, the manning of the plant, the electricity needed to power the plant and the recycled glass, will be about £130 per tonne.

Having checked the figures as carefully as I can, I believe that £130 per tonne could be half the conventional cost. I understand from inquiries I have made today that the cost of bagging and dumping the asbestos waste at Fulham power station worked out some time ago at £210 per tonne and that at West Thurrock power station, where there was a requirement to get rid of 4,000 cu m of asbestos waste, the cost worked out at £260 per tonne for bagging, transporting and dumping. My information is that the figure of £260 does not include the cost of stripping the asbestos.

The scale of the disposal of asbestos waste is a primary factor. There is much asbestos waste to be disposed of in buildings and other constructions. A conservative estimate is that we shall have to dispose of asbestos waste at the rate of 100,000 tonnes a year. At Fulham power station over 1,000 tonnes have to be disposed of. Greater Manchester has informed King, Taudevin and Gregson that it needs to dispose of 25 tonnes a day from its area. During the next few years a number of power stations will be decommissioned, most of them in the south-east of England.

An additional benefit of this newly invented process is that it provides options for how the asbestos waste can be treated. The plant could be put on site, with all the attendant savings. That is the most favoured option from the point of view of savings, where there is a large amount of asbestos waste to be disposed of. However, a temporary mobile unit could be placed on site to deal with small amounts of asbestos in sensitive areas where the health of those in the immediate area has to be monitored very carefully. In the case of other sites where the amount of asbestos waste is very small it could be transported to central units strategically located in different parts of the country.

The central unit or the temporary mobile units may be less cost effective than having the plant on the site. However, I believe that it is still competitive with current conventional disposal methods. I should very much like the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment to say whether he believes that the figure of £260 per tonne is too high.

Tremendous interest has already been shown in the new process. I believe that King, Taudevin and Gregson would wish me to say that my hon. Friend's Department has been extremely helpful, in particular Mr. Tony Sheils of the land waste department. At least 20 local authorities have expressed interest in the process. My hon. Friend may also be interested to hear that about 17 countries have been in touch with King, Taudevin and Gregson, including West Germany where, because of the lack of sites, there is an arrangement for asbestos waste to be exported for burial in East Germany. The cost is £1,500 per tonne. Therefore one understands why West Germany is deeply interested in this new process.

I had expected the Central Electricity Generating Board to be very interested in the new process, because potentially it is the largest client. However, I understand that after showing initial enthusiasm the CEGB rejected a trial scheme. I find this hard to believe and, if it is true, it is disappointing. Surely it is in the power stations which will have to be decommissioned that a cheaper and more effective system for making the waste harmless will be of the greatest economic benefit.

It would be wrong of me not to mention that there are other alternatives to the present conventional method, but I do not believe that they are half so good or half so effective as the process invented by King, Taudevin and Gregson. In the case of one scheme, I understand that the asbestos waste can be compressed to reduce its volume. Another system involves the encapsulation of asbestos waste either in cement or in a resinous material, but in those cases the asbestos waste is still toxic. Therefore its harm is not necessarily removed.

I have no doubt that the King, Taudevin and Gregson process is an important breakthrough. It could end the asbestos waste problem, which is a major environmental hazard. I am proud to say that a British firm has created this process. I ask my hon. Friend to use his good offices and his considerable authority not only to broadcast this achievement to local authorities and other potential clients but also—I think I am entitled to say this on behalf of the constituents of other hon. Friends as well as my own constituents — to consider seriously whether the regulations relating to the disposal of asbestos waste could be tightened up by means of a requirement to make the waste non-toxic. That is necessary on health and environmental grounds. I should like to think that I have demonstrated that there is a process by which the waste can be made non-toxic, and that on economic grounds it is practicable and reasonable to do so.

2.9 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. William Waldegrave): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Chipping Barnet (Mr. Chapman) for raising this important subject. It is appropriate that he should do so, because his commitment and expertise over a long period, even before he became a member of the Select Committee on the Environment, and his professional training as an architect give him insights into some of the problems resulting from the demolition or design of buildings.

I think that it would be useful if I filled in a little of the background. I shall have little to add to what my hon. Friend said, because his speech contained a wealth of accurate information.

It is estimated that about 6 million tonnes of asbestos has been imported into the United Kingdom over the past 80 years. Imports of asbestos are declining but in 1984 about 38,000 tonnes was imported, mainly for use in asbestos cement, friction materials and asbestos textiles. The amounts of asbestos waste arriving for disposal are substantial — about 120,000 tonnes per annum. Those levels are likely to continue for some years as asbestos materials are replaced by substitutes. The waste is often fibrous or dusty and must be handled properly. That leads directly to the manner of its disposal.

It may be helpful if I explain our general approach to the disposal of wastes; the treatment of asbestos is exceptional. We believe that a substantial proportion of domestic, commercial and industrial ordinary waste can be safely disposed of by controlled landfill. In many cases, that may be the best environmental option.

Only last week, I opened a symposium to launch the report of our landfill practices review group which has produced comprehensive guidance on the landfilling of wastes. I urged the authorities concerned to make sure that their standards are as high as they need to be, because some preliminary reports from the hazardous waste inspectorate give cause for concern. However, we rely equally on other methods such as incineration and chemical or physical treatment for wastes that need special approaches.

Most of the wastes for which we advocate disposal by landfill undergo dispersion and dilution or various forms of degradation within landfill, rendering them effectively harmless. Wastes that could pose long-term potential risks to man or the environment are not normally landfill. Asbestos is one of the exceptions.

Paradoxically, as I shall be agreeing with my hon. Friend, there is some evidence that the nature of even that asbestos waste is slowly changed for the better within landfills that also accept domestic and similar waste. It is due to the reaction of the leachate generated within those co-disposal landfills. However, those mechanisms are normally afforded only limited opportunity to work because asbestos waste has to be sealed in plastic bags to protect handlers. Therefore, the only benefit of the leachates is when the bags are broken in the landfill, which we do not want to happen.

The hazardous waste inspectorate has recently looked in detail at the practices adopted for the landfill disposal of asbestos and it reports that the main problem is the bursting of some bags during handling. There is a contradiction; there may be some degradation of asbestos through natural processes, but only in a way which conflicts with the manner in which it must be disposed of to ensure the safety of handlers.

The only environmental impact of any significance is the long-term hazardous potential of the waste within the landfill. That can be minimised by the proper recording of deposits, as required under the special waste regulations. All deposits have to be at suitable licensed sites, which are operated according to the licence conditions and the requirements of the Health and Safety Executive. However, the overall conclusion is that there are some drawbacks to the landfilling of asbestos waste and suitable alternative procedures are to be welcomed.

My Department is funding some research work at Harwell on the detoxification of asbestos waste. Preliminary results demonstrate its technical feasibility and work is being carried out to determine optimum conditions and operating factors. My hon. Friend asked whether we should now require detoxification before disposal. We cannot yet make a decision on that, but, in the light of progress on the various alternative procedures and the research work, we shall bear that in mind as a requirement for the future.

We understand that some alternative methods are available for the processing of asbestos waste prior to landfill. These mainly involve the conversion of the waste into a hard solid material, using a variety of bonding agents, some of which my hon. Friend referred to.

The WARD system — waste asbestos removal in drums—has recently been developed and has been used, or is being used, at some power stations. It consists of compressing asbestos waste inside steel drums and adding a bonding agent to make the waste a solid block within each drum.

Some other fixation processes, including Sealosafe and Chemfix, have been tried, but technical and economic reasons have prevented their wider use. They involve mixing asbestos waste with cement and a bonding agent such as pulverised fuel ash. A hard solid block results.

An older version, or forerunner, of the WARD system was called Black's blocking process. It involved compacting the asbestos waste after the addition of a bonding agent. The resulting hard block was wrapped in thick plastic sheeting, sealed and labelled before disposal by burial. Another method for disposal involves turning the waste into a slurry with water in a closed skip and depositing it in a disposal site.

As my hon. Friend rightly said, those approaches represent a different type of solution to the problem and, in one sense, a less complete solution than the KTG process which results in the waste being destroyed. I am happy to confirm that the company won a pollution abatement technology award under an admirable scheme set up under the impetus of my right hon. Friend the Member for Bridgwater (Mr. King) when he was a Minister at the Department of the Environment. I had the pleasure of signing the certificate sent to KTG in recognition of its achievement.

Everything now comes down to differing assessments of the economics of the process. I am still receiving some conflicting advice and some conflicting reports, including some from the CEGB, about the cost of the bagging and disposal of asbestos waste from power stations. I am not sure that the board would accept the figure that my hon. Friend gave.

Nevertheless, there is bound to be some uncertainty, because we are scaling up processes that have been operated on a pilot basis, and we would hope for economies of scale. Recent trials, as I understand it, have been at half a tonne per day, and I understand that they may need to be scaled by at least 10 times. My hon. Friend said 20 times.

Mr. Chapman: I think that if the plant were put in on a site and there was 50 per cent. utilisation instead of 100 per cent. it would be about as expensive as the conventional method. So there is clearly a graph of costs.

Mr. Waldegrave: That must be so. My Department would welcome further information on and assessment of the commercial viability, on which the speed of introduction of the process at least is bound to turn.

On the question of relative health hazards, it seems clear that these must be considerably less in the case of the Vitrifix process compared with all the operations leading up to landfill with a remaining asbestos waste of some kind. I understand, however, from the Health and Safety Executive that it too feels that it has insufficient information at present as to the likelihood of dust being involved in the process. No doubt this point can be considered further between the HSE and the company. It is an important point in assessing worker exposure during the process.

As I understand it, the economics of the Vitrifix process turn rather crucially on the cost of electricity because it is an energy-intensive process, as any high-temperature furnace process is bound to be. Therefore, as with many processed chemical industrial operations, it will depend on the loading of the process — whether it can be kept going—and on the cost of electricity.

I think that the KTG process is a very positive step and that my hon. Friend is indeed right to draw the attention of the House to it. My Department would welcome close consultation with and further information from the company, as would the HSE. Without going too far—and I hope that I shall not be in any way misinterpreted —I think that it would be a helpful development if one of the disposal authorities which has a large amount of asbestos to dispose of would consider taking seriously tenders from Vitrifix so that we can move to the next stage.

Obviously, that must be a matter for the decision of the authority or company involved, but from my Department's point of view it would be very interesting to see a bigger plant work so that we could assess it. The Department will be delighted to do anything it can — either itself or through the hazardous waste inspectorate—in the way of facilitating the transfer of information or ironing out any misunderstandings.

I end as I began by thanking my hon. Friend for raising the matter and congratulating the KTG people on the invention of the process, which has already been acknowledged by the entirely justified PAT award. I hope that over the next few years we may come to see that my hon. Friend is right in saying that this is a breakthrough in terms not only of the safe disposal of hazardous wastes but of British industrial achievement.

Rate-capped Authorities (Government Policy)

2.21 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): It is unfortunate, to put it mildly, that the House should have to be debating the issue of rate capping on the day on which it rises for Easter. The depths to which relationships between central and local government have fallen over the last six years are unprecedented. They have fallen, quite simply, because of the way in which the Government have sought continuously, year after year, to force local authorities to make cuts in their services and make staff redundant, compelling them to pass on the cuts in Government expenditure to local welfare services. Indeed, the Government have forced them to question the democratic basis on which they were first elected.

I will give a simple example of this. Six years ago—and indeed in 1982—the local authority in the area I represent, Islington, was able to elect its local council on a very clear manifesto which the council was quite able to carry out. Now, because of successive losses of grant from central Government and successive attacks on that local authority by central Government, the position is that if the grant were restored to the level it was in 1979 the ratepayers of Islington would this year be facing a very large rate reduction. Instead, they are faced with the dreadful choice of making cuts in their services and having losses of jobs or standing firm against the Government and trying to get some money back to maintain local services in Islington.

We now have a position in which a large number of local authorities have not set a rate for the financial year which has just begun. These include Camden, Greenwich, Hackney, Haringey, Islington, Lambeth, Lewisham, Southwark and Sheffield. It is no accident that those boroughs figure very high on the list provided by the Department of the Environment of the poorest communities in this country. Indeed, Hackney is Britain's poorest borough bar none.

There are also three authorities that have not set a rate this year because of the amount of money that has been taken away from them by central Government policy. They are Liverpool, Tower Hamlets and Newham. For those authorities upon which the Government have imposed rate capping, the cuts this year total £452 million. The Government want those authorities to make cuts in their services.

Those councils are being told to cut 12·3 per cent. of their budgets as between last year and this year. They have all considered the position very carefully. However, they have been placed in an impossible position. They wish to maintain their services, to keep faith with the people who elected them and to stick to the manifestos that they put before the people in 1982, but because of Government policy their wishes are being frustrated. The Government are trying to take away their opportunity to maintain services and to fulfil their manifesto commitments. Consequently, those authorities have not set a rate. Instead, they have asked central Government to return the grant that has been taken away from them in successive years since 1979. In London as a whole, the loss of grant to local authorities since 1979 amounts to more than £3

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billion. More than £500 for every person living in London has been taken away through loss of grant, cuts in services or increased rates to compensate for the loss of grant.

I shall outline briefly the situation facing my borough, Islington. The loss of grant this year, and the Government's decision affecting the council's budget this year, mean that the Government are saying that Islington's services can exist this year on £86·9 million. But the figure that the council gives, which is a minimal figure that does not go any way towards meeting many of the needs of the poorest people in the borough, is £94 million. Thus, there is a difference of 8·2 per cent.

If Conservative Members were councillors in Islington, Hackney or any of the other rate-capped areas, what would they do? Would they sit in the council chamber and calmly destroy those jobs, services and communities, or would they say, "No, our job is to speak up for the people of this borough and to obtain the resources that we need and deserve from central Government in order to do something about the appalling poverty, much of which is created by the Government's other policies."?

It has been calculated that if the borough council which I represent wished to carry out the Government's policies, 750 jobs would go this year. Those job losses would include those working on meals on wheels, those working as home helps and street sweepers, as well as those working in libraries. Indeed, every council department would be affected in some way by those job losses, and everyone in the borough would be affected by the loss of those services.

Where is the logic in sacking a home help, a meals on wheels worker or a street sweeper so that people can walk through filthy streets or see elderly people living alone, prisoners in their own homes because of the lack of social services? The same sort of logic is applied by the Government in every other area.

The borough of Hackney is just across the border from us. On any criteria, it is Britain's poorest borough. The loss of 12·9 per cent. of its budget this year is appalling even to contemplate. In Lambeth, 2,000 jobs at least would be lost if rate capping were carried out. In Southwark, 1,500 jobs would go. There would be carnage throughout London, Sheffield and the other areas affected if rate capping were carried out.

I am sponsored by a public service trade union, the National Union of Public Employees. Members of my union work largely for health authorities and local authorities. They work in all the difficult jobs at the sharp end. They deliver meals on wheels, sweep the streets, and collect dustbins. They do some of the most unpleasant, least glamorous but most important local government jobs. In the rate-capped authorities all those members' jobs are under threat. They ask what the logic can be of getting rid of their jobs, destroying their livelihoods and their hopes for the future when we all know that the work needs to be one, and when they are being threatened with privatisation and the loss of jobs to private enterprise companies. The sole motive of such companies in coming into those areas is not to help the poorest people but to make the fastest buck.

We have now come to the position where large numbers or local authorities have so far refused to set a rate for the forthcoming financial year. They have done so because they realise that, first, it is impossible for them to meet the cuts on which the Government are insisting, and secondly that, implicit in the Government's policy towards local government, is an attack on democracy itself. This has wider implications. That attack goes back to 1979, when the Government started asking for cuts in local government spending. Then they went on to telling, then they introduced the concept of a penalty clause, and then the concept of what the totals of expenditure of any one authority should be. Finally, in 1985-86, the Government are announcing what level of spending there has to be in selected local authorities.

If local authorities accept rate-capping limits, they are mortgaging the future, because next year the limits will be tighter, and the year after that even more so. It is not difficult for the Secretary of State for the Environment to come to the House, propose a change in the order and use the payroll vote to get it through. Rate capping can then suddenly affect not just a limited number of authorities in England, and all authorities in Scotland. It can quickly be spread to every local authority.

It is important for people to realise what the Government are doing in attacking democracy and taking finance away from inner city local authorities. People should also recognise that the implications of this run very deep. There is enormous support for the stance being taken by rate-capped authorities. I have never seen such large numbers of people demonstrating outside town halls as I have in the past few weeks, not in opposition to those local authorities but in support of them. I have probably been to more demonstrations than most people and I have never seen such support for local authorities — normally, people are critical of them. There is a turn-round in feeling and opinion, and the Government will rue the day that they introduced rate capping because of what it has done to the local authorities that are trying to provide services.

Yesterday, we saw an even more sinister movement. A judgment was made against the London borough of Hackney, in which the judge announced that there is a certain date by which the council must comply and set a rate. Thus, that judge has announced that he will invalidate the decision of two council meetings—two meetings of elected councillors carrying out a manifesto, who made a decision with the massive support of the people of that borough.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): Will my hon. Friend accept that the judge was decidedly uneasy about making that judgment, and made it clear that he did not like the idea of the Government putting the law courts in this invidious position because it is not a matter for the courts?

Mr. Corbyn: It is true that many people do not like the way in which the Government are putting them in an invidious position through their policies, when the Government do not have the guts to stand up and say what they mean and what they want doing about the crisis in local government.

Rate capping means the loss of money, and grants, and of control by locally elected councillors. It also means that, in the long run, the principle of the relationship between central and local government being one of partnership is thrown away, possibly for ever, but at least for as long as the present Secretary of State for the Environment and Government are in office. Instead of that partnership, there will be a dictatorial Government.

Why has the Minister refused so far to meet the leaders of the rate-capped authorities that would not set a rate? Secondly, why is he apparently refusing to meet the TUC, at its request, for a discussion about the crisis facing local government? When does he propose to meet the TUC, and when does he propose to make a statement to the House on this matter?

The issues of local government run far and wide. There are implications for every local authority in what is happening. The headless chicken atmosphere which surrounded the Government last weekend when they were running scared before the Scottish ratepayers will be repeated soon in England and Wales unless the Government are prepared to understand what is happening in the inner city areas and to mend their ways.

Yesterday the Secretary of State announced that he intended to claw back a further £123 million, mainly from county local authorities. That is a disgraceful decision. Fortunately the people living in the county areas will have an opportunity next month to vote in elections. They will vote solidly against central Government policies. They will vote against the anti-democratic nature and thrust of central Government in their relations with local government.

The Government will rue the day that they introduced the rates legislation. They will rue the day that they listed the rate-capped authorities and tried to take control of local government. Their policies will hit them back—slap in the face.

2.36 pm

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) for allowing me to intervene before the Minister replies to the debate. My hon. Friend and I have worked closely together with the London borough of Islington in defence of jobs and services in our area. I am pleased and proud to stand here today to support the actions of Islington council in defence of the people of the borough.

Last year when the Rates Bill was making its way through the House and when, night after night, we debated these matters in Committee, we warned the Government about the consequences of their actions. We are now beginning to see the fruits of those actions.

The way in which the Government have responded in the last few weeks has been particularly disgraceful. Because of the withdrawal of rate support grant, the operation of penalties, the rate limits imposed upon local authorities and because of concern for the people, authorities unable to set a rate have approached the Government through the Association of Metropolitan Authorities and the London Boroughs Association. The Government have refused to meet them for discussions. That is not a reasonable response. It displays a vindictiveness towards the authorities and the people that we have come to expect from this Government.

The same Government refused, in a similar vindictive manner, to meet the executive of the National Union of Mineworkers when it offered discussions without preconditions. The Government are now displaying the same vindictive and arrogant attitude towards certain authorities.

I have discussed the rate- capping issue with many of my constituents in the past few weeks. On behalf of my constituents and of the borough which represents them, I ask the Government to consider seriously whether, after all, they are prepared to sit down and have reasonable and responsible discussions. If they are not prepared to do that, they will stand condemned for the chaos and vindictiveness they are imposing on the people in the inner city areas.

2.39 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. William Waldegrave): The hon. Members for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) and for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) are well known for their opposition to the policy of rate limitation. A good deal of what we have heard today we have heard before. The hon. Member for Islington, North said that it was a pity that we were debating this matter on the last day of the Session. His hon. Friend put him right on that because we debated this matter throughout the larger part of last year. We have certainly had prolonged sessions in Committee and susequently.

Islington's budget for 1984-85 was more than £86 million. That represents an increase of more than 24 per cent. on the amount it spent in 1983-84. In that year, Islington exceeded its expenditure target by only 0·5 per cent. and incurred a mere £60,000 holdback of block grant. In 1984-85, by increasing its spending—without any regard to the consequences—by more than 24 per cent., it is exceeding its target by 22 per cent. and has incurred very significant holdback of £17·5 million. Indeed, it has forfeited all its grant and the rates have increased by 29·6 per cent. If it had spent at target, the rates could have fallen by almost the same amount.

The hon. Member for Islington, North spoke of the new announcement by the Secretary of State about grants for counties. That is a good line for the Opposition in the run-up to the county elections. I am astonished that John Carvel, one of the few local authority correspondents who actually understands local government finance, should, for the first time in his history, behave rather like what he would describe as someone from a less distinguished and more tabloid newspaper.

There is nothing surprising about the close-ending of grant. It happens every year and depends on whether there is an overspend—it usually reflects the overspend or underspend in large authorities. Every county treasurer will have been expecting that announcement and will have taken it into account in his budget. I do not blame John Carvel because I suspect that he did not write the headline, as though it was a great news story.

Islington ratepayers have seen the local rate increase from 59p in 1982-83 to 122·74p in 1984-85, an increase of 108 per cent. Moreover, in the past two and a half years Islington has increased its manpower by more than 9 per cent.

Against that background, the rate limit which the House approved for Islington is eminently reasonable. It is 112·07p. That represents a reduction of 8·7 per cent. on the 1984-85 poundage. It is intended to enable the council to spend this year at the same level in cash terms as its 1984-85 budget. I can see no possible cause for complaint. Indeed, Islington councillors also apparently have no cause for complaint. If they were dissatisfied with the proposed rate limit which the Secretary of State announced on 11 December they had the opportunity to make representations and seek agreement to a higher limit. They did make a point about their estimated penny rate product

[Mr. William Waldegrave]

for 1985-86, and the rate limit takes account of that point. But they have made no representations to us of the devastating cuts they now allege.

Indeed, I am not surprised that we have not heard any official talk of devastating cuts from Islington, because the scope for sensible pruning there is so great. That is what I am told by the journalists of *Time Out*, not a Government publication, which carried an interesting little piece last month. I shall just read it to the House. It stated:

"In these times of financial cutbacks and economic hardship, it is astonishing to discover Islington Council squandering £1·6 million of rate-payers' money tarting up its offices in the town hall. Not only were they perfectly adequate to begin with, but the work is being carried out using the most expensive wood on the market—American oak. Brand new office partitions are being put in, all covered in beautiful and costly hessian."—*[Interruption.]* I know that hon. Members do not like to hear things that do not fit in with their preconceptions, but it might do them some good to listen. The article continued:

"And rows of perfectly serviceable, custom made oak lockers have been smashed up and ripped out to make way for made-to-measure replacement. Admittedly, part of this hideous extravagance includes the cost of facilities being put in for the disabled."

Mr. Chris Smith *rose*——

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman must wait until I have finished the quotation from a magazine which, I have no doubt, if it had said something that suited the hon. Gentleman, he would have quoted in the House with the utmost approval.

The article continued:

"Which is splendid news for any disabled person working in, or visiting the town hall in future, provided he or she doesn't suffer severe damage negotiating Islington's neglected streets while getting there. If this is the kind of thing rate-capping is supposed to prevent, no wonder the local authorities on the hit list don't like it."

Mr. Chris Smith: I am surprised at the Minister using that quotation, because it was produced by his right hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government at a dinner held by the Islington chamber of commerce but three weeks ago. There is a wholly inaccurate representation in the article about the replacement of the heating system at Islington town hall and a wholly inaccurate figure and description of the work involved. His right hon. Friend was put right on that matter by the leader of Islington council. I am surprised that there has been no liaison between the Minister and his right hon. Friend.

Mr. Waldegrave: The contradiction of the story was not convincing. We are told by Opposition Members that there is no waste anywhere in Islington council, that it is, extraordinarily, a perfect council and that nothing could be done better by any other authority. Opposition Members argue that *Time Out* was well off the mark, as are Ministers, journalists and all others who criticise Islington council on any occasion.

Mr. Corbyn *rose*——

Mr. Waldegrave: I will not give way. The hon. Gentleman had an opportunity to address the House.

Islington and the other rate-limited authorities should have responded to rate capping by reducing that sort of waste. Instead, they have been demanding the return of the block grant which, they say, we have "stolen" from them. That argument is spurious, and they know it. The Labour party started to cut the grant in 1975-76. There is nothing sacrosanct about the 61 per cent. grant rate that we inherited.

We do not consider these councils entitled to put their municipal fingers in the taxpayers' pockets to fund their spending sprees. If they had spent in line with their targets, rate increases would have been modest. The example of other responsible authorities show what can be done. Rate increases by councils such as Islington are due overwhelmingly to the spending decisions of those councils, in full knowledge of the consequences for their grants and for the ratepayers.

Let us consider what has been happening. We had something called "Democracy Day," when all of these councils were going to demonstrate their opposition to the Government in what they said would be "an impressive show of unity." Unfortunately, that unity did not work —as usual in the Labour party—and south Yorkshire, ILEA and Merseyside took the opportunity of "Democracy Day" to fix precepts at or below the maximum limit that we had set. They were joined by Basildon.

What happened three days later? Reference has been made to a headless chicken. If one wanted a scene that was reminiscent of a number of headless chickens running about, it would have been the setting of the GLC rate, a scene which hardly enhanced the relatively low reputation of London's Labour leaders. The GLC decided to set its precept nearly 3p below the limit that we had set.

The decisions of those authorities came as no surprise to us. But they must have come as a bit of a shock to their ratepayers, who had been pounded with propaganda telling them that rate capping would decimate jobs and services. Indeed, many of those ratepayers must be asking why so much of their money was spent giving them totally misleading information about the effects of our policies.

The remaining authorities passed motions that no rate would be set. But as some of their friends in the upper tier authorities were quick to point out, they knew that they could postpone making a rate without immediate legal consequences. Indeed, the resolutions that they passed were carefully worded, all with expensive legal advice, to avoid legal consequences.

Last week, many of the authorities met again to discuss their rates. This time common sense broke out in Leicester and in Thamesdown, where legal rates were set. The remaining nine authorities—only half of the 18 in the original show of unity—again passed carefully worded resolutions not to make a rate. A good example was the resolution passed by Hackney council, which resolved to defer a rate-making decision while

"re-affirming its commitment to set a legal and practical rate in due course."

These councils have tried to justify their decisions to defer making rates by arguing that they were about to start negotiating with the Government—the usual story. First, they were going to have collective discussions with us. But my right hon. Friend made it clear in his reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Skipton and Rippon (Mr. Watson) on 14 March that there would be no negotiations on that basis.

Then they claimed that discussions were about to start through the AMA and ALA, even though my right hon. Friend wrote to Mr. Layden and Mrs. Hodge in terms which made it clear that the time for discussion of the Rates Act, the rate limits he had set and the rate support grant settlement for 1985-86 had passed.

The truth, as we have made abundantly clear, is that there will be no negotiations. The time for negotiation has passed, and the councils' anxiety to talk to us is in marked contrast to their reluctance to do so when they had the opportunity. Moreover, even if there were still time for those councils to make approaches, the demands that they are making would hardly form the basis of a realistic agenda.

They have been asking us to withdraw the Rates Act and to re-write the rate support grant settlement so that we could pay them substantial sums of money. They have asked for all their so-called "lost grant" back. They have deliberately made demands which they know to be unreasonable in an effort to make us appear inflexible and intransigent. If there was any doubt about that, the leaked "Blunkett report" made it clear that that was the objective.

Mr. Sedgemore: Is the hon. Gentleman really saying that there will be no negotiations, or is he saying that their might be negotiations if the terms are changed? Is he saying, before Britain's poorest borough goes back to court in a week's time, that the Government are adamantly refusing to negotiate with Hackney borough council?

Mr. Waldegrave: I make it absolutely clear that there will be no negotiations. If the council argues in court, on the advice of its lawyers, that it is waiting to set a rate because the negotiations are in train, that would not be true.

Referring to the prospect of non-existent negotiations on an unrealistic agenda as the reason for not making a rate is a very dangerous game to play. These councils know that, if they persist in their totally unjustified posturing, the consequences could be severe. If councillors are responsible for a loss to the council that is judged to be due to their own wilful misconduct, they can be surcharged; and if the loss amounts to more than £2,000, they will automatically be disqualified from holding office as councillors. If they are bankrupted, they would be precluded from standing for Parliament. For some of these people, that may be a telling consideration.

One hopes that councillors will be equally, if not more, concerned about the consequences for the areas that they are supposed to serve. Council employees will probably be the first to suffer. They will not be paid. Some of the more extreme shop stewards may be prepared to put up with that, but I am not sure that the same will be true of their members. Anyway, why should they go without pay in order to bolster the political aspirations of these militants? The councils' clients will begin to feel the effects. Of course, those who need the services most, the very people whom these councils claim to be protecting, would suffer first and suffer most.

It is the duty of all these councils to make a legal rate without further delay. It was helpful of the hon. Member for Islington, North to give me the opportunity to put that point clearly on the record. That is the view of Mr. Justice Woolf, who yesterday ruled that there were "no reasonable grounds" for Hackney's decision to defer setting a rate. It seems to be the view also of the hon. Gentleman's party, which decided yesterday, by a two to one majority, that it would not support councils that refused to set rates. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman backed another loser in this matter.

Let me end by referring to a letter sent, at ratepayers' expense, to the unfortunate ratepayers of Southwark. The letter advises the member to continue paying rates at this year's level. The council has told its ratepayers that it is "negotiating with the Government", which, as I have explained, is totally untrue. The council has not told its ratepayers that last year's borough rate is 25 per cent., or almost 37p in the pound, higher than the limit that we have set the council. I say to the ratepayers of Southwark, "You have no obligation whatsoever to pay any rate until a rate has been set legally for the current year." Last year's rate cannot be a legal rate in Southwark, and this year's rate will be considerably lower.

I am grateful to the hon. Member for Islington, North for giving me the opportunity to put some of these matters clearly on the record. I have every hope and every confidence that these councils will shortly set legal rates because they, like the others, recognise the position in which they find themselves.

Teaching (Pay Dispute)

2.53 pm

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): In my maiden speech nearly six years ago, I said that I was a member of the greatest profession—teaching. I hold to the view that the teaching profession is the greatest profession. The time has come for the House to face the consequences and the effects of the current teachers' strike. I invite my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State to respond to my points on the important issue of the teachers' pay dispute.

I was a teacher for 23 years and for seven years was in charge of a large mixed school of more than 2,000 students. Millions of pupil learning days have already been lost because of the current wave of teachers' strikes. The schools affected include special schools. I know of two schools for maladjusted children and another school for educationally subnormal children that were recently closed for three days. It is public knowledge that hundreds of schools have been closed for three days, and sometimes more, with a consequential loss of education for our children. It is a very serious matter.

Before we break up for our Easter recess, it is important to consider the schoolchildren who have just broken up for their Easter holidays. However, whereas we can be sure, when we come back from our welcome break, that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will be seated where you are in your Chair to keep us in good order and to teach us good order, the children can be far less certain that their teachers will be in front of the class to teach them. Between now and then there will have been the Easter conferences of the major teacher unions. I still hope that new thinking will prevail at those conferences. A few hot-heads, claiming to represent all the teachers—which they do not—may seek to step up their disruptive campaign.

There is strong pressure among some teachers on their coleagues not to supervise the examinations that the children will be taking in the spring and summer, and not to continue to prepare them for those examinations. It is a very serious matter and I cannot believe that teachers will do it. If they do, the effect will be to damage those children for life in a massive way, and I do not think that such action could possibly be justified. I appeal to members of the teaching profession not in any circumstances to do such a thing, and to put the children first, as they have always done traditionally.

It needs to be said loud and clear that the purpose of a few teachers seems to be to damage the education of our children. From my experience, most people are genuinely and deeply upset at what is happening. It is the purpose of the hot-heads to disrupt the smooth running of the schools. It is their purpose to cause lessons to be cancelled and to see schools close altogether for several days a week. If they succeed in furthering their efforts, they will deeply damage the education of the children in those schools. Indeed, I suppose that unless they can damage and disrupt our children's education, there is no point in their taking the action. If the withdrawal of good will and of cover for absent colleagues and walking out from classes had no effect, no one would take any notice, so one has to see the rationale of the situation from that point of view.

Therefore, it is totally disingenuous of some teachers' leaders to claim that it is not the intention of the teachers to harm the children by the strike. By definition, children are deeply damaged by those actions. Some will never recover in their lives. We must face that possibility, and so must my former colleagues in the profession.

All teachers must be professionals first and last, as most are. They must put the children's education first and last. That is what is involved in a professional approach to education. The teacher must be a professional first and last. As I said earlier, in my view it is the greatest profession of all, and that must be the teachers' approach.

My first point, which I cannot emphasise too strongly, is that, no matter how justified the teachers' pay claim may be, and no matter how annoyed, provoked, angry or lacking in morale they may be as professional people—or would-be professional people — there can be no justification for strike action or any other form of disruptive action. It is totally wrong in principle.

My memories of teaching go back a long way. I remember in 1965 the teachers' strike at the William Penn comprehensive school in south London. It was then a school of about 1,100 boys. Twenty-five very fine schoolmasters walked out for a one-day strike. They were members of the National Association of Schoolmasters, which was not represented on the Burnham committee and did not seem to be able to achieve representation on that committee. The strike was intended to force that representation, and it achieved it. At the time, that action seemed to have much justification. It was taken by dignified men. Looking back, I believe that it was the thin end of a wedge, which has led to the present wave of strikes, with all the damage to our children.

I cannot emphasise my first point too strongly. However justified the teacher's pay claim might be, no matter how annoyed, provoked, angry or lacking in morale they might be as professional or would-be professional people, there can be no justification for strike action or for any other form of disruptive action which damages the children. It is wrong in principle.

We have heard many protests from the Labour party and the alliance whose members have been clamouring to support the teachers in their claim for higher salaries. Many have said inside and outside the House that we have to go back to the Houghton award of 1974 and achieve such a standard again. I was a teacher at that time, and was paid that award. I remember it well. I also remember very well that it was eroded under the Labour Government. The Lib-Lab pact also occurred between 1974 and 1979. I do not wish to be tendentious, but it seems to me to be the deepest hypocrisy for the Labour party and the alliance to say that they have supported the Houghton level of salaries when under their leadership that level was eroded. Since the Conservative Government came to power in 1979, the level of teachers' pay has improved by 9 per cent. in real terms——

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Greenway: I am sorry, but I shall not give way.

If teachers' salaries have improved by 9 per cent. under the Government, no one can be complacent about that because basically it is not good enough. However, at least it is reasonable for the Government to say, "That erosion did not take place under our Administration. It happened under the Labour Government." We challenge the hypocrisy of the Labour party when it tries to wriggle away from that fact. That must be said, but I do not say it in a

tendentious spirit because I wish teachers' salaries to be improved — they need to be. However, I question whether the local authorities and the Government will find an extra 12 per cent. this year. I wonder whether the teachers have set out on a realistic quest in seeking such an improvement.

The teachers are only too well aware of that fact. The ordinary classroom teacher, who is the backbone of the profession, knows only too well that the present disruptive action will not lead to a vastly greater amount of money, and many have told me so themselves. Perhaps that is why their morale is at a low ebb. Their own leaders are asking them to take action that they know is unprofessional. It is counter-productive in achieving the end that they seek, which is more pay. Unfortunately, the public are alienated. It is sad to see a great profession less loved by the public, by parents and by children — and that is suggested by the response of some members of the public — than it traditionally has been. There is no greater example of the profession than yourself, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You were a veritable Mr. Chips in your day and gave a great deal to the profession.

Even if the teachers' action is not stepped up, it is wrong in principle and in practice. I say that sincerely. I realise that teachers have a right to protest and must find some way of expressing their feelings, but striking is not the way.

What is the answer? I appreciate that it is unlikely that my hon. Friend will be able to give me many answers today. He will not be likely to say anything that might rock the boat in the present attempt to start the negotiations again. I hope that the negotiations will be successful. They need to be. A settlement of this terrible situation is keenly sought by us all. My hon. Friend may be able to do little more than rehearse the arguments and outline the current situation once more. However, I hope that he will be able to say something.

I should like to voice some of the things that many teachers are thinking and saying. I was a teacher in London, which is not always the easiest of assignments. I know how very hard a teacher has to work and how inadequate is the financial reward that most teachers receive. One must bear that clearly in mind. It is essential that teachers should be paid at a level that enables them to have the self-respect to which they are entitled as professional people, especially if they renounce the right to strike because of the damage that it does, although their rate of pay should not be ruinous to the ratepayers and the taxpayers.

We should start by conceding that there is some merit in the teachers' case; there is no question about that. In particular, there should be more pay for the good teacher at the chalk face who, in my experience, has always been under-rewarded. It is difficult adequately to reward the good teacher while not overpaying the terrible ones — and there are a few terrible teachers, too.

The problem has faced successive Governments and successive local government employers. Even if one considered that starting pay at present was not too unreasonable, pay stays at that level for far too long. It takes far too long to reach the higher levels, and those levels are not high enough when they are reached. No recognition is afforded either to the quality of teaching or to the scarcity value of the teacher. In short, the salary structure seems to be all wrong. A good middle-aged head of department or senior teacher should enjoy a better salary and a better standard of living than he does at present. Other teachers, too, should enjoy a better standard of living, but the job of head of department or senior teacher is the goal of many teachers. Once the teachers reach that goal, it should represent a proper and better reward. His or her contemporaries at university who now work in other occupations may work no harder or longer — indeed, most will not — but they enjoy a considerably better standard of living. It is extremely unfair.

I believe that the case is mainly for salary restructuring, and perhaps for relating pay to performance. That is the only way of rewarding the extra good teacher. There is probably also a case for employing fewer teachers as rolls fall, but paying those whom we retain a much better salary.

The constant improvement in pupil-teacher ratios, which is now the best ever—the Government can take credit for that — has not been matched by a commensurate improvement in the quality of education. We must have a wide and searching debate about what the ideal pupil-teacher ratio should be. It will vary among teachers, because some teachers could teach 100 children brilliantly while others could not teach one.

The improvement in the pupil-teacher ratio has been expensive in cash terms. Has not the time come to reconsider the matter and perhaps to spend money not on even better pupil-teacher ratios but on better teachers? All this is for negotiation, but how can we have that if one side refuses to negotiate? Unfortunately, the NUT refused the 4 per cent. pay offer. It then refused the offer of arbitration, having fought so hard for arbitration last year. Its representatives walked out of the restructuring talks, but I understand that the union is still interested. It has even refused conciliation, but eventually it must negotiate — if not now, then later. The later that happens, not only will more damage be caused to children, but the teachers will have done more damage to their standing in the public eye.

If the NUT refuses to negotiate, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said, the Government may have to impose a solution. If that happens, what are the Government's intentions? Will there be a proper appraisal of teachers' performance? If that is envisaged, we must ensure that such appraisal is conducted not only by headmasters—we do not want a creeps' charter—but by teachers' peers and even their juniors, as well as others. Will the Government consider the relation of pay to performance, and the reward of teachers not just for time served but for their ability to teach? Will they reduce the number of teachers, increase the salaries of more senior staff and toughen the procedures for getting rid of incompetent teachers? Cannot the teacher be better valued in society now on the basis of greater public esteem? Above all, we should reward the good teacher.

The pay dispute must stop sooner or later, and the sooner the better. We need a two or three-year strike-free agreement. The recent habit of striking and withdrawing from voluntary and some professional activities once a year damages children, schools and teachers, and I know well that it is extremely upsetting for them. I hope that sooner rather than later the teachers will get terms that they can accept. If they leave it until later, the negotiations will not go as well. They will attract more odium from an angry public who may have less sympathy in future with any grievances that the teachers may have.

[Mr. Greenway]

I hope that the matter can be settled and that teachers can return to their central place in society. They are respected and loved by children, parents and all members of society for the honest job that they try to do. Let no one forget that it is a great and noble profession.

3.15 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Bob Dunn): I should like to take this opportunity to thank my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) for raising the important issue of the teachers' pay dispute and the effects of their industrial action. The House always listens with a great deal of interest to my hon. Friend's words because of his long experience in the education service. During his six years in the House he has held high office in a number of educational organisations, both within our party and outside. I thank him again for his comments.

I shall deal a little later with the effects of this action on schools, pupils, parents, teachers themselves and society in general, but I should like to begin by setting out some of the background to the negotiations on teachers' pay.

The Remuneration of Teachers Act 1965 provides that the Secretary of State shall constitute one or more committees to consider and make recommendations on teachers' pay. The Burnham primary and secondary committee has therefore been established for the purpose of considering school teachers' pay. The management panel of the committee comprises representatives of the employers—that is, the local education authorities—and of my right hon. Friend. The teachers' panel comprises representatives of the teacher associations. It is for the Secretary of State to make orders to give statutory effect to the committee's agreed recommendations.

Although the Secretary of State's repesentatives have a place within the management panel of the Burnham committee, they do not constitute a majority, and it is not therefore possible for my right hon. Friend, through them, to impose his will upon the management panel. Still less of course is it possible for him to impose his will on the Burnham committee as a whole, since any resolution would need to secure the approval of the teachers' panel. There are those who argue that my right hon. Friend should somehow step in to resolve the dispute. It will I hope be clear from what I have said that that is not open to him. The Burnham committee is a negotiating body and can proceed only by way of agreement between management and teachers.

The present position, as the House will know, is that in response to the teachers' claim for £1,200 for all—putting about 12·5 per cent. on the pay bill — the management made teachers an offer of a 4 per cent. increase. This was rejected. It then offered arbitration. This, too, was rejected. It offered to resume talks on structure reform broken off by the teachers. This was rejected, too. Exploratory meetings between both panels and the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service have taken place, and ACAS is pursuing the prospects for conciliation. We must wait and see how this initiative fares.

In rejecting these various offers, the teachers have said that they want to go back to 1974 and the salary levels established by the Houghton committee. This backward-looking yearning for a "golden age" is misconceived. Let me give the facts. The "level" established in 1974 hardly warrants the word "level". It had already been eroded by 1979. In no small measure this erosion was caused by public sector pay settlements like Houghton which came in a flock at that time. The rest is history — the International Monetary Fund and Labour's pay policy. But history is remembered only selectively and some union leaders would have their members forget everything but the "golden age" and the Houghton "level". I must dispel this illusion and remind the House that inflation in the mid-1970s was running at about 20 per cent. a year. This Government have no intention of returning to that self-perpetuating and self-defeating inflationary spiral. It is not a philosophical question of what a teacher is worth. This Government and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State have the highest regard for the majority of teachers committed and dedicated to their difficult job. It is a question of economics. We cannot go back to paying ourselves more than the nation can afford. I say again, therefore, that the teachers' "back to Houghton" claims are quite unrealistic.

As to the possibility of arbitration, in offering the teachers arbitration, the spokesman for the management panel made it plain that he was doing so because of what the teachers' panel spokesman called the "unbridgeable gap" between the teachers' claim and the management panel's offer. Arbitration is not an ideal solution. The Government have made it plain that they cannot suspend economic laws; no additional resources will be made available to local authorities to finance an arbitral settlement. The fact is that no arbitrator can conjure up resources out of thin air to finance a pay settlement that is beyond the employers' capacity to pay. The teachers do not differ from other employees in this respect. Resources are finite, and what is spent on pay is not available for spending on goods and other services.

My right hon. Friend does not undervalue teachers. He recognises both the importance of the job that they do, and the dedication with which the great majority perform their difficult task. He is well aware of diminished career and promotion opportunities in the wake of falling pupil numbers. Career prospects for capable and effective teachers are much diminished. The present pay and career structure was relevant and appropriate 10 or 20 years ago, but there is a widespread recognition that reform is now needed. That is why my right hon. Friend has consistently encouraged the employers and the teachers to consider together the possibility of structural reform, and he has consistently made clear his willingness to consider any proposals put to him. If he is satisfied of their educational merit, and considers them affordable in present economic circumstances, he has made it plain that he would be prepared to put them to his Cabinet colleagues and seek their support for any necessary additional resources. At the same time, he has emphasised that he cannot guarantee the results.

My right hon. Friend has given the teachers and employers a clear lead on the direction in which he believes reform is necessary. At a time of reduced promotion opportunities, he looks to reforms that would link pay more directly with performance. That does not mean a crude system of payment by results. It means a sensitive and objective assessment of all aspects of teachers' performance with a view to improving teaching

quality by means of well-informed and, therefore, more soundly based decisions on induction, in-service training, support and counselling, professional and career development, deployment and promotion. It means greater incentives to achieve good performance and more help and encouragement for those encountering difficulty.

The Secretary of State believes that a reform based on such principles would offer improved rewards, better morale and increased job satisfaction, and, of course, enhanced status and esteem. Together with other policies and initiatives for better schools, which I need not rehearse here, such reform could make a real contribution to higher educational standards in our schools. I know that both sides of the House share that view.

This is not easy and my right hon. Friend has never pretended otherwise. But instead of grappling with the problem, the leaders of the biggest of the unions have taken the teachers out of the structure reform discussions, and led them to disrupt and damage children's education, buoyed up by the false expectations aroused by an unrealistic pay claim. This is an appropriate time, on the eve of the teacher unions' Easter conferences, to urge each and every teacher to recognise the country's economic circumstances, and to look for realistic and affordable solutions — the only ones offering any prospect of success. They will achieve nothing and persuade no one, least of all my right hon. Friend, by their present course of disruption.

My right hon. Friend's concern is above all for the quality of education provided for pupils and improvement in teaching quality can be wholly consistent with the interests of the teachers in better career prospects. Central to the Secretary of State's policies for improved teaching quality is the development of more formal and systematic arrangements for the appraisal of teachers' performance. He hopes that the teachers and employers can negotiate such arrangements into place. He has set aside resources to support research and development in the field. The Department is consulting the unions and the local authorities on how progress on appraisal might be made in the context of the better career development and management of teachers. But my right hon. Friend is acutely aware that, two years after the publication of the White Paper entitled "Teaching Quality", in which the Government set out their commitment to performance appraisal, we are scarcely any nearer agreement. In those circumstances, it is plainly incumbent on him to consider all possible means of securing his objectives. It is against that background that we have announced in the White Paper entitled "Better Schools" our intention to seek power to make regulations on appraisal. Indeed, in that White Paper we have said much that has been warmly welcomed on both sides of the House and in the education service about where we should be in the next decade and after, leading on to the 21st century.

I know that Labour Members have shared our interest and supported the claims and the points made in the White Paper "Better Schools" and have not disagreed about the main thrust of the arguments contained therein. We have been used to receiving the constantly reiterated views that ever more resources are necessary and essential. I am, of course, grateful for any comments that Members of the Opposition may care to make about the policies contained in our White Paper. It must be hard for the Opposition to make a speech condemning what we have done in the past six years and what we intend to do over the next 10 years and more. All I know is that the arguments which they put forward in their speeches both in the House and outside have led us to the view that we are content to receive their support in what we are doing. And of course I am grateful that the hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice), who leads the Opposition on these matters, is always fair and even-handed in what he says and what he has to do.

Mr. Radice: The hon. Gentleman is not.

Mr. Dunn: I do take exception to that. The hon. Gentleman knows that I try to understand the points that he makes.

Mr. Radice *rose*—

Mr. Dunn: No. I have got a lot to say and it is my speech.

I have always listened with care to what the hon. Gentleman has had to say. I think that he represents a more moderate voice on the Opposition Benches and I hope that he will continue for a lot longer in his present role on those Benches—certainly not on these.

My hon. Friend, in moving the motion, has drawn attention to the widespread disruption that is being caused by the teachers' industrial action. Throughout England and Wales hundreds of thousands of children have had their schooling dislocated. Many schools have had to close altogether for up to three days at a time and many more have been unable to provide all their pupils with uninterrupted education. Parents have had their working and domestic arrangements disrupted, as their children have been sent home not only at lunchtimes but for part of the time tabled school day. As so often with industrial action, the hardest hit tend to be those who are worst placed to cope with additional problems—single-parent families, families least able to meet the costs of extra travel for their children and so on.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Order. I express the hope that Members and staff will have a quiet and peaceful recess.

It being half past Three o'clock, Mr. Deputy Speaker adjourned the House without Question put till 15 April, pursuant to the Resolution of the House of 26 March.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 25 March 1985

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Forth asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what estimate he has made of any change in the level of support within the common agricultural policy for dairy products, cereals, beef and sheepmeat, respectively, which may result from the early entry of Portugal and Spain to the European Economic Community.

Mr. MacGregor: The accession of Portugal and Spain to the European Community will not of itself affect the levels of support for these products under the common agricultural policy.

European Community (Food and Wine Exports)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the total volume of European Economic Community exports of food and wine, by category, to the Soviet Union and to Eastern Europe, respectively, in the most recent annual period for which figures are available; and what were the comparable figures in each of the previous 10 years.

Mr. MacGregor: The following tables provide the information requested for the years 1976 to 1983 together with the latest available figures for 1984. Information is not readily available on a consistent basis for years prior to 1976 or for annual periods other than calendar years.

European Community† exports of the main agricultural commodities to the Soviet Union

'000 tonnes

	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	Jan-June 1984
Wheat	*	0	*	5	576	857	1,573	3,822	1,868
Barley	439	*	405	215	222	788	6	610	*
Wheat flour	*	0	0	0	330	598	596	178	185
Rice	*	11	110	24	59	*	*	*	*
Malt	98	31	45	107	125	198	140	227	59
Wholemilk powder	4	8	*	9	35	47	25	1	*
Skimmed milk powder	20	0	0	0	*	0	*	0	*
Condensed milk	0	*	0	*	0	*	*	*	*
Butter and butteroil	0	49	21	135	142	*	*	40	25
Beef and veal	24	3	0	22	97	98	67	112	72
Pigmeat	*	0	*	5	*	2	0	5	*
Poultrymeat	18	62	6	77	67	86	46	46	*
Sugar, total (white equivalent)‡	236	253	38	225	818	728	1,092	786	548
of which refined sugar	185	253	2	225	649	580	896	644	414
Wine	*	*	10	50	132	104	135	63	25

Source: Eurostat.
* Less than 500 tonnes.
† 1976-80: EC9; 1981-84: EC10.
‡ Includes raw sugar converted to white sugar equivalent: 1 tonne raw sugar = ·92 tonnes white sugar.

European Community† exports of the main agricultural commodities to Eastern Europe (excluding USSR)‡

'000 tonnes

	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	Jan-June 1984
Wheat	755	1	11	760	1,880	2,987	1,986	1,787	1,067
Barley	330	43	1,959	1,801	1,580	1,241	51	154	44
Wheat flour	*	4	*	*	6	65	129	23	*
Rice	15	7	14	30	15	65	31	10	6
Malt	48	9	0	1	0	*	0	1	*
Wholemilk powder	0	*	*	3	*	2	4	1	*
Skimmed milk powder	5	81	16	21	6	*	1	*	1
Condensed milk	0	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Butter and butteroil	1	5	8	16	15	72	40	7	*
Beef and veal	23	31	21	57	122	136	53	45	31
Pigmeat	*	4	*	*	7	44	8	26	2
Poultrymeat	*	*	1	*	2	19	27	12	4
Sugar, total (white equivalent)‖	15	95	11	10	32	191	60	18	1
of which refined sugar	15	27	11	10	31	191	60	6	1
Wine	18	15	14	16	17	21	27	15	9

Source: Eurostat.
* Less than 500 tonnes.
† 1976-80: EC9; 1981-1984: EC10.
‡ German Democratic Republic, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Albania.
‖ Includes raw sugar converted to white sugar equivalent: 1 tonne raw sugar = ·92 tonnes white sugar.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish a table showing the amount of food and wine exported by the European Economic Community to the Soviet Union in the most recent six-month period for which figures are available and the average unit value of these sales, expressed in pound sterling per ton, on the same basis as his reply to the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Terlezki) on 2 February 1984, *Official Report*, column 319.

Mr. MacGregor: The information requested is set out in the following table:

European Community exports of the main agricultural products to the Soviet Union

	January to June 1984	
	Quantity '000 tonnes	*Average unit value* £ per ton*
Wheat	1,868	105
Barley	†	‡
Wheat flour	185	143
Malt	59	151
Wholemilk powder	†	1,609
Butter and butteroil	25	1,037
Beef and veal	72	784
Pigmeat	†	845
Poultrymeat	†	639
Sugar (white equivalent)	548	157
of which, refined sugar	414	163
Wine	25	55

Source: Eurostat.

* Converted from ECU at average market rate of exchange £0·585/ECU.

† Less than 500 tonnes.

‡ Not available.

European Community (Surplus Foodstuffs)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his reply of 14 March, what is his estimate of the extent to which the £20 million per day spent by the European Economic Community on the storage and dumping of surplus foodstuffs in 1984 will be exceeded or reduced in 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: As the 1985 Community budget has not yet been adopted, it is not possible to give a firm estimate of expenditure this year on commodities in structural surplus.

Farmers (Diversification)

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what finance has been allocated to farmers from European Economic Community resources to promote diversification from farming to tourism and other industries; and when these funds will be available for payment.

Mr. Jopling: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

THE ARTS

Budget Implications

29. **Mr. Freud** asked the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State answering in respect of the Arts if he will make a statement on the implications of the Budget for the Arts.

30. **Sir David Price** asked the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State answering in respect of the Arts what effect he estimates the Budget statement of 19 March will have upon the public and private funding of the arts, respectively.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend announced a package of measures to promote employment, which should enable arts bodies to make more productive use of their subsidies.

I believe that the announcement of increased relief at the higher rates of tax for convenants to charities will prove a valuable incentive to private support for the arts.

Arts Council (Administration)

31. **Mr. Tony Banks** asked the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State answering in respect of the Arts if the Minister for the Arts will undertake an inquiry into the administration of the Arts Council.

Mr. Waldegrave: No.

ENVIRONMENT

Local Authorities (Capital Receipts)

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the rules he has imposed constraining the use by local authorities of their capital receipts, new and cumulative, in each year from 1981-82 to 1985-86, most recent arrangements.

Mr. Patrick Jenkin: The Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 provides for the rate of use by local authorities of capital receipts to be regulated by prescribing what proportion of different classes of receipt may be used to enhance an authority's capital spending permission in any year.

From the coming into force of part VIII of the Act on 1 April 1981, proportions were prescribed for local authorities in England as follows:

—for receipts from the sale of dwellinghouses normally let or available for letting, other than those disposed of on shared ownership terms, 50 per cent.;

—for receipts from the repayment of advances for the acquisition or improvement of a dwellinghouse, 50 per cent.; and

—for receipts from the repayment of grants and advances to housing associations, 1 per cent.

From 1 April 1982 the proportion of 50 per cent. was revoked in respect of receipts from the sale of dwellinghouses normally let or available for letting where the dwellinghouse was not held under part V of the Housing Act 1957 or was disposed of under a homesteading agreement.

From 1 April 1983 a proportion of 50 per cent. was prescribed in respect of receipts from the sale of land (including buildings and structures on land) not held under the Housing Acts and of vehicles, vessels, plant, machinery and apparatus; anf from the repayment of grants and advances not made under the Housing Acts.

From 1 April 1984 the proportion of 50 per cent. in respect of receipts from most sales of dwellinghouses and from repayments of advances for the acquisition or improvement of a dwellinghouse was changed to 40 per cent.

From 1 April 1985 that proportion of 40 per cent. becomes 20 per cent. less; the proportion of 50 per cent.

for most non-housing receipts introduced in 1983 becomes 30 per cent.; and a proportion of 30 per cent. is introduced in respect of receipts from the sale of undeveloped housing land and of dwellinghouses normally let or available for letting disposed of on shared ownership terms or under a homesteading agreement.

Authorities will continue to be able to use receipts arising from low-cost home ownership schemes such as building under licence, build for sale and purchase for resale, in full to cover the immediate cost incurred under such schemes. The position remains that no prescribed proportion applies to such receipts. Accordingly, authorities have been and remain free to use such receipts in their entirety in any year to enhance their spending permission.

Where there are prescribed proportions, they apply to receipts accruing in the year in question and to those accumulated in earlier years.

While the rules properly constrain the amounts which authorities may spend, they do not prevent them from applying the cash from capital receipts at any rate they choose for any other purpose to which capital monies may properly be applied, for instance, the repayment of debt, internal lending, or other such purposes.

Environment Ministers Council

Mr. Malone asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make a statement about the outcome of the Council of Environment Ministers meeting on 20 March.

Mr. Waldegrave: I led the United Kingdom delegation at this meeting at which the principal item discussed, as on 7 March, was Community action to set new limits for vehicle emissions.

After prolonged discussion, the Council finally agreed in principle to the framework for a new directive which will balance industrial and consumer factors with the need for increased environmental protection. This agreement represents a major improvement on European vehicle emission standards, and will keep open good opportunities for the export of United Kingdom manufactured motor vehicles to the Community.

Each category of vehicle will have standards appropriate to that category. In industrial terms this means that expensive three-way catalytic converter technology may now be required only for large vehicles over 2,000 cc; medium cars (1,400-2,000 cc) will have standards achieveable by simple lean burn technology combined with oxidation catalysts (not three-way catalysts) or comparable cost-effective technology; and present limits for small cars (below 1,400 cc) will be tightened from 1990 as an interim stage before further emission reductions to be agreed in 1987.

It was also agreed that individual member states—such as the Federal Republic of Germany—with serious environmental problems will be able to start a limited incentive scheme from July this year to encourage the voluntary purchase of cars meeting the new limits.

Precise limit values have yet to be settled. The Council decided that this work was to be completed by the end of June. The work as basis for this will go ahead in consultation with technical experts from the motor industry and elsewhere. I am very pleased that a settlement has now been reached which recognises the United Kingdom's concern to balance industrial and consumer factors with the need for increased environmental protection.

I am also pleased that the Council agreed to adopt the directive that provides for the introduction of unleaded petrol in the Community not later than 1989 or earlier if individual member states wish. The Council had agreed this directive, which is the result of a United Kingdom initiative last December, but adoption has been delayed because of the uncertainty over vehicle emissions.

The Council also reached agreement on a directive on containers of liquids for human consumption on terms satisfactory to United Kingdom interests subject to a parliamentary reserve by the United Kingdom. It would in particular avoid discrimination between different types of container systems or packaging. We would expect to implement the directive in the United Kingdom through voluntary arrangements. The measure should help to reduce the environmental impact of used containers, and save energy and raw materials.

Housing

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he proposes to have with representatives of the Association of Metropolitan Authorities about estimates of repair bills in respect of maintenance of pre-first world war dwellings and post-second world war public sector defective properties and about the extent to which repairs undertaken to existing stock have within the restraints of the investment funds allocated to them squeezed out new-build programmes.

Sir George Young: The Department will shortly be asking local authorities to provide detailed estimates of the costs of repair of the houses and flats they own and manage. This will include properties built before 1919 and defective houses and flats built since the last war. The local authorities' associations have been consulted on the conduct of this inquiry. It is for individual authorities to decide how much of their capital resources to devote to repair of the existing stock.

Local Authorities (Housing Revenue)

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish figures setting out expenditure in 1982-83 and 1983-84 on wages and salaries, including pensions, by the housing departments of the local authorities.

Mr. Waldegrave: The available estimates are as follows. The housing revenue account figures are based on budget data supplied by local authorities and converted to estimated outturn prices by the DOE. The non-HRA figures come from local authorities' outturn return.

Local authority housing employee costs England—£ million

	HRA	*Non-HRA*
1982-83	590	30
1983-84	510	42

Local Authority Expenditure

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the budgeted expenditure increase, current expenditure, in each local authority in each year from 1981-82 to 1984-85, showing the total increase between 1981-82 and 1984-85.

Mr. Patrick Jenkin: I have today placed a copy of the required tables in the House of Commons Library. These show, for each local authority in England, budgeted current expenditure at outturn prices in each year since 1981-82, percentage changes between individual years and the absolute and percentage changes between 1981-82 and 1984-85.

Lead Shot

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce legislation in the current Session of Parliament to ban the use of lead shot by anglers.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Government believe that the use of lead shot by anglers should be phased out voluntarily if at all possible. A review of progress has recently been conducted by the Nature Conservancy Council, whose formal report is awaited. The Government will then consider whether further action is necessary, in the light of that report.

Rivers (Pollution Control)

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will detail all those measures that he has *(a)* undertaken so far and *(b)* proposes to take to improve river quality.

Mr. Macfarlane: In the last 18 months we have implemented all the main provisions of part II of the Control of Pollution Act 1974, providing a comprehensive statutory framework for the protection of our rivers and coastal waters. The provisions include full public participation in the system for controlling discharges of effluent, a code of good agricultural practice to prevent pollution from agricultural sources, and wide powers to deal with accidental and diffuse pollution. We have also reviewed the policy and procedures for the control of discharges of sewage effluent made by water authorities, set a financial framework which provides for higher investment by those authorities, continued the initiative to clean up the Mersey and made further progress with the implementation of the EEC directives on dangerous substances discharged to the aquatic environment.

For the future it remains the Government's intention to continue our policy to maintain and improve water quality, and in keeping with this a new national survey of rivers and estuaries will be undertaken to help develop programmes for the control of water pollution. This year we will be making regulations providing for the opening, in July, of registers containing details about water quality and discharges of effluent, and announcing proposals for the withdrawal of the exemptions conferred by the Control of Pollution (Exemption of Certain Discharges from Control) Order 1983. In addition, public consultation will be undertaken on proposals for the effective use of the new precautionary measures introduced by part II of the 1974 Act.

Housing Corporation and Housing Associations

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if the Housing Corporation and housing associations in receipt of public funds are expected to observe Government guidelines on pay for public sector employees in reaching pay settlements with their own staff.

Sir George Young: There is no Government guideline on pay for public sector employees. The Government make a pay assumption in their public expenditure plans, but the pay of Housing Corporation employees is determined by analogy with the pay of new town development corporation staff or, for staff of chief officer and above, by analogy with Civil Service rates of pay, and approved by Ministers.

Staff of housing associations are not public sector employees. Their pay is a matter for negotiation between the staff and their employers.

Conservation (Management Agreements)

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the management agreements entered into by the Nature Conservancy Council, indicating in each case the acreage covered and the annual and total payments made.

Mr. Waldegrave: This information is being compiled by the NCC. I shall write to the hon. Member very shortly.

Birds of Prey

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the number of inspectors in his Voluntary Inspectorate for inspecting registered keepers of birds of prey.

Mr. Waldegrave: The current number of part time ornithological wildlife inspectors is almost 200.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will detail the cases that came to court in which his Department gave information against registered breeders of birds of prey.

Mr. Waldegrave: 90 witness statements were provided by the Department to enforcement agencies during 1984 but not all these necessarily came to court.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what is his estimate of the number of each of the protected raptors;

(2) what is his estimate of each of the protected raptors in England and Wales; and if these numbers are increasing or decreasing.

Mr. Waldegrave: My Department does not keep these statistics, but I am advised by the Nature Conservancy Council that the most recent available estimates are:

Raptors	*Number*	*Estimate*
Common Buzzard	12,000 pairs	Increasing
Honey Buzzard	4-10 pairs	Stable
Golden Eagle	4-500 pairs	Increasing
Goshawk	70 pairs	Increasing slowly
Marsh harrier	25 pairs	Increasing
Hen harrier	600 pairs	Stable
Montagu's Harrier	2-9 pairs	Decreasing
Hobby	100-180 pairs	Stable
Kestrel	70,000 pairs	Stable
Merlin	3-400 pairs	Decreasing
Peregrine	8-900 pairs	Increasing
Red Kite	46 pairs	Stable
Sparrowhawk	20,000 pairs	Increasing
Osprey	25-30 pairs	Stable

Separate estimates for England, Scotland and Wales are not available.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what is the number of *(a)* golden eagles, *(b)* goshawks, *(c)* merlins, *(d)* peregrine falcons and *(e)* other raptors held by registered breeders;

(2) what is the number of each protected raptors kept by registered keepers in 1984;

(3) how many registered breeders and keepers there are of *(a)* golden eagle, *(b)* the goshawk, *(c)* the merlin, *(d)* the peregrine falcon and *(e)* other raptors; and how many of each bird was (i) bred and (ii) kept in 1984.

Mr. Waldegrave: Breeders as such are not registered but the following are the numbers of birds recorded as held by keepers in Great Britain.

	Total kept	*Not bred in 1984*
(a) Golden Eagle	41	1
(b) Goshawk	473	38
(c) Merlin	153	35
(d) Peregrine	523	43
(e) Other raptors	5,931	888

Separate records are not maintained for England, Scotland and Wales. Data are still being verified from the re-registration period which commenced on 1 September 1984.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many raptors were released into the wild by registered breeders in 1984.

Mr. Waldegrave: The total number of raptors released to the wild in 1984 was 103, of which 29 were captive bred.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the number of prosecutions in the latest period for which figures are available of those charged with robbing the nest of the protected raptors.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 31 January 1985, at column 280.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Speed asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he now estimates he will have finished his study of local government finance.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I estimate that the studies will be completed towards the end of this year.

Homeless Persons (Voluntary Organisations)

Mr. Weetch asked the Secretary of State for the Environment on how many occasions the discretionary power under section 13 of the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 has been used since the legislation became operative; and how many separate loans, grants or a combination of these have been made.

Sir George Young: My right hon. Friend and his precedessors have made 56 grants, but no loans, under section 13 of the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 since the legislation became operative. It is not known how many grants or loans have been made by local authorities under the same power.

Mr. Weetch asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what amounts of money have been made available to voluntary organisations under the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 in each year since the Act became operative.

Sir George Young: The following amounts have been made available by my right hon. Friend and his predecessors:

	£000s
1977-78	0
1978-79	110
1979-80	168
1980-81	200
1981-82	233
1982-83	307
1983-84	299
1984-85	*266

* As at 28 February 1985.

I have no information on the amounts of money made available by local authorities under this section.

Mr. Weetch asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give a breakdown of the purposes for which money has been advanced under section 13 of the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977.

Sir George Young: The grants made under this section by my right hon. Friend and his predecessors have been in respect of the provision of housing aid and advice services. I have no information regarding the purposes for which local authorities give assistance under this section.

Mr. Weetch asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what sums have been received by the Secretary of State in repayment of loans under section 13(9) of the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 in each year since its operation.

Sir George Young: No loan has been made under this section by my right hon. Friend or his predecessors.

Litter Act 1983

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what sections of the Litter Act 1983 are in force.

Mr. Waldegrave: All sections of the Litter Act 1983 are in force, with the exception of section 4, which requires local authorities to prepare litter abatement plans. Implementation of section 4 has so far been deferred in view of the need for restraint in public expenditure.

Housing (Hyndburn)

Mr. Hargreaves asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many houses in Hyndburn are classified as requiring repairs costing more than £7,000, as defined by the English House Condition Survey 1981; and what is the estimated cost of putting these deficiencies to rights;

(2) how many houses in Hyndburn are classified as requiring repairs costing between £2,500 and £7,000, as defined by the English House Condition Survey 1981; and what is the estimated cost of putting these deficiencies to rights;

(3) how many houses in Hyndburn are classified as unfit for habitation as defined by the English House Condition Survey 1981; and what is the estimated cost of putting these deficiencies to rights.

Sir George Young: Estimates are not available at district level corresponding to those for England derived from the detailed inspection of a sample of dwellings in the 1981 House Condition Survey.

Local authorities' 1984 housing investment programme returns included, for 1 April, their estimates of dwellings in their areas in three categories, unfit, fit but lacking basic amenities, and not substandard but requiring more than £3,000 of repairs; copies of these returns are available in the Library. The numbers reported by local authorities are not necessarily comparable as their criteria may differ and in total the figures are not consistent with estimates from the English House Condition Survey.

Building Act 1984

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes to table regulations to give effect to the Building Act 1984.

Mr. Gow: My right hon. Friend hopes to lay new Building Regulations and Building (Approved Inspectors etc.) Regulations in the summer to come into operation before the end of the year.

Nitrates

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many applications he has received from water authorities for permission to exceed the 50mg per litre level of nitrates in public water supplies; how many of these applications he has accepted or rejected; and if any time limits or conditions have been placed on the derogations.

Mr. Macfarlane: Forty-seven applications have been received. No decisions have yet been taken on any of these.

Football

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many football matches the Minister with responsibility for sport has attended since taking office.

Mr. Macfarlane: I shall write to the hon. Member shortly.

Marsham Street (Repairs)

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the cost of the first-aid remedial action on his Department's headquarters building in Marsham street, referred to in his answer of 18 March, *Official Report*, column 343; and what is the estimated cost of the proposed repairs.

Sir George Young: The cost of remedial work done to date is £18,217·34 plus VAT. Until the consultant's report is available for consideration, it is not possible to estimate the cost of any additional work.

PRIME MINISTER

Official Business

Mr. Gorst asked the Prime Minister how many days, or parts of a day, she has spent outside the United Kingdom on official business during each year since she became Prime Minister; and how many days she expects to have spent outside the United Kingdom during the first quarter of 1985.

The Prime Minister: The information requested is as follows:

	Number of days
1979	30
1980	17
1981	45
1982	33
1983	38
1984	30
1985*	6

* Up to 25 March.

Chief Scientific Adviser

Mr. Boyes asked the Prime Minister what are the role and responsibilities of the Chief Scientific Adviser, Cabinet Office, Sir Robin Nicholson; and whether that responsibility includes giving advice on nuclear affairs.

The Prime Minister: The role and responsibilities of the Chief Scientific Adviser, Cabinet Office, Sir Robin Nicholson, were given in annex A of Cmnd. 8591 at the time when he was Chief Scientist, Central Policy Review Staff. When the Central Policy Review Staff was disbanded in July 1983 I announced that Sir Robin Nicholson would continue as Chief Scientific Adviser, Cabinet Office and continue to advise me and the Secretary of the Cabinet on scientific and technological matters and scientific and technological aspects of other issues which came to me or to the Cabinet Office. This remains the position.

United States Navy

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Prime Minister whether consultations have taken place between Her Majesty's Government and the United States Government on the granting of port facilities in the United Kingdom for United States Navy maritime pre-positioning ships.

The Prime Minister: Consultations take place at regular intervals between Her Majesty's Government and the United States Government on a range of aspects of contingency planning.

It would not be in the public interest to give details of such consultations.

Falkland Islands

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Prime Minister what moneys have been spent on infrastructure and development in the Falklands, excluding defence expenditure, in the financial years 1982-83, 1983-84 and 1984-85; and how much will be spent in the next three financial years.

The Prime Minister: Expenditure on infrastructure and development in the Falkland Islands against commitments of a £15 million rehabilitation grant and a £31 million development aid grant announced in 1982 has been as follows:

	£ million
1982-83	10·4
1983-84	6·0
1984-85	* 6·6

* Estimate.

Expenditure is likely to continue at about the current level for the next three years.

MI5

Mr. Winnick asked the Prime Minister what is the general policy of Her Majesty's Government concerning the appearance before the Home Affairs Committee of the Director General of MI5; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: As my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House stated in his letter of 27 April 1983 to my right hon. Friend the Member for Taunton (Mr. du Cann), at columns 444-48, there is a long-standing convention under which the Government do not provide information or answer questions in Parliament on matters of security or intelligence, and the Government would regard themselves as bound by that convention in relation to departmental Select Committees, no less than in relation to Parliament itself. In the light of that policy the Government would not consider it appropriate for the Director General or other members of the Security Service to appear before a Select Committee.

Local Revenue

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Prime Minister what consideration Her Majesty's Government are currently giving to new methods of raising local revenue, with particular reference to a poll tax.

The Prime Minister: The local government finance studies are looking at all the main aspects of the present finance system including how total local authority revenues might best be raised. A poll tax is one of a number of options for raising revenue locally.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Crimes of Violence and Vandalism (Convictions)

Sir Anthony Grant asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of convictions of persons under 18 years for crimes of violence or vandalism in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Mellor: The readily available information relates to offenders aged under 17 years and is published annually in tables S4.1(A) and S4.1(B) of "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, supplementary tables, vol. 4".

Government Property (Damage)

Sir Anthony Grant asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of convictions for damage to Government property in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Mellor: Information collected centrally does not distinguish offences of damaging Government property from other offences of criminal damage. The available information for indictable offences is published annually in table 5.1 of "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, 1983" (Cmnd. 9349) and for summary offences in table S4.1(B) of supplementary tables, vol. 4.

Prisoners (Correspondence)

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many letters to and from prisoners have been *(a)* photocopied and *(b)* retained in each of the last five years; and how many prisoners this has involved.

Mr. Mellor: This information is not available.

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what is his practice regarding the photocopying of correspondence between prisoners and *(a)* solicitors, *(b)* Members of Parliament, *(c)* probation officers, *(d)* social workers and *(e)* members of their family; where such copies are retained; for how long and for what purpose; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if it is with his authority that letters to and from prisoners are photocopied by the prison service and sent to his Department's P5 division.

Mr. Mellor: Under prison rule 33(1) the Secretary of State may, with a view to securing discipline and good order or the prevention of crime or in the interests of any persons, impose restrictions, either generally or in a particular case, upon the communications to be permitted between a prisoner and other persons. Under prison rule 33(3) letters to or from a prisoner may be read or examined. Under rule 37A(1) a prisoner who is a party to legal proceedings may correspond with his legal adviser in connection with the proceedings, and unless the Governor has reason to suppose that any such correspondence contains matter not relating to the proceedings it shall not be read or stopped. It may be necessary for correspondence not protected by rule 37A(1) to be photocopied for these procedures to operate effectively, or for the prevention of crime or in the interests of any persons, particularly where questions of national security arise; and his specific authority is not required for that. In such cases the photocopies would be

held at establishements or elsewhere for so long as necessary and would be destroyed when they were no longer needed.

Victim Support Schemes (Funding)

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has received representations from individuals and organisations concerning his Department's funding to victim support schemes.

Mr. Mellor: The Home Office has received some 60 letters from hon. Members and a number from victims' support schemes and others supporting the recommendations of the Home Affairs Committee concerning the funding of victims' support schemes in its report on compensation and support for victims of crime (HC 43). The Government's reply to the Committee's report was given in a White Paper (Cmnd. 9457) published on 7 March.

Intex 85

Mr. Sackville asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he proposes to take to encourage local authorities to take part in the warning and monitoring exercise Intex 85.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Intex 85 exercise was held on 16-17 March. The United Kingdom warning and monitoring organisation informed county level authorities of the exercise and invited them to take part; 29 in England and Wales and four in Scotland did so. We are considering what more can be done to encourage local authorities in the future. We are ready to help in any way we can.

Prisoners (Segregation)

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners segregated under rule 43 are sharing cells; and how many cells are involved.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is not held centrally.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many prisoners segregated under rule 43 at Leeds prison are currently sharing cells; and how many cells are involved;

(2) in what ways facilities for work, education, recreation and association are more limited for segregated prisoners at Leeds prison than for the other prisoners.

Mr. Mellor: I will reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if the wing in which segregated prisoners are accommodated at Leeds prison is properly separated from other parts of the prison.

Mr. Mellor: The part of the wing at Leeds prison in which prisoners segregated under prison rule 43 for their own protection are located, is physically separated from the rest of the prison.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if the wing in which segregated prisoners are accommodated at Leeds prison has facilities for keeping food hot.

Mr. Mellor: A hot plate has been provided in the part of the wing at Leeds prison in which prisoners segregated under prison rule 43 for their own protection are located.

Gloucester Prison

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he plans to re-examine the Chief Inspector of Prisons' recommendation to relocate C wing at Gloucester prison elsewhere.

Mr. Mellor: No.

Murder (Sentencing Recommendations)

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many recommendations have been made by judges under section 1(2) of the Murder (Abolition of Death Penalty) Act 1965; and in how many cases prisoners have been released before the minimum period recommended.

Mr. Mellor: In England and Wales, 201 such recommendations were made from 1965 — when the power was introduced—until the end of 1984.

Up until the end of 1984, three life sentence prisoners have been released on life licence at an earlier date than that recommended by the trial judge. In accordance with the provisions of section 61 of the Criminal Justice Act 1967, all three prisoners were released on the recommendation of the parole board and after consultation with the Lord Chief Justice and, where he was available, the trial judge.

Prisons (Food Hygiene)

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what specific training or qualifications prison medical officers have in relation to their responsibilities for supervising food hygiene standards in prisons.

Mr. Mellor: All medical practitioners receive instruction in general health and hygiene as part of their training. The prison department does not provide further training in these subjects for prison medical officers but those who wish to do so attend external courses.

Cruelty to Animals Act 1876

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the revised White Paper on the amendment of the Cruelty to Animals Act 1876 will be published.

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. and learned Friend hopes to publish a further White Paper shortly.

Penal Institutions (Education Classes)

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the number of inmate hours of study in educational classes in penal institutions for both day and evening education classes during 1984, with comparative figures for 1982 and 1983 with the figures for youth custody centres and detention centres, and for earlier years borstal institutions, identified within the totals and in all cases related to the average daily inmate population in the year.

Mr. Mellor: The available information is as follows:

Type of Establishment	Calendar Year 1982 Average Daily Population	Academic Year 1981-82 Student Hours	Calendar Year 1983 Average Daily Population	Academic Year 1982-83 Student Hours	Calendar Year 1984 Average Daily Population	Academic Year 1983-84 Student Hours
Prisons	33,606	2,088,492	32,302	2,205,120	31,345	2,334,866
Remand Centres	2,893	240,917	3,365	261,165	3,645	307,063
Youth Custody Centres	5,095	1,204,287	6,088	1,120,713	6,821	1,347,802
Detention Centres	2,113	907,922	1,706	815,637	1,485	697,217
Totals	43,707	4,441,618	43,462	4,402,635	43,295	4,886,948

NB. The change from borstal sentences to youth custody sentences took place on 24 May 1983, when Part I of the Criminal Justice Act 1982, was implemented. The figures in the table before and after that date are not directly comparable, because of changes in the designation of accommodation which occurred about that time: in particular most young prisoner centres as well as borstals became youth custody centres.

Featherstone Prison

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of the cells of Her Majesty's prison, Featherstone, near Wolverhampton, are occupied by *(a)* one inmate, *(b)* two inmates and *(c)* three inmates.

Mr. Mellor: On 10 March, no cell was occupied by more than one prisoner. In the short-term open unit, which has rooms not cells, 66 prisoners were sharing two to a room.

Off-sales Licences

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the number of liquor licensing committees which have issued off-sales licences to petrol stations; and how many such licences were issued in the years 1980 to 1983.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is not collected centrally.

Security Operations

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Seretary of State for the Home Department how long he devoted to reviewing security operations before his announcement on 12 March, *Official Report*, column 154, that no operation, investigation, surveillance of action against any individual had been carried out without due propriety.

Mr. Brittan: I have a continuing responsibility to satisfy myself that the security service operates entirely within the letter and spirit of its directive. My inquiries into the particular allegations were made in the context of that continuing responsibility, but I do not propose to say more on how they were pursued.

Police (Dental Treatment)

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the estimated value, as a percentage of gross salary, of free prescriptions and dental treatment to each grade within the police force for 1983-84 and 1984-85.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Information on the cost of reimbursing National Health Service charges incurred by police officers for medical prescriptions and dental treatment is not recorded centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Diplomatic Immunity

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has, by country of diplomat, of the numbers of persons stopped on suspicion of committing moving traffic offences in respect of whom the police have taken no further action when the person has successfully claimed diplomatic immunity in each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The table below sets out, for each of the last five years, the total number of moving traffic offences which are alleged to have been committed by persons who were entitled to diplomatic immunity.

	Number
1980	197
1981	170
1982	156
1983	190
1984	98

Since none of the alleged offences has resulted in court proceedings, it would be inappropriate to relate them to particular missions.

Women Prisoners

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many women were held in prisons in England and Wales for the years 1982, 1983 and 1984, distinguishing between those held on remand and sentenced prisoners.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested will be published shortly in a Home Office statistical bulletin on "The Prison Population in 1984".

Animal Laboratories

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of LD50 tests on animals are carried out without anaesthesia at any stage in Government research laboratories, in university laboratories and in all laboratories; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: This information is not available. LD50 tests, however, are not normally performed under anaesthesia unless an anaesthetic agent is itself the subject of the test. The number of such cases is likely to be small. The purpose of an LD50 test is to determine the toxicity of a particular substance and the administration of an anaesthetic — which is itself toxic — would probably invalidate the result. Even if anaesthetics were compatible with the test, it would be difficult to calculate an appropriate dose because of the unpredictable duration of the test.

The Government welcome and encourage the replacement of LD50 tests by other forms of acute toxicity test wherever possible. In the limited circumstances where it is still necessary to perform LD50 tests, they are carried out under the terms of the Cruelty to Animals Act 1876. The pain condition under the Act requires any animal in severe and enduring pain to be immediately and painlessly killed.

Strip Searches

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many strip searches were made on women prisoners in England and Wales in Her Majesty's prisons for each of the years 1982, 1983 and 1984, distinguishing between prisoners held on remand and sentenced prisoners.

Mr. Mellor: This information is not recorded centrally.

Lynn Barlow

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the cost to the taxpayer of flying Lynn Barlow and a police officer to Glasgow after her arrest on the support the miners' march in London on 25 February.

Mr. Ancram: I have been asked to reply.

Lynn Barlow was arrested in London after failing to appear at Dumbarton sheriff court on 4 December 1984. I understand from the chief constable of Strathclyde police that the travel costs associated with returning her to Scotland to answer the charges against her totalled £180.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Tourism Policy

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will state the objectives of Her Majesty's Government in tourism policy.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The Government's overall objective is to encourage the maximum development and international competitiveness of the United Kingdom as a tourist destination. The Government aim to do this by removing obstacles to tourism and supporting the tourist boards. The vast majority of tourism investment will of course be funded by the private sector, which I hope will increasingly recognise the growth potential of tourism and leisure.

Information Technology (Small Firms)

Mr. Warren asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will review the problems presented for the development of information technology by the bias in the Alvey programme against the funding of contracts with small companies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Pattie: Participants in the Alvey programme are selected on their ability to contribute to the research programme, not on their size. In fact, firms of all sizes are active in the programme and so far about 20 small firms are directly involved in approved projects.

Sanitary Ware (Imports)

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much Belgian sanitary ware was imported in 1979 and 1983; what proportion of the imports came from the Belgian company Boch SA; whether he has any evidence that Boch SA was given state aid by the Belgian Government on terms contrary to the treaty of Rome; what representations his Department has received about alleged dumping of the Belgian sanitary ware; what action he has taken; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon: Imports of sanitary ware from Belgium (and Luxembourg) totalled £175,595 in 1979 and £2,788,706 in 1983. Statistics of imports of the products of individual companies are not easily obtainable.

On 16 February 1983 the European Commission took a formal decision that state aid in the form of the acquisition of a holding amounting to BF 475 million in Boch SA was incompatible with the Common Market within the meaning of article 92 of the EEC treaty and must therefore be withdrawn. On 28 February 1984 the Commission brought an action before the European Court of Justice against Belgium to declare that by not complying within the prescribed period with that decision Belgium had failed to fulfil its obligations under the treaty.

On 24 October 1984 the European Commission took a further formal decision that state aid granted to Boch SA in the form of a subscription of BF 83 million of new capital was incompatible with the Common Market within the meaning of article 92 of the treaty and must therefore be withdrawn. On 11 February 1985 Belgium brought an action before the European Court of Justice against the Commission to have that decision declared void.

My Department has received a number of complaints about imports of subsidised Belgian sanitary ware.

We have repeatedly made clear to the Commission our concern about the distortions of competition resulting from the state aid that has been granted; about its impact on intra-Community trade; and about the adverse effects on United Kingdom producers. I last raised this matter with Commissioner Sutherland on 28 February.

It is wholly unsatisfactory that this aid should have been granted in the first place and that this situation should not yet have been dealt with effectively. We shall continue to press the Commission to bring matters to an early and acceptable conclusion.

EC (Manufactures)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what percentage of the original six European Economic Community members' market for manufactures was provided by the United Kingdom in 1984; and what was the comparable percentage in 1972;

(2) what percentage of the current European Economic Community members' market for manufactures was provided by the United Kingdom in 1984; and what was the comparable percentage in 1972.

Mr. Channon: Information in respect of 1984 is not yet available. The most recent information, which relates to 1983, is as follows:

*United Kingdom share of other European Community members' imports of manufactures**

	Original six members per cent.	Current membership per cent.
1972	6·1	7·4
1983	7·0	7·8

* Standard International Trade Classification sections 5 to 8.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State of Trade and Industry if he will publish a table showing, in respect of each year from 1970 to 1984, the total amount of the United Kingdom's manufactured exports to and imports from the current European Economic Community nations; and if he will publish a further table showing the annual deficits or surpluses in manufacturing trade which these figures produce.

Mr. Channon: The information is in the table.

United Kingdom Trade in Manufactures with European Community†*
£ million balance of payments basis

	Exports	Imports	Visible balance
1970	1962	1,430	+532
1971	2,059	1,728	+331
1972	2,282	2,331	−50
1973	3,015	3,481	−466
1974	4,330	4,965	−635
1975	4,699	5,408	−709
1976	6,773	7,441	−668
1977	8,672	9,425	−753
1978	9,704	11,510	−1,806
1979	12,030	14,585	−2,555
1980	13,285	14,508	−1,223
1981	12,517	15,165	−2,647
1982	13,720	18,158	−4,438
1983	15,039	22,220	−7,181
1984	17,909	25,650	−7,740

* Standard International Trade Classification sections 5 to 8.
† Present membership throughout.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what study he has made of the consequences for employment in the United Kingdom of the £10 billion deficit in the nation's manufacturing trade with the Common Market.

Mr. Butcher: Developments in trade performance are kept under continual review. The deficit in our balance of trade in manufactured goods with the European Community reflects many inter-related factors, including the pattern of our trade in other goods and with other areas. It is not possible to assess what consequences it may have had for employment.

EC (Steel Industries)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has as to the percentage reduction in the numbers employed in the steel industries of the various Common Market countries since the Council of Ministers agreed on a plan to reduce and restructure the industry; and if he will make a statement outlining the extent to which the various nations have fulfilled their agreed obligations in this area of policy.

Mr. Channon: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Inner German Trade Agreement

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the principles and operation of the inner German trade agreement; and if he is satisfied that its operation is not injurious to British trade and industry.

Mr. Channon: A protocol on German internal trade and connected problems forms an integral part of the EC treaty. The effect of internal German trade on other member states of the EC is subject to the provisions of this protocol. The protocol provides powers for the member states to take preventative measures should they encounter difficulties arising from such trade.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if any separate record is kept by Her Majesty's Government of the volume of exports from Germany which originate from East Germany and which have tariff and levy free access to the Common Market under the terms of the inner German trade agreement.

Mr. Channon: Her Majesty's Government maintained no records of trade conducted under the inner German trade agreement.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what has been the total value of imports from West Germany and East Germany, respectively, in each of the past 15 years; and how much of the West German total consists of goods which entered the Common Market through the inner German trade agreement.

Mr. Channon: Figures of United Kingdom imports from the Federal Republic of Germany and from the German Democratic Republic are shown in the table. The other information requested is not available.

United Kingdom Imports
£ Million OTS basis

	Federal Republic of Germany	German Democratic Republic
1970	549·5	16·1
1971	647·7	19·6
1972	840·7	21·7
1973	1,352·5	26·4
1974	1,908·7	44·1
1975	2,007·7	38·8
1976	2,772·8	60·4
1977	3,591·4	95·3
1978	4,498·3	88·4
1979	5,778·1	109·7
1980	5,654·1	88·1
1981	5,941·1	93·6
1982	7,405·9	133·9
1983	9,665·7	167·6
1984	11,090·2	198·1

Source: *Overseas Trade Statistics.*

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if goods and materials entering Germany from East Germany in terms of the inner German trade agreement are subject to the Common Market's anti-dumping procedures; and if the Common Market Commission has any role in supervising these arrangements.

Mr. Channon: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Night-clothes (Flame Resistance)

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry why standards governing the flame resistance of children's night-clothes differ between nightgowns and pyjamas.

Mr. Fletcher: The existing regulations, which date from 1967, are concerned only with the safety of nightdresses, which because of their loose fitting design have been the cause of more accidents. Pyjamas fit more closely to the body and do not pose so great a risk. Moreover cotton, which is the most popular fabric used for pyjamas, has to be chemically treated to enable it to meet the flammability standard and the treatment available at present would not only affect the feel and comfort of the fabric but also increase its cost. Mandatory compliance would therefore restrict consumers' choice.

Nevertheless, in the current review of the regulations I am proposing that suppliers of pyjamas shall in future be required to attach a label to them which indicates their flamability, so that purchasers will be able to identify the safer ones.

British Aerospace

Mr. Millan asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what parliamentary procedure will be necessary to enable him to implement his intention to dispose of the Government's residual shareholding in British Aerospace.

Mr. Pattie: No parliamentary procedure will be necessary. Under sections 3(4) and 5(3) of the British Aerospace Act 1980 the Secretary of State may dispose of his shares with the consent of the Treasury. No parliamentary procedure is provided for.

Research Establishments

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry why he does not allow the Government research establishments referred to in his answer of 1 March, *Official Report*, column *319*, which are to be encouraged to undertake paid work for private clients, to retain what they earn in order to expand their research activities.

Mr. Butcher: The Department's research establishments are encouraged to undertake paid work for private clients and they are given credit for receipts up to levels approved by Parliament when it votes the annual Supply Estimates. The Supply Estimates provision for the research establishments is cash limited. If there are receipts above the levels voted for in any one year, they have to be surrendered to the Consolidated Fund.

Franchising Contracts

Mr. Fry asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether the Commission of the European Communities consulted Her Majesty's Government on case 161/84 Pronuptia de Paris *v* Schillgalis, referred to the European Court of Justice by the Federal Court of Karlsruhe, on whether article 85(1) of the treaty of Rome is applicable to franchising contracts, and in consequence whether regulation 67/67/EEC is applicable to such contracts; and what was Her Majesty's Government's response.

Mr. Fletcher: The Commission has not consulted Her Majesty's Government about the case in question. It is not a requirement or current practice for the Commission to consult member states about cases referred to the European Court of Justice by national courts.

Trade (Departmental Promotion)

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the successes of his Department in stimulating increased trade and, in particular, exports in the north west of England during 1984.

Mr. Channon [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 March 1985, c. *208*]: North-west firms have shared in expenditure on a number of departmental schemes aimed at increasing export sales. Knowledge of business achieved as a result of official trade promotion is considered to be confidential between the Department and the companies concerned. However, participants in the eight north-west based trade missions sponsored by the British Overseas Trade Board in 1984 reported initial orders amounting to £2·86 million, with longer-term business expected to be considerably in excess of this figure.

WALES

Hospital Waiting Lists

8. **Mr. Rogers** asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on hospital waiting lists in Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I am encouraged by the substantial rise in the number of people treated by the NHS in Wales, including the 17·5 per cent. increase of inpatient cases in the five years to September 1984. I also welcome the 5·6 per cent. reduction in the year to September 1984 in the number of urgent inpatient cases awaiting treatment. Progress still needs to be made in tackling the numbers of outpatients and reducing waiting times for some specialties and in some areas. The Welsh Office is encouraging health authorities to take the necessary management action for which they are responsible.

Primary Schools (Expenditure)

10. **Mr. Wigley** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has as to the per capita expenditure on supplies and equipment in primary schools in Gwynedd and for the whole of Wales, for the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. John Stradling Thomas: In 1983-84 expenditure per primary pupil on books, educational equipment, stationery and materials was £15·8 for Gwynedd and £19·8 for Wales.

Personal Social Services

18. **Mr. Terlezki** asked the Secretary of State for Wales how much was spent on personal social services in Wales in the last year for which figures are available; and how this figure compares with that for each year since 1978-79.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Net expenditure by local authorities on personal social services in Wales was just

over £121 million in 1983-84. In cost terms, this compares with expenditure of £116 million, £114 million, £115 million, £112 million and £109 million in the preceding years to 1978-79 and represents a real growth of about 11·7 per cent. over the period.

Mid-Wales Development

19. **Mr. Alex Carlile** asked the Secretary of State for Wales when he last met the chairman of Mid-Wales Development; and what was discussed.

Mr. John Stradling Thomas: My right hon. Friend and I have met the chairman of the Development Board for Rural Wales on a number of occasions in recent months. A wide range of matters was discussed.

Road Improvement Programmes

20. **Dr. Roger Thomas** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what recent revisions have been made in the starting dates of road improvement programmes in south-west Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Stradling Thomas: Tenders are shortly to be let for the A48 Cross Hands-Llanddarog improvement, which when completed will substantially improve communications with south-west Wales. Twelve other major schemes in south-west Wales were listed in tables 2 to 5 of "Roads in Wales 1983", of which the A40 Whitland bypass and Treffgarne Rocks improvement will start later than indicated there.

Welsh Language

21. **Mr. Best** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what his Department has done to support the Welsh language since 1979.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: In a speech in 1980 my right hon. Friend undertook that while there were people who want to speak the Welsh language the Government would respond with the means of supporting it and giving it strength. That promise has been kept. Support since 1979 has amounted to £8·5 million and a further £2·5 million is planned for the next financial year, enabling a variety of bodies to undertake practical and constructive projects in the Welsh language field. It is a level of support of which we are proud and from my regular contact with bodies in receipt of grant is, I know, widely appreciated.

Livestock and Dairy Farming

22. **Mr. Geraint Howells** asked the Secretary of State for Wales when he last discussed the problems of the livestock and dairy sectors with members of the National Farmers Union in Wales and the Farmers Union of Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I met both the National Farmers Union and the Farmers Union of Wales on 18 January and the National Farmers Union in Wales again on 15 March for discussion of a number of topics of common concern, particularly the problems of the livestock and dairying sectors.

Highmead Home, Cardiff

23. **Mr. Gwilym Jones** asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the investigation he has caused to be made into the Highmead Home, Cardiff.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Following allegations made in the House, my officials made informal inquiries with the South Glamorgan county council, which has statutory responsibilities in relation to the provision of private residential care. These inquiries have brought forward no evidence to substantiate the allegations and, at this stage, my right hon. Friend does not propose any further action.

Students

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish figures showing for 1982-83, 1983-84 and an estimate for 1984-85 of the numbers of *(a)* full-time and *(b)* part-time students in Wales.

Mr. John Stradling Thomas: The numbers of students in universities and colleges of further and higher education in Wales were as follows:

	1982	*1983*
Full-time and sandwich	50,153	50,110
Part-time (including evening only)	46,675	52,228

Note: November-December of each year.
Figures exclude the Open University.
Figures for 1984 are not yet availble.

Job Creation

Sir Raymond Gower asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will state the total of new jobs created in Wales since 1979; how many of these jobs were in manufacturing and how many in service industries; and how many in industries connected with modern technology.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Comprehensive information on jobs created is not available. However, since 1 May 1979 projects for which offers of selective financial assistance were accepted, or which were allocated Government-financed factories, promised to provide over 72,000 jobs. A split between manufacturing and service sectors is not readily available, but just over 11,000 jobs relate to projects in the fields of telecommunications, radio, electronics and aerospace industries. These figures do not include all the self-employed or jobs not involving selective financial assistance or Government factories.

Teachers (Pay Dispute)

Sir Raymond Gower asked the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the extent of the teachers' pay dispute in Wales; and what progress has been made towards a settlement.

Mr. John Stradling Thomas: Responsibility for the pay and conditions of service of teachers in England and Wales rests with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science. There was a half day strike by members of the NAS/UWT on 26 February which involved all counties in Wales and members of the same union have been on strike in selected schools in Dyfed for the last fortnight and in Clwyd this past week. Members

of the NUT have had three-day strikes in selected schools in Clwyd and Dyfed for the past three weeks and in Gwynedd and Powys for the last two weeks. There has also been disruption in schools in all counties as a result of the withdrawal of goodwill.

Milk Quotas

Sir Raymond Gower asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is his assessment, up to the latest convenient date, of the consequences in Wales of the introduction of the milk quota scheme; what has been the change in the number of milk producers and upon the volume of milk produced in the Principality; and if he is satisfied with the results of arrangements for outgoers.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The consequences in Wales of the introduction of milk quotas will differ from farm to farm, according to the decisions taken by individual farmers. The number of registered milk producers in Wales at 31 December 1984 was 7,262, a decrease of 2·2 per cent. over December 1983. From April 1984 to January 1985 milk production was estimated to be 8·3 per cent. below year earlier levels. I am satisfied with the arrangements for outgoers.

Brynhyfryd Hospital, Forden

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals there are for the future of Brynhyfryd hospital, Forden; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Powys health authority is carrying out an appraisal of mental health provision in the district, and this will include the role of Brynhyfryd.

Pen y Ffordd Bypass

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales when he proposes to announce the result of the public inquiry into the compulsory purchase orders connected with the Pen y Ffordd bypass A550; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Stradling Thomas: The report of the inspector who held the inquiry into the compulsory purchase order and the associated side roads order has been submitted to our Department and is under active consideration. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's decision will be issued in due coure and all interested parties will receive notification. I shall also arrange for the hon. Gentleman to receive a copy of the decision letter.

TRANSPORT

Road Construction

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Transport what has been the trend, from the first quarter of 1980 to the most recent practicable date, in road tender prices, road material prices and road output prices.

Mrs. Chalker: Road tender prices have been volatile, rising and falling in successive years to their level in the first quarter of 1984, 1 per cent. below that in the first quarter 1980. The rate of increase in road material prices has fallen from 19 per cent. in 1980-81 to 7 per cent. in 1984-85. The index for road output prices, which combines the two above, has increased over the period by 19 per cent.

Rail Electrification

Sir John Farr asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations have been received from British Rail for a scheme to electrify forthwith the midland main railway line between Bedford and Market Harborough.

Mr. David Mitchell: None.

Sir John Farr asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has received from the British Railways Board as to the cost of electrifying the midland main railway line between Bedford and Market Harborough.

Mr. David Mitchell: We have received no such information from the Board.

Passenger Transport Authorities

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the total level of subsidy given by central Government to passenger transport authorities.

Mrs. Chalker: Expenditure on highways and transport by the six English metropolitan county councils in 1984-85 has been supported by Transport Supplementary Grant (TSG). The amounts of grant are as follows:

	£ million
Greater Manchester	22,875
Merseyside	26,628
South Yorkshire	7,413
Tyne and Wear	9,084
West Midlands	17,831
West Yorkshire	22,130
Total	105,961

The councils also receive Rate Support Grant. From 1985-86 TSG will be confined to highways capital expenditure.

Road Construction

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the total level of expenditure planned for the construction of *(a)* motorways and *(b)* all other new roads in each of the next five years.

Mrs. Chalker: The public expenditure White Paper — Cmnd. 9428 — contains the following total net planning figures for all expenditure on trunk motorways and other trunk roads in England for the next three years:

	£ million
1985-86	824
1986-87	870
1987-88	890

1985-86

Of the £824 million net provision for 1985-86, £598 million is for the new construction of motorways and trunk roads. The gross equivalent provision is £620 million of which some £280 million is attributable to motorway schemes.

1986-87-1987-88

Planned provision for new construction in these years is not separately identified between motorways and trunk roads.

Local Roads

Cmnd. 9428 also gives planning totals for local transport capital expenditure in the period 1985-86 to 1987-88. Capital expenditure on road construction in 1985-86 is shown as £502 million, but is not separately identified for the two further years.

Archway Road, London

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to arrange for the renovation of his Department's property at Archway Road, London N6.

Mrs. Chalker: I am considering what would be appropriate in the light of the district valuer's report will make an announcement as soon as possible.

East London Road Assessment Study

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the cost of the consultation exercise in respect of the east London road assessment study.

Mrs. Chalker: £11,500 has been spent on press advertising and leaflet distribution inviting people to express their views on the problems.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Transport which organisations have been invited to give evidence to the east London road assessment study.

Mrs. Chalker: Press advertisements and distributed leaflets have invited views on transport-related problems from all who live, work and travel in the study area. In addition, specific aproaches have been made to a large number of national, London-wide and local interests.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Transport when the results of the east London road assessment study are expected to be announced.

Mrs. Chalker: The consultants' report on phase I of the study—identification of problems—is expected in the summer and will be published shortly thereafter. In advance of receiving this I cannot predict the duration of the next stage to explore and report on possible solutions, but I would expect this to take some time.

Helicopter Accident (Isles of Scilly)

Mr. Harris asked the Secretary of State for Transport which of the eight safety recommendations in the report of the inquiry into the British Airways helicopter crash off the Isles of Scilly has not been accepted by the Civil Aviation Authority; and what stage has been reached in implementing the other seven.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The only safety recommendation not accepted by the Civil Aviation Authority is that concerning the use of aerodrome pressure setting (QFE) by BAH helicopters on low level aproaches to St. Mary's prior to crossing the coast.

Of the other seven recommendations, two will be implemented through amendments to legislation to be presented to Parliament shortly; they are the inclusion of audio warning for radio altimeters and revisions of requirements for the carriage of survival beacons. The CAA is revising weather minima and instrument monitoring procedures and investigating the practicability of relocating radio altimeters and the provision of lifejackets suitable for continuous wear. For the longer term, consideration is being given to the developement of a helicopter ground proximity warning system and the strengthening of passenger seats.

Liverpool Airport

Mr. Allan Roberts asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement outlining the Government's proposals for the future control of Liverpool airport after local government reorganisation takes place.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Local Government Bill provides for the transfer by order of metropolitan county council interests in airports to the districts comprising any such county, provided that those districts can agree among themselves both on the operation of the airport by a committee of all or any of them and the transfer or division of the interests. Failing such agreement, the interest will be transferred by order to the relevant passenger transport authority. It is therefore for the districts within Merseyside county council to decide together whether they can agree on terms for assuming control of Liverpool airport after abolition of the Merseyside county council.

Mr. Allan Roberts asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about Government policy on Liverpool airport.

Mr. Michael Spicer: It is Government policy to encourage the maxium use of regional airports. Liverpool airport is no exception, and has received substantial Government capital expenditure allocations for its rationalisation.

Wharves and Inland Waterways (Grants)

Mr. Crowther asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many grants have been *(a)* applied for and *(b)* made, under section 36 of the Transport Act 1981, for the installation or expansion of wharf facilities on inland waterways.

Mr. David Mitchell: Four formal applications for section 36 grants have been received, and three of these have been approved. the fourth, only recently received, is still being considered.

Motor Cyclists

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make arrangements to collect information on the average length of time taken by motor cyclists between passing part one and taking or passing part two of the driving test.

Mrs. Lynda Chalker: No. The average length of time between a motor cyclist passing part one and taking part two will not, in practice differ markedly from the average wait for part two of the test. This is similar to that for L tests for which figures are readily available. The additional cost of collecting these further data could not be justified.

Traffic area offices, who book the tests, already aim to ensure that motor cyclists who are reaching the end of the two-year period on their provisional licence are offered early test appointments within the period remaining.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make arrangements to collect information on the number and proportion of motor cycle provisional licences issued from 1 October 1982 which have been *(a)* replaced by a full licence and *(b)* allowed to lapse.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The range of statistical information available from drivers' records held on DVLC's computers at Swansea is to be reviewed. A study

will begin, later this year, when work on replacing obsolete equipment at the centre is sufficiently advanced. It will include consideration of the information requested.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Supergrass Trials

Rev. William McCrea asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many persons have been released in converted terrorist supergrass trial cases in the Province.

Mr. Scott: Ninety-nine persons have been acquitted since 1982 following trials or appeals in cases where the evidence of a former accomplice was presented on behalf of the Crown. Information on how many of these were released on their acquittal could be obtained only at a disproportionate cost.

Rev. William McCrea asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if he will name those convicted and imprisoned because of evidence given by converted terrorists;

(2) if he will name those persons convicted on evidence of converted terrorists and the appropriate sentences passed on them.

Mr. Scott: No. It would not be appropriate to give the names of individuals in this connection.

District Councillors (Allowances and Expenses)

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to his reply of 5 March, *Official Report*, column 489, on the allowances and expenses for which members of district councils qualify, what are the rates of remuneration for each of attendance, special responsibility, special loss, travel and subsistence allowances; and what is the rate of remuneration for expenses incurred in attending conferences and meetings.

Mr. Chris Patten: The current rates of allowances are as follows:

1. Attendance and Financial Loss Allowances

Period	*Attendance allowance* £	*Financial loss allowance* £
Not more than four hours	7·76	11·25
More than four hours	15·52	22·50

2. Special Responsibility Allowances

A district council with a population	*Total amount payable in a financial year* £	*Maximum payable to individual members* £
Exceeding 100,000	4,435	One-third of £4,435
Not exceeding 100,000	1,105	445

3. Travel Allowance

Type of vehicle	*Rate (pence per mile)*
i. A motor car or tri-car exceeding 1199 cc cylinder capacity	20·0
ii. A motor car or tri-car exceeding 999 cc but not exceeding 1199 cc cylinder capacity	18·2
iii. A motor car or tri-car exceeding 500 cc but not exceeding 999 cc cylinder capacity	16·8
iv. A motor car not exceeding 500 cc cylinder capacity	16·8
v. A solo motor cycle exceeding 150 cc but not exceeding 500 cc cylinder capacity	6·4
vi. A solo motor cycle exceeding 120 cc but not exceeding 150 cc cylinder capacity	4·4
vii. A solo motor cycle not exceeding 120 cc cylinder capacity	4·2

Additional allowances are *(a)* 0·4 pence per mile for each additional passenger *(b)* 29·0 pence per night for garaging a motor car or tri-car and *(c)* 17·5 pence per night for garaging a motor vehicle of any other type.

4. Subsistence Allowances

	£
(a) Day subsistence rates	
An absence not involving an absence overnight from the usual place of abode	
i. of more than four but not more than eight hours	4·00
ii. of more than eight but not more than 12 hours	7·00
iii. of more than 12 but not more than 16 hours	10·00
iv. of more than 16 hours	12·00
(b) Night Subsistence Rates	
In any period of 24 hours:	
An absence involving an absence overnight from the usual place of abode	
a.i. in the British Islands	44·50
ii. elsewhere than in the British Islands	as determined by the Department of the Environment in respect of each specific case
b. An absence involving an absence overnight in London or in any other place in the British Islands approved by the Department	50·75

5. Expenses

There is no fixed rate of remuneration for expenses incurred in attending conferences and meetings. The level of reimbursement is determined by individual councils with the purpose of meeting the cost

Terrorism

Mr. Maginnis asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if he will list the number of murders, attempted murders and explosions believed to be attributable to Republican terrorist groups for each of the years 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983 and 1984;

(2) if he will list the number of murders, attempted murders and explosions believed to be attributable to Loyalist terrorist group for each of the years 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983 and 1984.

Mr. Scott: The information available suggests that responsibility for these crimes can be attributed as follows:

Year	Murder		Attempted Murder		Explosions	
	Republican	Loyalist	Republican	Loyalist	Republican	Loyalist
1980	33	13	188	15	260	20
1981	69	12	461	26	159	3
1982	71	13	401	12	212	7
1983	34	7	286	13	178	6
1984	40	7	185	22	189	3

Students, Apprentices and Trainees

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish figures showing for 1982-83, 1983-84 and an estimate for 1984-85, the numbers of *(a)* full-time students, *(b)* part-time students, *(c)* full-time trainees, *(d)* apprentices and *(e)* trainees on day-release courses.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is as follows:

	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85
(a) Full-time students (Excluding YTP Students)	26,618	26,092	*28,926
(b) Part-time students (Excluding YTP day release students)	91,039	89,982	*94,532
(c) Full-time trainees (Including YTP students)	15,797	16,471	†17,081
(d) Apprentices	6,540	5,999	†3,137
(e) Trainees on day release courses	8,633	9,157	†8,470

* Estimate
† Actual
Note:
YTP = Youth training programme.

Armagh Women's Prison

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make it Her Majesty's Government's policy to introduce the use of sniffing machines in Armagh women's prison, instead of strip searching; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: Equipment for detecting explosives is available to the prison service in Northern Ireland, but such equipment as has been produced does not provide a level of security which would obviate the need for other forms of searching.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give the monthly breakdown since November 1982 of the number of women held in Her Majesty's prison, Armagh, indicating for each month the number held on remand and the number sentenced and distinguishing between those remanded or sentenced for scheduled and non-scheduled offences.

Mr. Scott: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Kilroot Power Station

Mr. Beggs asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what assessment he has made of the implications for employment in the heavy engineering and plant fabrication industries in Northern Ireland of the possible conversion of Kilroot power station from oil to coal or lignite firing; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Boyson: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply which I gave him on 14 March at column 221.

Scheduled Offences

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish in the *Official Report* for the years 1984 and 1985 to the nearest convenient date the number of persons charged with scheduled offences whose cases were concluded and who were *(a)* charged with scheduled offences and pleaded guilty, *(b)* charged with scheduled offences and pleaded not guilty, *(c)* found guilty of scheduled offences and *(d)* found not guilty of scheduled offences having pleaded not guilty.

Mr. Scott: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Contracts

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many contracts advertised during the 1983-84 financial year were cancelled after tenders were received; and if he will list them;

(2) how many contracts advertised during the present financial year were cancelled after tenders have been received; and if he will list them.

Dr. Boyson: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Orlit Houses

Mr. Clifford Forsythe asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the current position regarding the repair and upkeep of Orlit houses currently in Housing Executive ownership.

Mr. Chris Patten: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Strabane (Housing)

Rev. William McCrea asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many Southern Irish Army soldiers are living in Northern Ireland Housing Executive houses in the Strabane area.

Mr. Chris Patten: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Housing (Resource Allocations)

Rev. William McCrea asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what assessment he makes of the relative costs of public and private housing when deciding on the level of allocation of resources to public sector housing in the Province; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: The cost of houses in the private sector is not a determining factor in the allocation of resources to public sector housing programmes. The Government will continue to ensure, however, that expenditure on public sector programmes and on schemes to encourage the private sector represents good value for money.

Capital Grants Scheme

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what decisions he has reached as a result of the review of the standard capital grants scheme.

Dr. Boyson: I have placed in the Library copies of a paper outlining the results of the review of the standard capital grants scheme by the Department of Economic Development and the details of the revised scheme which will be introduced. I believe that the new arrangements will improve the cost effectiveness of the scheme while retaining its straightforward nature.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Televised Proceedings

Sir David Price asked the Lord Privy Seal if, in the light of the progress of the House of Lords experiment in televising the proceedings in their Lordships' Chamber, he will make a statement on the possibility of televising the proceedings in the Chamber of the House of Commons.

Mr. Biffen: It is for each House to make its own decision. I anticipate that this House will wish to consider this issue further in due course.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

British Telecom

Mr. Gould asked the Attorney-General if he will publish a list of those persons and institutions whose activities in applying for British Telecom shares have been referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions.

The Attorney-General: No. A report was sent on 20 March 1985 to the Director of Public Prosecutions from the Department of Trade and Industry about this matter and is under consideration. It would not be right to make information public about individual cases in which there may be reason to suspect that criminal offences may have been committed.

Legal Aid Act

Ms. Harman asked the Attorney-General if he has any plans to repeal section 22 of the Legal Aid Act.

The Attorney-General: My right hon. and noble Friend the Lord Chancellor has no such plans.

Ms. Harman asked the Attorney-General if he has authorised any prosecutions for breach of section 22 of the Legal Aid Act; and whether he intends to prosecute anyone for breach of section 22 of the Legal Aid Act.

The Attorney-General: I assume that the hon. Member is referring to the cases where legal aid assessment officers, acting bone fide in reliance on certain departmental instructions first drawn up in 1951, passed information on legal aid applicants to other officials. Having consulted the Director of Public Prosecutions, I have decided that it would not be right to prosecute in these cases. I have also decided that it would not be right to prosecute those who drew up the instructions, since they did so on legal advice.

Criminal Proceedings

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Attorney-General if he will introduce legislation to permit a person who is aggrieved at the refusal of the Director of Public Prosecutions to institute criminal proceedings to challenge the decision in the courts; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: No. The Director of Public Prosecutions exercises his functions under my superintendence and it would be wrong to make his decisions subject to supervision by the courts and thus bring the courts into the prosecution process.

EMPLOYMENT

Industrial Injuries (Inquiries)

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Employment what is the average length of time taken by the Factories Inspectorate to investigate cases of industrial injury and to process compensation claims; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No data is available from which the average period of time for the investigation of cases of industrial injury can be derived. Matters on claims for industrial compensation should be referred to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services.

EC (Social Fund)

Mr. Forth asked the Secretary of State for Employment what estimate he has made of the effect on the amount of European social fund money received by the United Kingdom of the possible entry of Spain and Portugal to the European Economic Community.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: It is impossible to predict with any accuracy the effect of enlargement on United Kingdom receipts for the European Social Fund, because this will depend on many factors, including the size of fund and the rules and guidelines in force at the time.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Employment what was the total number of persons unemployed at the most recent date for which figures are available; and what was the comparable total for the same date in the year immediately preceding the United Kingdom's membership of the Common Market.

Mr. Alan Clark: On 10 February 1985, the number of unemployed claimants in the United Kingdom was 3,323,676. The corresponding number of unemployed in February 1972 is estimated to have been 936,600. This information is also available from the Library. The comparison is affected by the 1983 Budget provisions which mean that some men, mainly aged 60 and over, no longer need to sign on in order to receive supplementary

benefit or national insurance credits. The estimated effect of these measures, which accumulated between April and August 1983, is 162,000.

Budget (Job Creation)

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for Employment what is his estimate of the effect of the Budget proposals in reducing unemployment.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Budget contains a coherent and wide-ranging set of measures to help generate employment and tackle unemployment. These include the expansion of the youth training scheme and the community programme, as well as substantial reform of the structure of national insurance contributions and raising the tax thresholds. These will help create the conditions for substantial numbers of new jobs without taking any risks with inflation. By 1986-87 our employment and training measures together will be providing help for 1 million people.

Strikes

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on his assessment of the relationship between strikes and employment.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: While it is impossible to make an accurate estimate, strikes definitely put employment at risk. In the short term, output is lost and orders go to competitors—in the case of national strikes, particularly to overseas competitors. Export orders are lost and some of the orders lost in previous strikes have not been recovered.

Balloting Procedures

Sir Humphrey Atkins asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many times in the past 12 months he has met representatives of the Trades Union Congress to discuss balloting procedures; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I shall reply to my right hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Youth Training

Miss Boothroyd asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many and what percentage of school leavers have been on youth training or youth opportunity schemes for each of the last five years for which records are available; whether he will break these figures down into the following areas: *(a)* west midlands, *(b)* east midlands, *(c)* Scotland, *(d)* Northern Ireland, *(e)* north, *(f)* north-west, *(g)* Yorkshire and Humberside, *(h)* East Anglia, *(i)* south-east, *(j)* Wales and *(k)* south-west; and of these, how many trainees were (i) offered jobs with sponsors, (ii) found work, (iii) registered for employment and (iv) found places on other schemes on completion of their periods of training.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Employment (1) on what basis he calculates that a second year of youth training will cost £125 million in 1986-87 and £300 million in 1987-88;

(2) if his estimate of the costs of a second year of the youth training scheme assumes employers pay *(a)* 25 per cent., *(b)* 50 per cent. or *(c)* 75 per cent. of the cost of training.

Mr. Peter Morrison: We have not predicted what the cost of extending the youth training scheme would be. The Government is prepared to put £125 million in 1986-87 and £300 million in 1987-88, in addition to spending on the existing youth training scheme, towards the cost of the new scheme; but we are looking to employers, who stand to gain a great deal from this advance in our training arrangements, to pay their fair share as well. The total cost, and the exact contribution required from employers, will depend on the outcome of the consultations which the Manpower Services Commission will be carrying out.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what proposals he has for improved training on the extended youth training scheme;

(2) how the youth training allowance for the second year of the youth training scheme will compare with the present youth training scheme allowance.

Mr. Peter Morrison: We have asked the Manpower Services Commission to draw up detailed proposals for the new scheme, including recommendations on training content and the trainee allowance. As under the existing scheme, however, the more that available resources are devoted to training, rather than to the allowance, the greater will be the benefit to young people.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Employment whether his proposals for a second year of youth training will be made after consultation with the Trades Union Congress.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Yes. The Manpower Services Commission will consult with the TUC in developing its proposals.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many additional places in the community programme he expects to be created by the end of 1985 and, of these, how many will be allocated to Scotland.

Mr. Peter Morrison: My right hon. Friend has written to the chairman of the Manpower Services Commission and has asked him to proceed so that an additional 50,000 places can be filled by December 1985, with extra provision in all areas, but to let him have the commission's views as soon as possible on the best means to distribute available places.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many additional *(a)* 16-year-olds and *(b)* 17-year-olds he expects to join the expanded youth training scheme in 1986-87 and 1987-88.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The number of young people entering the expanded youth training scheme will depend on the outcome of the consultations which the Manpower Services Commission will be carrying out. We have, however, estimated that there might be around 200,000 more young people in training at any given time.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Employment what he estimates to be the saving from the abolition of the young workers' scheme.

Mr. Alan Clark: The savings in a full year from the abolition of the young workers' scheme, announced in the Budget statement, were estimated as £25 million.

Mines and Quarries Act

Mr. Barron asked the Secretary of State for Employment if the National Coal Board has applied for any alteration or exemption to the Mines and Quarries Act or other such legislation relating to the coal mining industry in the last six months.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Maternity Pay Fund

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for Employment what research his Department is currently supporting into the effects on health of those operating visual display units; and if he has considered asking the Health and Safety Commission to review matters in order to establish the facts.

Mr. Peter Bottomley [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 March 1985, c. *556*]: The Health and Safety Executive published a research paper in 1980 and a guidance note in 1983, both of which consider the health aspects of operating VDUs. Further guidance is to be published shortly. Current work being undertaken by the executive includes studies on skin problems in VDU operators, possible reproductive problems, the ergonomic design of VDU equipment and the design of workplaces and lighting for VDU operation. The commissioning of further research into aspects of VDU job design is being considered. The Health and Safety Executive continues to keep the subject under review.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

UN Development Programmes

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment of the cost-effectiveness of United Kingdom contributions to United Nations development programmes he has made; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Raison: I regret the delay in answering this question. The British contribution to the United Nations development programme cannot be separately evaluated, as it comprises an unconditional grant to the programme's central funds.

We have not made an independent assessment of the cost effectiveness of the programme. The United Nations development programme has its own evaluation process, and an annual report is made on this work to the governing council, of which the United Kingdom is a member. I am sending a copy to the hon. Member.

The United Nations development programme is also subject to inquiry from within the work programme of the United Nations' joint inspection unit.

Famine Victims

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish a complete list of what Her Majesty's Government are doing to help famine victims.

Mr. Raison: I am arranging for a list to be placed in the Library.

Ethiopia

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the Royal Air Force's commitment to food distribution in Ethiopia is to continue.

Mr. Raison: We have offered the Ethiopian Government a continuation of the RAF operation beyond the end of March and are assessing how long we shall stay.

CIVIL SERVICE

Visual Display Units (Pregnancies)

Mrs. Beckett asked the Minister for the Civil Service if the Civil Service medical advisory service is aware of any clusters of abnormal pregnancies among women users of visual display units in the Civil Service other than that at the Department of Employment's offices in Runcorn; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: No. The Civil Service medical advisory service is not aware of clusters of abnormal pregnancies among women users of visual display units in the Civil Service, either in the Department of Employment's offices in Runcorn or elsewhere.

Mrs. Beckett asked the Minister for the Civil Service if he will now publish the report, including the recommendations of the Civil Service medical advisory service, on the cluster of abnormal pregnancies which occurred at the Department of Employment's offices in Runcorn among women users of visual display units.

Mr. Hayhoe: The report of the Runcorn survey was presented at an international meeting which examined the allegations of reproductive hazards from VDUs and was held in London on 29-30 November 1984. The papers of the conference have been published and are available from Humane Technology, P.O. Box 2, Quorn, Leicestershire LE12 8EG at a cost of £15. Medical and scientific consensus at the meeting was that VDUs do not constitute a reproductive hazard. An account of the meeting was also published in the Health and Safety Information Bulletin — IRS 67 Maygrove Road, NW6 2EJ — on 8 January 1985.

The study of 169 pregnancies in 113 women who had worked in a Department of Employment office in Runcorn over a nine-year period showed that rates of miscarriages, foetal abnormalities and stillbirths in the "exposed" pregnancies were within normally accepted limits, and no clustering of abnormal pregnancies was apparent. There was an unusually low rate of miscarriage of "control" pregnancies, a feature of other studies which have relied largely on mothers' own memories for information about past pregnancies.

The recommendations of the Civil Service medical advisory service are that the outcome of the large scale prospective studies of VDT operators currently under way in north America should be closely reviewed and that further studies on the Runcorn model in the Civil Service are inappropriate. Their close review of international medico-scientific literature and their close co-operation

with the Health and Safety Executive on questions of adverse outcome of pregnancy associated with occupation will continue.

Mrs. Beckett asked the Minister for the Civil Service if, in the light of further clusters of abnormal pregnancies occurring at fire brigade headquarters in Manchester, he will now reconsider the decision not to continue the Civil Service medical advisory service research on the occurrence of such clusters among women users of visual display units; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: I understand that the report of possible clusters of abnormal pregnancies occurring at the fire brigade headquarters in Manchester is based on anecdotal evidence gathered during a survey by the Fire Brigades Union. It appears that the report has not been submitted to the occupational health medical officer for Greater Manchester council nor to a professional journal for medical and scientific assessment. The Civil Service medical advisory service will take into account the findings of the study, after publication in a scientific journal, in its assessment of possible reproductive hazards which might be attributed to VDU usage. The current medical and scientific consensus is that no such hazards exist.

Mrs. Beckett asked the Minister for the Civil Service whether the Civil Service medical advisory service has studied the results of American research about the clusters of abnormal pregnancies occurring among the wives of male users of visual display units; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: An intensive search of medico-scientific literature has not elicited the information stated and neither the Civil Service medical adviser nor the chairman of the scientific advisory committee of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists is aware of scientific studies reported in the medical literature which support the assertion.

Birth Defects (Research)

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Minister for the Civil Service whether research is to be restarted into the two clusters of women whose children have birth defects in Runcorn and Manchester.

Mr. Hayhoe: For the reasons given in my recent replies to the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) research concerning women civil servants operating VDUs in Runcorn is not being continued.

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Minister for the Civil Service why the decision was taken to stop research into the cluster of confirmed birth defects at the Department of Employment, Runcorn.

Mr. Hayhoe: For the reasons given in my recent replies to the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett), research in VDU usage in the Department of Employment, Runcorn is not continuing. No clustering of birth defects has been confirmed.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Discretionary Grants

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has for each local education authority in England and Wales about the total number of applications made for discretionary grant awards, the number granted in full and the number granted in part, for the last year in which figures are available.

Mr. Brooke: No information is collected regarding the number of applications which are made. The table shows for 1982-83 the number of new full-value and lesser value discretionary awards actually made, and expressed per 1,000 of the average of the 18 and 19-year-old population for each local authority in England and Wales.

	Full-value discretionary awards		*Lesser value awards*	
	Number of awards	*Per 1,000 of the average of the 18 + 19 population*	*Number of awards*	*Per 1,000 of the average of the 18 + 19 population*
Barking	29	13	241	106
Barnet	333	74	—	—
Bexley	97	28	88	26
Brent	531	125	10	2
Bromley	223	46	56	12
Croydon	87	16	679	126
Ealing	18	4	430	100
Enfield	24	6	217	54
Haringey	128	38	377	111
Harrow	193	60	60	19
Havering	58	15	474	122
Hillingdon	108	27	178	45
Hounslow	54	16	135	41
Kingston-upon-Thames	27	14	84	43
Merton	26	11	156	64
Newham	40	11	198	54
Redbridge	117	34	56	16
Richmond-upon-Thames	105	45	126	54
Sutton	58	23	217	86
Waltham Forest	83	25	496	151
Inner London	2,474	62	4,131	103
Birmingham	172	10	328	18
Coventry	139	24	373	64
Dudley	81	18	681	155

	Full-value discretionary awards		*Lesser value awards*	
	Number of awards	*Per 1,000 of the average of the 18 + 19 population*	*Number of awards*	*Per 1,000 of the average of the 18 + 19 population*
Sandwell	88	18	—	—
Solihull	62	18	4	1
Walsall	69	15	—	—
Wolverhampton	50	11	—	—
Knowsley	6	2	671	188
Liverpool	—	—	1,707	185
St. Helens	47	15	633	198
Sefton	97	19	14	3
Wirral	593	108	242	44
Bolton	171	42	1,124	273
Bury	104	36	707	245
Manchester	199	22	1,761	193
Oldham	53	15	553	161
Rochdale	84	26	488	149
Salford	103	24	688	162
Stockport	152	34	813	180
Tameside	55	16	732	212
Trafford	—	—	436	119
Wigan	120	24	1,294	263
Barnsley	116	32	473	130
Doncaster	155	30	589	115
Rotherham	59	14	840	198
Sheffield	384	44	1,097	126
Bradford	388	52	853	114
Calderdale	73	24	173	56
Kirklees	308	53	1,246	213
Leeds	103	8	712	57
Wakefield	169	33	1,018	199
Gateshead	74	21	—	—
Newcastle upon Tyne	131	27	592	123
North Tyneside	53	17	688	219
South Tyneside	—	—	99	36
Sunderland	230	47	118	24
Isles of Scilly	—	—		—
Avon	466	28	1,175	71
Bedfordshire	159	18	262	30
Berkshire	384	29	172	13
Buckinghamshire	338	33	118	12
Cambridgeshire	298	28	14	1
Cheshire	1,023	64	8	1
Cleveland	319	33	448	46
Cornwall	183	27	1,057	157
Cumbria	457	59	782	100
Derbyshire	187	13	4,823	334
Devon	1,186	72	663	40
Dorset	387	41	491	52
Durham	355	36	—	—
East Sussex	363	36	1,929	191
Essex	710	32	—	—
Gloucestershire	415	47	357	40
Hampshire	1,202	41	823	28
Hereford and Worcester	366	34	82	8
Hertfordshire	141	9	671	41
Humberside	904	64	1,688	119
Isle of Wight	78	44	115	65
Kent	1,623	66	4,066	166
Lancashire	853	40	1,559	72
Leicestershire	673	44	951	62
Lincolnshire	470	51	428	47
Norfolk	220	19	1,479	131
North Yorkshire	841	67	1,302	104
Northamptonshire	248	28	90	10
Northumberland	107	23	792	168
Nottinghamshire	538	33	122	7
Oxfordshire	266	24	—	—
Salop	384	53	276	38

	Full-value discretionary awards		Lesser value awards	
	Number of awards	Per 1,000 of the average of the 18 + 19 population	Number of awards	Per 1,000 of the average of the 18 + 19 population
Somerset	164	21	668	85
Staffordshire	463	29	169	10
Suffolk	520	53	137	14
Surrey	463	26	349	20
Warwickshire	375	46	736	90
West Sussex	366	35	225	21
Wiltshire	372	39	491	51
Clwyd	199	31	233	36
Dyfed	2	—	1,096	212
Gwent	209	27	2,056	266
Gwynedd	103	29	1,050	294
Mid-Glamorgan	—	—	251	28
Powys	193	104	315	169
South Glamorgan	221	33	108	16
West Glamorgan	314	52	45	7

General Certificate of Secondary Education

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what consideration he has given to possible increased work loads on teachers arising from his proposal to introduce the new general certificate of secondary education.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend is conscious of the need to ensure that the total work load on teachers is reasonable. The general criteria for the GCSE provide accordingly that syllabuses and methods of assessment must not make unreasonable demands on human and financial resources.

Teachers

Mr. Speed asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list his Department's estimates of the membership figures for each of the teacher unions represented on the Burnham committee, the date and source of such figures and his estimate of the number of teachers not in a union.

Mr. Dunn: The Department does not estimate the size of the membership of the teacher unions. Actual figures are supplied by the unions themselves to the Certification Office and these were given in my reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) on 12 February, at column 116. We are not able to estimate the number of teachers not belonging to a union.

Pupil-Teacher Ratios

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what percentage change there has been in pupil-teacher ratios in the period from 1975 to 1984 in all types of schools.

Mr. Dunn: The percentage changes in pupil-teacher ratios between January 1975 and 1984 within schools in England are as follows:

	January 1975 PTR	January 1984 PTR	Percentage reduction
All maintained schools	20·6	18·7	9·2
Nursery	21·6	19·8	8·3
Primary	24·2	22·1	8·7
Secondary	17·2	16·2	5·8
Independent schools	13·5	11·6	14·1
Special schools	9·1	7·1	22·0
All schools	19·7	17·6	10·7

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information is available to his Department as to the pupil-teacher ratio in secondary schools participating in the assisted places scheme.

Mr. Dunn [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 March 1985, c. *480*]: The average pupil-teacher ratio at assisted places schools was 11·6 in January 1984, the most recent date for which figures are available.

Student-Staff Ratios

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what percentage change there has been in the student-staff ratio in the polytechnics over the period 1975 to 1984.

Mr. Brooke: The percentage change in the student-staff ratio (SSR) for advanced level work in the polytechnics between 1974-75 and 1983-84 was as follows:

(SSR)

1974-75	1983-84	Percentage change
7·0	11·1	58·6

The ratios are calculated as full-time equivalent student load divided by the full-time equivalent number of lecturers who are involved in teaching.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what percentage change there has been in student-staff ratios in universities over the period 1975 to 1984.

Mr. Brooke: The percentage change in the student-staff ratio (SSR) in universities in Great Britain between December 1975 and December 1983, the latter date for which information is available, was as follows:

(SSR)

1975	1983	Percentage change
8·8	10·2	16·2

This ratio is defined as the full-time equivalent of undergraduate and postgraduate students divided by full-time academic staff funded wholly from university funds.

A-Level Biology (Animal Dissection)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what discussions have taken place between his Department and secretaries of the General Certificate of Education examining boards concerning the removal of animal dissection from the A-level biology syllabus; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: Representatives of the GCE examining boards recently brought officials of the Department and of the Secondary Examinations Council up to date on the current position on requirements for dissection in A-level biology syllabuses. It was made plain by the Department at that meeting that decisions on such requirements are for the GCE examining boards themselves.

The issue of the inclusion of a limited amount of dissection in A-level biology syllabuses is a difficult one, and merits discussion by all of those professionally concerned. The Government have no plans to seek to issue guidance on it.

Pupil Statistics

Miss Boothroyd asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many, and what percentage, of school pupils attended *(a)* public sector schools and *(b)* assisted and independent schools for each of the last five years for which records are available.

Mr. Dunn: The number and percentage of pupils in maintained and independent schools in England in the years 1980 to 1984 are as follows:

Number of pupils in schools in England

	Maintained		Independent	
	Number of pupils	Percentage	Number of pupils	Percentage
1980	8,397,059	94·0	535,974	6·0
1981	8,185,094	93·9	535,029	6·1
1982	7,972,907	93·8	528,620	6·2
1983	7,752,217	93·7	523,885	6·3
1984	7,573,841	93·5	522,392	6·5

Schools (Expenditure)

Miss Boothroyd asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what have been the levels of both direct and indirect spending on *(a)* public sector schools and *(b)* assisted and independent schools by (i) central Government and (ii) local education authorities for each of the last five years for which records are available.

Mr. Dunn: The information requested is given in the following table:

	1979-80 £ million	1980-81 £ million	1981-82 £ million	1982-83 £ million	1983-84 £ million
Expenditure by:					
Central Government					
on maintained schools	35	37	40	34	34
on other schools	10	8	9	13	18
Local education authorities					
on maintained schools	5,374	6,514	7,032	7,479	7,831
on other schools	93	116	127	127	130

Notes:

1. Expenditure includes capital as well as current spending, and assistance with pupils' fees as well as direct expenditure on the provision of education.
2. "Other schools" includes non-maintained special schools and direct grant schools as well as independent schools.

School Leavers (Further and Higher Education)

Miss Boothroyd asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to the numbers and percentages of school pupils attending *(a)* public sector schools and *(b)* assisted and independent schools who subsequently attended (i) Oxford, (ii) Cambridge, (iii) all other universities, (iv) polytechnics and (v) all other higher and further education establishments for each of the last 10 years for which records are available.

Mr. Dunn: Information on the intended destination of school leavers is given in the table:

School leavers who intended to go to full-time courses of higher and further education

	1973-74		1974-75		1975-76		1976-77		1977-78		1978-79		1979-80		1980-81		1981-82		1982-83	
	Number (000's)	Per cent.	Number (000's)	Per cent.	Number (000's)	Per cent.	Number (000's)	Per cent.	Number (000's)	Per cent.	Number (000's)	Per cent.	Number (000's)	Per cent.	Number (000's)	Per cent.	Number (000's)	Per cent.	Number (000's)	Per cent.
Maintained Schools																				
Total leavers	599·84	100·0	608·84	100·0	624·73	100·0	665·13	100·0	682·20	100·0	693·84	100·0	706·11	100·0	689·89	100·0	706·69	100·0	721·81	100·0
Leavers going to																				
Oxford or Cambridge†	1·79	0·3	2·06	0·3	1·91	0·3	1·80	0·3	2·13	0·3	1·92	0·3	2·00	0·3	2·07	0·3	2·28	0·3	1·81	0·3
Other Universities	22·48	3·7	22·87	3·8	25·86	4·1	26·34	4·0	29·18	4·3	30·02	4·3	30·64	4·3	29·03	4·2	28·52	4·0	28·67	4·0
Polytechnics	9·44	1·6	10·00	1·6	12·22	2·0	13·02	2·0	12·10	1·8	13·07	1·9	13·44	1·9	16·57	2·4	18·77	2·7	17·19	2·4

	1973-74		1974-75		1975-76		1976-77		1977-78		1978-79		1979-80		1980-81		1981-82		1982-83	
	Number ('000's)	Per cent.	Number ('000's)	Per cent.	Number ('000's)	Per cent.	Number ('000's)	Per cent.	Number ('000's)	Per cent.	Number ('000's)	Per cent.	Number ('000's)	Per cent.	Number ('000's)	Per cent.	Number ('000's)	Per cent.	Number ('000's)	Per cent.
Other establishments of Higher and Further Education	68·85	11·5	79·66	13·1	80·21	12·8	86·89	13·1	88·06	12·9	86·16	12·4	95·19	13·5	121·34	17·6	131·99	18·7	133·10	18·4
Total	102·55	17·1	114·58	18·8	120·20	19·2	128·05	19·3	131·48	19·3	131·17	18·9	141·27	20·0	169·02	24·5	181·56	25·7	180·76	25·0
*Independent Schools**																				
Total leavers	41·96	100·0	42·87	100·0	41·86	100·0	42·38	100·0	42·11	100·0	43·53	100·0	44·62	100·0	44·07	100·0	44·44	100·0	43·71	100·0
Leavers going to																				
Oxford or Cambridge†	2·64	6·3	2·89	6·7	2·64	6·3	2·64	6·2	2·57	6·1	2·73	6·3	2·77	6·2	2·89	6·6	2·80	6·3	2·70	6·2
Other Universities	8·85	21·1	8·88	20·7	9·71	23·2	9·80	23·1	9·89	23·5	10·26	23·6	10·78	24·2	10·58	24·0	11·00	24·8	9·27	21·2
Polytechnics	2·55	6·1	2·46	5·7	2·75	6·6	2·75	6·5	2·80	6·6	2·56	5·9	2·84	6·4	3·27	7·4	3·41	7·7	3·31	7·6
Other establishments of Higher and Further Education	10·95	26·1	11·16	26·0	10·94	26·1	9·93	23·4	10·21	24·2	10·82	24·9	10·68	23·9	12·22	27·7	12·78	28·8	13·09	29·9
Total	24·98	59·5	25·38	59·2	26·03	62·2	25·11	59·2	25·47	60·5	26·38	60·6	27·07	60·7	28·96	65·7	29·97	67·4	28·36	64·9

Notes:
* Figures for the years 1973-74 to 1979-80 include the former direct grant schools.
† Separate figures for Oxford and Cambridge are not available.

English Teaching

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will introduce legislation to make mandatory the teaching of English in all schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend takes the view that English should be a compulsory element of the curriculum for all pupils of statutory school age. He sees no evidence that legislation is required to secure this.

Assisted Places Scheme

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what studies are being undertaken by his Department to assess the proportion of *(a)* potential O-level candidates and *(b)* potential A-level candidates leaving the maintained sector for the assisted places scheme and the effects on the maintained schools so affected;

(2) to what conclusions he has come concerning educational standards as a result of the assisted places scheme;

(3) how he estimates the marginal benefit accruing to a child educated under the assisted places scheme of the extra cost to his Department of so educating a child;

(4) what criteria he uses to gauge that the quality of education available to pupils educated under the assisted places scheme exceeds that which is available to those pupils in the maintained sector.

Mr. Dunn [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 March 1985, c. *480*]: Schools are selected to participate in the assisted places scheme because of their high standard and good academic records, from which assisted pupils will benefit. The cost of the scheme is more than justified by the consequent widening of parental choice and increase in the educational opportunities for able children from low-income families. The size of the scheme means that its implications for maintained schools are negligible.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what information he has as to the average income represented by fees paid by his Department under the assisted places scheme for those schools participating in the scheme for which the 60 per cent. requirement has been relaxed;

(2) if he will list in the *Official Report* the fee income to each school participating in the assisted places scheme as a result of the scheme; and what percentage of each school's fee income this represents for 1984-85.

Mr. Dunn [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 March 1985, c. *480*]: The latest estimated amounts to be paid to each school in respect of remitted fees for the school year 1984-85, and an estimate of the proportion of the school's fees income which that represents are as follows. Those schools which have been granted dispensation from the 60 per cent. rule for 1984-85 are indicated with an asterisk.

School Name	*Estimated payments* £	*Estimated percentage of fee income*
Abbey School, Reading	52,281	4·5
Abingdon School	92,775	7·6
Aldenham School, Elstree*	32,656	2·9
Alice Ottley School, Worcester	64,751	7·3
Alleyn's School, Dulwich	225,437	12·7
Arnold School, Blackpool	60,921	5·0
Ashford School, Kent*	64,691	6·3
Bancroft's School, Woodford	73,284	6·0
Bath High School*	65,286	12·3
Batley Grammar School	151,651	19·5
Bedales School, Petersfield	3,372	0·2
Bedford High School	91,715	7·1
Bedford Modern School	123,954	8·4
Bedford School	99,882	4·9
Dame Alice Harpur School	122,541	11·8
Belvedere School, Liverpool	125,130	27·0
Berkhamsted School*	39,868	3·1
Berkhamsted School for Girls	29,257	4·7
Birkenhead High School	149,040	13·9
Birkenhead School	174,650	16·9
Bishop's Stortford College	22,633	1·5
Blackheath High School	68,673	12·6
Bolton School (Boys)	162,252	12·4
Bolton School (Girls)	151,068	14·6
Bradfield College, Reading	14,653	1·8
Bradford Girls Grammar School	38,412	4·8
Bradford Grammar School	127,675	9·0
Brentwood School	89,692	5·8
Brighton and Hove High School	126,693	16·9
Brighton College	100,722	8·1
Bristol Cathedral School	110,818	17·3
Bristol Grammar School	173,211	11·7
Bromley High School	87,879	14·9
Bruton School for Girls	115,819	13·9
Bury Grammar School (Boys)	95,610	11·3

School Name	Estimated payments £	Estimated percentage of fee income
Bury Grammar School (Girls)	119,871	13·4
Canford School, Wimborne	74,232	4·2
Carmel College, Wallingford	152,873	21·5
Casterton School, Cumbria	52,857	7·9
Caterham School*	137,616	15·6
Central Newcastle High School	74,814	10·0
Charterhouse	45,033	1·6
Cheadle Hulme School	104,262	6·9
Chigwell School	102,053	10·4
Churchers College, Petersfield	96,408	12·4
City of London School	148,967	8·6
City of London School for Girls	108,598	10·4
Clifton College, Bristol	98,841	4·6
Clifton High School, Bristol	41,879	6·2
Colfe's School, London SE12	165,150	13·9
Colston's School, Bristol	111,489	11·1
Colston's Girls' School	90,456	11·5
Coventry School	186,957	7·1
Cranleigh School*	87,650	4·2
Croydon High School	76,329	7·3
Culford School, Bury St. Edmunds	65,964	2·0
Dame Allans Boys School, Newcastle-upon-Tyne	101,114	14·5
Dame Allans Girls School	88,964	13·0
Dauntseys School, Devizes	82,107	7·9
Denstone College, Uttoxeter	192,501	14·6
Dulwich College	313,086	10·5
Edgehill College, Bideford	103,587	18·2
Eltham College, London SE9*	112,722	11·7
Emanuel School, London SW11	308,564	23·2
Epsom College*	55,420	2·9
Exeter School	162,796	16·3
Farnborough Hill School	162,932	18·4
Flested School, Dunmow	102,013	5·4
Forest School, London E17	138,231	8·4
Friends School, Saffron Walden	119,880	14·0
Godolphin and Latymer School, London W6	178,092	14·2
Gresham's School, Norfolk*	24,611	3·1
Haberdashers Askes School (Boys), Elstree	211, 582	9·0
Haberdashers Askes School for Girls, Elstree	94,972	8·6
Hampton School	149,682	10·1
Harrogate College	23,097	2·3
Hereford Cathedral School	214,143	21·5
Highgate School*	59,655	3·5
Hulme Grammar School (Boys), Oldham	142,941	15·4
Hulme Grammar School (Girls), Oldham	110,655	18·0
Hymers College, Hull*	98,187	13·1
Ipswich High School	96,504	16·7
Ipswich School	84,273	6·9
James Allen's Girls School, Dulwich	121,269	13·5
John Lyon School, Harrow	92,947	10·9
Kent College, Canterbury	77,853	7·1
King Edward's School at Bath*	84,420	9·5
King Edward's School, Birmingham	243,650	18·7
King Edward VI High School, Birmingham	141,249	16·0
King Edward VII School, Lytham	148,285	19·6
King Edward VI School, Norwich	99,744	9·9
King Edward VI School, Southampton	189,750	13·6
King Edward's School, Witley	98,897	8·2
King's College School, Wimbledon	114,080	8·3
King's High School for Girls, Warwick	109,419	13·5
King's School, Chester	79,053	11·2
King's School, Macclesfield*	181,873	11·0
King's School, Rochester	69,461	6·3
King's School, Worcester	111,627	9·1
Kingston Grammar School	124,710	11·4
Kingswood School, Bath	60,078	5·8
Kirkham Grammar School	38,736	5·4
Lady Eleanor Holles School, Hampton	58,539	6·1
La Sagesse Convent School, Newcastle-upon-Tyne	133,279	23·6
Latymer Upper School, London W6	309,634	18·2
Leeds Girls High School	109,965	12·1
Leeds Grammar School	162,704	11·5
Leys School, Cambridge*	58,182	6·3
Liverpool College	150,523	15·7
Lord Wandsworth College, Basingstoke	110,124	12·6
Loreto Convent Grammar School, Altrincham	45,105	4·4
Loughborough Grammar School	107,220	7·9
Loughborough High School	72,903	9·1
Magdalen College School, Oxford	98,467	12·1
Malvern College*	101,892	4·7
Manchester Grammar School	247,412	10·7
Manchester High School	131,664	10·8
Maynard School, Exeter	137,088	23·3
Merchant Taylors' School, Crosby	153,481	14·9
Merchant Taylors' Girls School, Crosby	114,135	14·3
Merchant Taylors' School, Northwood	123,353	7·0
Mill Hill School*	107,944	7·8
Monkton Combe School, Bath*	66,026	5·2
Mount St. Mary's College, near Sheffield	90,960	15·1
Newcastle under Lyme School, Staffordshire	338,124	19·9
Northampton High School	176,641	21·8
North London Collegiate School, Edgware	65,685	6·1
Norwich High School	115,698	14·4
Nottingham Girls High School	118,746	11·6
Nottingham High School (Boys)	26,148	2·0
Notting Hill and Ealing High School*	66,780	9·2
Old Palace School, Croydon	108,183	13·0
Oxford High School	53,121	7·2
Perse School for Boys, Cambridge	41,666	6·0
Perse School for Girls*	87,846	10·1
Plymouth College	147,825	13·1
Pocklington School, near York	125,723	14·0
Portsmouth Grammar School	113,569	11·2
Portsmouth High School	111,261	17·5
Putney High School	101,049	14·2
Queen Elizabeth Grammar School, Blackburn	186,672	13·1
Queen Elizabeth Grammar School, Wakefield	136,075	11·2
Queen Elizabeth Hospital School, Bristol	121,536	18·0
Queen Mary School, Lytham	158,627	18·0
Queen's College, Taunton	98,333	8·6
Queen's College, London W1	67,655	10·0
Queens School, Chester	54,510	9·4
Ratcliffe College, Leicester	43,736	6·2
Redland High School, Bristol	55,458	9·0
Red Maids School, Bristol	120,147	19·0
Reigate Grammar School	78,928	5·4
Repton School	65,265	—
Rossall School, Fleetwood	61,146	3·2
Royal Grammar School, Guildford	114,986	8·6
Royal Grammar School, Newcastle	179,034	12·4
Royal Grammar School, Worcester	104,211	7·1
St. Albans School	97,500	9·1
St. Albans High School For Girls	48,144	6·3
St. Ambrose College, Altrincham	69,625	8·0
St. Anselm's College, Birkenhead*	114,515	13·0
St. Bede's College, Manchester	139,482	15·5

School Name	Estimated payments £	Estimated percentage of fee income
St. Bees School, Cumbria	141,370	26·6
St. Benedict's School, Ealing	67,165	6·0
St. Catherine's School, Bramley	31,087	3·5
St. Dunstan's College, Catford	137,007	11·1
St. Edmund's College, Ware	61,832	6·4
St. Edward's College, Liverpool	274,521	26·4
St. George's College, Weybridge	43,661	3·1
St. Helen's School, Northwood	26,747	3·0
St. John's College, Southsea	144,771	17·1
St. John's School, Leatherhead*	9,232	0·7
St. Joseph's College, Ipswich	52,439	6·6
St. Joseph's Convent, Reading	105,600	15·1
St. Mary's College, Crosby	186,751	21·2
St. Mary's School, Cambridge	60,427	8·4
St. Mary's Hall, Brighton	48,205	6·4
St. Maur's Convent, Weybridge	71,169	9·4
St. Paul's School	89,897	4·4
St. Paul's Girls School	89,647	6·7
St. Peter's School, York	127,506	9·3
St. Swithun's School, Winchester	6,880	0·6
Salesian College, Farnborough	42,418	9·4
School of St. Helen and St. Katharine, Abingdon	64,464	8·8
Sedbergh School, Cumbria	20,548	2·0
Sheffield High School	68,472	11·0
Shrewsbury High School	68,184	13·1
Sir William Perkins School, Chertsey	58,142	9·3
South Hampstead High School	54,033	8·0
Stamford School	71,796	6·4
Stamford High School	46,227	4·2
Stockport Grammar School	180,524	14·0
Stonyhurst College, Nr. Blackburn	42,573	3·3
Stowe School, Nr. Buckingham*	27,384	1·3
Streatham Hill and Clapham High	121,041	27·0
Sutton High School	47,069	5·4
Sutton Valance School, Nr. Maidstone	72,452	7·1
Sydenham High School	83,226	13·0
Talbot Heath School, Bournemouth	124,551	18·1
Taunton School	66,578	3·5
Tonbridge School	2,528	0·3
Trent College, Derbyshire	153,702	11·0
Trinity School of John Whitgift, Croydon	136,344	9·4
Truro School	91,274	7·0
Truro High School	58,898	9·0
University College School, London NW3	72,793	5·0
Upton Hall Convent School	94,434	14·0
Ursuline High School, Ilford	94,719	16·0
Wakefield High School	104,858	10·0
Walthamstow Hall, Sevenoaks	80,220	10·1
Warwick School	119,073	9·3
Wellingborough School	79,176	7·0
Wellington College, Berkshire	56,588	6·3
Wellington School, Somerset	192,757	15·2
Wells Cathedral School	74,720	7·4
West Buckland School, Barnstaple	23,361	4·0
Westminster School	10,526	0·7
Whitgift School, Croydon	122,826	6·9
William Hulme Grammar School, Manchester	161,834	12·9
Wimbledon High School	50,901	8·6
Winchester College	40,737	1·9
Wisbech Grammar School	152,020	18·0
Withington Girl's School, Manchester	55,623	8·4
Wolverhampton Grammar School	247,674	24·1
Woodbridge School	124,830	11·6
Woodhouse Grove School, Bradford	112,580	12·4
Wycliffe College, Stonehouse	73,340	22·6

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East of 11 March, *Official Report*, column 32, if he will now give for each year of the operation of the assisted places scheme the names of schools which have been granted dispensation from the 60 per cent. rule and the percentage of assisted places pupils formerly attending maintained schools in each case.

Mr. Dunn [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 March 1985, c. 480]: The rule requires participating schools to recruit assisted pupils who, at the time of their selection, are attending a publicly-maintained school and have done so for two years or more so that these form at least 60 per cent. of all the school's assisted pupils. Dispensations granted from this rule are as follows. For those cases in italic figures, the dispensation granted on a contingency basis was not, in the event, needed.

School	Percentage of relevant pupils
School year 1981-82	
St. Benedict's School, Ealing	54
Notting Hill and Ealing High School	*64*
St. Helen's School, Northwood	0
Kingston Grammar School	46
Bancroft's School, Woodford	62
St. Paul's School	58
Sutton High School	50
Merchant Taylor's Girls School, Crosby	52
Leeds Girls' High School	56
Dame Allan's Boy's School, Newcastle-upon-Tyne	56
Royal Grammar School, Newcastle-upon-Tyne	56
Dulwich College	57
James Allen's Girls' School, Dulwich	54
City of London School for Girls	56
City of London School (Boys)	50
South Hampstead High School	53
Kingswood School, Bath	50
Monkton Combe School	57
Wellington College	0
Stowe School	0
Leys School, Cambridge	*100*
St. Mary's Convent, Cambridge	44
Perse School for Girls, Cambridge	50
King's School, Macclesfield	58
Costerton School, Cumbria	45
Trent College	53
Canford School, Wimborne	57
Chigwell School	46
Brentwood School	47
St. Swithun's School, Winchester	0
Church's College, Petersfield	62
Malvern College	40
Aldenham School	50
Berkhampsted School for Girls	67
Berkhampsted School (Boys)	54
St. Albans High School for Girls	50
Hymers College, Hull	41
Pocklington School, near York	52
Ashford School	23
Kent College, Canterbury	40
Ratcliffe College, Leicester	0
Oxford High School	46
Shrewsbury High School	55
Ipswich School	62
St. Joseph's College, Ipswich	25
Woodbridge School	55
Cranleigh School	33
Epsom College	40
Charterhouse	50
St. John's School, Leatherhead	0
St. George's College, Weybridge	57

School	Percentage of relevant pupils
St. Maur's Convent, Weybridge	43
Caterham School	42
School Year 1982-83	
Hasmonean High School (Girls)	39
Whitgift School, Croydon	53
Trinity School of John Whitgift, Croydon	59
St. Benedict's School, Ealing	52
Notting Hill and Ealing High School	49
St. Helen's School, Northwood	13
King's College School, Wimbledon	58
Lady Eleanor Holles School, Hampton	58
St. Paul's School	59
St. Mary's College, Crosby	52
St. Anselm's College, Birkenhead	56
Bury Grammar School—Boys	50
Bury Grammar School—Girls	58
Sheffield High School for Girls	58
Wakefield Girl's High School	59
Royal Grammar School, Newcastle-upon-Tyne	59
Dulwich College	58
St. Dunston's College, Catford	56
Bristol Grammar School	59
Bath High School	58
Bedford Schools	53
Wellington College, Berkshire	53
Stowe School	0
Leys School, Cambridge	44
King's School, Macclesfield	51
King's School, Chester	52
Cranford School, Wimborne	57
Chigwell School	50
Wycliffe College, Stonehouse	55
St. Swithun's School, Winchester	0
St. John's College, Southsea	59
Malvern College	35
Berkhampstead School (Boys)	50
Hymers College, Hull	39
Pocklington School, near York	49
Ashford School	27
Loughborough Grammar School	51
Taunton School	55
Epsom College	44
Charterhouse	50
St. George's College, Weybridge	54
St. Maur's Convent, Weybridge	42
Caterham School	41
School Year 1983-84	
Whitgift School, Croydon	50
Kingston Grammar School	57
King's College School, Wimbledon	55
Forest School, London E17	59
Bury Grammar School—Boys	51
Withington Girl's School, Manchester	58
Royal Grammar School, Newcastle-upon-Tyne	58
Colston's School, Bristol	58
King Edward's School at Bath	58
Bradfield College, Reading	0
Abbey School, Reading	53
Stowe School	33
Leys School, Cambridge	40
St. Mary's Convent, Cambridge	58
Trent College	53
Mount St. Mary's College, Derbyshire	51
Canford School, Wimborne	50
St. Mary's Hall, Brighton	50
Chigwell School	56
Wycliffe College, Stonehouse	43
St. Swithun's School, Winchester	25
Malvern College	26
Aldenham School	20
Berkhamsted School for Girls	56
St. Albans High School for Girls	57
Hymers College, Hull	44
Ashford School	37
Tonbridge School	50
Kent College, Canterbury	49
Stonyhurst College	53
Loughborough Grammar School	52
Loughborough High School	59
Stamford School	59
Abingdon School	58
Cranleigh School	56
Epsom College	41
Charterhouse	40
St. George's College, Weybridge	53
Caterham School	41
School Year 1984-85	
Mill Hill School	56
Eltham College	58
Notting Hill and Ealing High School	54
Highgate School	62
St. Anselm's College, Birkenhead	52
Monkton Combe School	54
Bath High School	57
King Edward's School at Bath	52
Stowe School	38
King's School, Macclesfield	59
Leys School, Cambridge	26
Perse School for Girls, Cambridge	58
Malvern College	25
Aldenham School	55
Berkhamsted School (Boys)	52
Hymers College, Hull	43
Ashford School	55
Gresham's School, Norfolk	50
Cranleigh School	53
Epsom College	37
St. John's School, Leatherhead	50
Caterham School	42

Higher Education

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many places were available in further and higher education for each of the last five years in *(a)* universities, *(b)* polytechnics and *(c)* other institutions; and how many and what percentage of the students concerned were studying for each category of qualification for which records are available.

Mr. Brooke [*pursuant to his reply*, 20 March 1985, c. 493]: The numbers and percentages of students enrolled on courses leading to qualifications for which information is readily available for each of the last five years, at universities in Great Britain and polytechnics and other colleges of further education in England in 1981 to 1983 and in England and Wales in 1979 and 1980, are given in the tables.

Universities in Great Britain

	1979		1980		1981		1982		1983	
	000's	Per cent.	000's	Per cent.	000's	Per cent.	000's	Per cent.	000's	Per cent.
Full-time										
Postgraduate	47·6	16·3	47·5	15·9	46·8	15·6	45·4	15·4	47·5	16·3
First degrees	241·1	83·7	247·8	83·0	250·2	83·3	246·7	83·5	240·8	82·6
Other			3·3	1·1	3·2	1·1	3·3	1·1	3·5	1·2
TOTAL	292·7	100·0	298·7	100·0	300·2	100·0	295·4	100·0	291·7	100·0
Part-time										
Postgraduate	25·9	26·0	27·4	27·5	28·2	27·1	28·3	26·2	29·0	26·2
Undergraduate*	73·8	74·0	72·3	72·5	76·0	72·9	79·7	73·8	81·7	73·7
TOTAL	99·7	100·0	99·7	100·0	104·2	100·0	108·0	100·0	110·8	100·0

* Including Open University students.

Full-time and sandwich course enrolments in Polytechnics

	England and Wales		England only		
	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983
POLYTECHNICS					
Full-time and sandwich students					
Advanced qualifications					
Postgraduate initial teacher training	1,409	1,807	1,907	1,405	1,336
Other initial teacher training	8,204	6,130	5,700	5,748	6,509
Postgraduate in-service teacher training	241	180	62	113	128
Other in-service teacher training	448	451	345	393	472
Postgraduate and higher degrees	2,970	3,039	2,877	2,681	3,333
University first degree	245	226	199	143	1,204
CNAA first degree	73,277	78,590	87,104	95,143	101,339
BEC/TEC Higher Certificates/Diplomas	4,598	6,369	10,193	13,663	15,570
HND/HNC	11,511	10,744	8,221	6,059	4,838
Diploma of Higher Education	714	881	1,078	1,329	1,545
Professional qualifications	6,950	6,943	7,047	6,892	6,784
College Diploma/Certificates	5,069	5,002	5,179	4,803	4,475
Other advanced qualifications	377	372	483	544	553
Non-advanced qualifications					
BEC/TEC Certificates/Diplomas	163	215	328	181	175
OND/ONC	79	65	25	—	—
City and Guilds	102	76	60	49	47
GCE 'A' level	10	11	18	16	17
GCE 'O' level	—	—	—	—	—
CSE/CEE	—	—	—	—	—
Professional qualifications	516	533	433	400	218
College Diploma/Certificate	2,176	2,050	2,174	1,888	1,924
Other specified qualifications	219	164	112	39	8
Unspecified qualifications	1,105	709	1,301	1,082	750
Total full-time and sandwich students	120,383	124,557	134,846	142,571	151,225

Full-time and sandwich course enrolments in other establishments of further education

	England and Wales		England only		
	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983
OTHER ESTABLISHMENTS OF FE					
Full-time and sandwich students					
Advanced qualifications					
Postgraduate initial teacher training	3,307	3,739	3,610	2,704	2,217
Other initial teacher training	24,912	17,460	15,018	14,754	14,315
Postgraduate in-service teacher training	165	160	104	143	110
Other in-service teacher training	1,445	1,551	1,344	1,221	1,364
Postgraduate and higher degrees	2,257	2,313	2,510	2,547	2,803
University first degree	8,743	9,889	11,296	12,406	11,786
CNAA first degree	10,259	11,450	13,350	15,747	17,356
BEC/TEC Higher Certificates/Diplomas	4,799	5,504	6,748	11,394	16,023
HND/HNC	6,546	6,148	5,366	4,413	3,660
Diploma of Higher Education	1,634	1,597	1,116	1,291	1,035
Professional qualifications	9,814	9,781	8,915	7,882	7,915
College Diplomas/Certificates	4,050	3,798	3,518	3,778	3,456
Other advanced qualifications	573	588	554	587	525
Non-advanced qualifications					
BEC/Certificates/Diplomas	29,082	39,248	56,860	70,567	75,739

	England and Wales 1979	1980	1981	England only 1982	1983
OND/ONC	15,212	12,496	8,108	5,877	4,898
City and Guilds	47,965	49,562	50,628	58,720	59,933
GCE 'A' level	55,993	56,237	55,926	58,091	58,146
GCE 'O' level	31,017	31,662	32,441	31,762	29,540
CSE/CEE	414	449	575	442	402
Professional qualifications	30,000	44,746	45,377	45,362	44,076
College Diploma/Certificate	18,318	14,423	12,082	13,199	12,181
Other specified qualifications	6,111	5,779	4,286	3,611	3,096
Unspecified qualifications	65,964	55,564	56,964	63,640	52,558
Total full-time and sandwich students	375,580	384,144	396,696	430,138	423,124

Part-time day and evening only course enrolments in Polytechnics

	England and Wales 1979	1980	1981	England only 1982	1983
POLYTECHNICS					
Part-time day and evening only students					
Advanced qualifications					
Postgraduate initial teacher training	—	5	41	23	—
Other initial teacher training	569	702	851	677	425
Postgraduate in-service teacher training	370	439	393	536	628
Other in-service teacher training	4,353	4,852	4,381	4,826	5,059
Postgraduate and higher degrees	7,394	7,658	8,186	8,552	8,715
University first degree	496	401	372	377	334
CNAA first degree	6,906	8,088	9,115	10,090	11,442
BEC/TEC Higher Certificates/Diplomas	5,740	10,453	14,208	14,710	14,367
HND/HNC	8,654	3,886	1,244	472	382
Diploma of Higher Education	125	119	129	175	204
Professional qualifications	23,340	23,103	22,046	20,521	21,887
College Diplomas/Certificates	3,174	3,399	3,590	3,444	3,583
Other advanced qualifications	2,175	1,590	1,187	708	763
Non-advanced qualifications					
BEC/TEC Certificates/Diplomas	935	1,216	905	673	643
OND/ONC	—	—	—	—	—
City and Guilds	4,505	3,431	1,771	1,188	994
GCE 'A' level	194	194	201	233	207
GCE 'O' level	114	129	115	129	363
CSE/CEE	—	—	—	—	—
Professional qualifications	5,055	4,442	3,937	4,095	4,096
College Diploma/Certificate	927	742	833	866	1,158
Other specified qualifications	417	396	539	179	172
Unspecified qualifications	9,577	8,144	7,269	7,796	7,540
Total part-time and evening only students	84,420	83,389	81,303	80,270	82,881

Part-time day and evening only course enrolments in other establishments of further education

	England and Wales 1979	1980	1981	England only 1982	1983
OTHER ESTABLISHMENTS OF FE					
Part-time day and evening only students					
Advanced qualifications					
Postgraduate initial teacher training	40	72	36	29	56
Other initial teacher training	353	281	219	160	258
Postgraduate in-service teacher training	701	767	1,008	1,212	905
Other in-service teacher training	8,844	9,419	9,003	10,280	11,030
Postgraduate and higher degrees	2,746	2,774	2,943	2,796	3,002
University first degree	607	667	749	660	654
CNAA first degree	966	1,112	1,387	1,477	1,726
BEC/TEC Higher Certificates/Diplomas	16,622	30,084	38,420	42,285	43,246
HND/HNC	14,345	7,788	2,345	1,189	762
Diploma of Higher Education	81	71	34	98	174
Professional qualifications	38,385	40,116	37,432	37,730	39,120
College Diplomas/Certificates	1,334	1,598	1,598	1,965	1,989
Other advanced qualifications	6,841	5,479	3,635	1,672	1,307
Non-advanced qualifications					
BEC/TEC Certificates/Diplomas	135,088	137,600	120,566	111,160	119,788
OND/ONC	2,397	734	470	290	319
City and Guilds	311,922	287,444	248,281	226,955	228,804

	England and Wales			England only	
	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983
GCE 'A' level	65,336	65,074	65,216	69,682	79,086
GCE 'O' level	111,330	114,111	114,906	121,833	129,429
CSE/CEE	914	501	875	507	594
Professional qualifications	41,605	86,116	82,266	83,789	93,019
College Diploma/Certificate	3,102	2,223	2,217	2,544	2,531
Other specified qualifications	4,731	2,525	2,470	3,141	3,739
Unspecified qualifications	542,087	487,634	486,981	514,711	562,169
Total part-time and evening only students	1,310,057	1,284,190	1,223,057	1,235,865	1,323,707

Distribution of full-time and sandwich course enrolments in Polytechnics

	England and Wales			England only	
	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983
POLYTECHNICS					
Full-time and sandwich students					
Advanced qualifications					
Postgraduate initial teacher training	1·2	1·5	1·4	1·0	0·9
Other initial teacher training	6·8	4·9	4·2	4·0	4·3
Postgraduate in-service teacher training	0·2	0·1	*	0·1	0·1
Other in-service teacher training	0·4	0·4	0·3	0·3	0·3
Postgraduate and higher degrees	2·5	2·4	2·1	1·9	2·2
University first degree	0·2	0·2	0·1	0·1	0·8
CNAA first degree	60·9	63·1	64·6	66·7	67·0
BEC/TEC Higher Certificates/Diplomas	3·6	5·1	7·6	9·5	10·3
HND/HNC	9·6	8·6	6·1	4·2	3·2
Diploma of Higher Education	0·6	0·7	0·8	0·9	1·0
Professional qualifications	5·8	5·6	5·2	4·8	4·5
College Diplomas/Certificates	4·2	4·0	3·8	3·4	3·0
Other advanced qualifications	0·3	0·3	0·4	0·4	0·4
Non-advanced qualifications					
BEC/TEC Certificates/Diplomas	0·1	0·2	0·2	0·1	0·1
OND/ONC	0·1	0·1	*	*	*
City and Guilds	0·1	0·1	*	*	*
GCE 'A' level	*	*	*	*	*
GCE 'O' level	*	*	*	*	*
CSE/CEE	*	*	*	*	*
Professional qualifications	0·4	0·4	0·3	0·3	0·1
College Diploma/Certificate	1·8	1·6	1·6	1·3	1·3
Other specified qualifications	0·2	0·1	0·1	*	*
Unspecified qualifications	0·9	0·6	1·0	0·8	0·5
Total full-time and sandwich students	100·0	100·0	100·0	100·0	100·0

* = less than 0·1 per cent.

Distribution of full-time and sandwich course enrolments in other establishments of further education

	England and Wales			England only	
	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983
OTHER ESTABLISHMENTS OF FE					
Full-time and sandwich students					
Advanced qualifications					
Postgraduate initial teacher training	0·9	1·0	0·9	0·6	0·5
Other initial teacher training	5·8	4·5	3·8	3·4	3·4
Postgraduate in-service teacher training	*	*	*	*	*
Other in-service teacher training	0·4	0·4	0·3	0·3	0·3
Postgraduate and higher degrees	0·6	0·6	0·6	0·6	0·7
University first degree	2·3	2·6	2·8	2·9	2·8
CNAA first degree	2·7	3·0	3·4	3·7	4·1
BEC/TEC Higher Certificates/Diplomas	1·3	1·4	1·7	2·6	3·8
HND/HNC	1·7	1·6	1·4	1·0	0·9
Diploma of Higher Education	0·4	0·4	0·3	0·3	0·2
Professional qualifications	2·6	2·5	2·2	1·8	1·9
College Diplomas/Certificates	1·1	1·0	0·9	0·9	0·8
Other advanced qualifications	0·2	0·2	0·1	0·1	0·1
Non-advanced qualifications					
BEC/TEC Certificates/Diplomas	7·7	10·2	14·3	16·4	17·9
OND/ONC	4·1	3·3	2·0	1·4	1·2
City and Guilds	12·8	12·9	12·8	13·7	14·2
GCE 'A' level	14·9	14·6	14·1	13·5	13·7

	England and Wales 1979	1980	1981	England only 1982	1983
GCE 'O' level	8·3	8·2	8·2	7·4	7·0
CSE/CEE	0·1	0·1	0·1	0·1	0·1
Professional qualifications	8·0	11·6	11·4	10·5	10·4
College Diploma/Certificate	4·9	3·8	3·0	3·1	2·9
Other specified qualifications	1·6	1·5	1·1	0·8	0·7
Unspecified qualifications	17·6	14·5	14·4	14·8	12·4
Total full-time and sandwich students	100·0	100·0	100·0	100·0	100·0

* = less than 0·1 per cent.

Percentage distribution of course enrolments in Polytechnics part-time day and evening only

	England and Wales 1979	1980	1981	England only 1982	1983
POLYTECHNICS					
Part-time day and evening only students					
Advanced qualifications					
Postgraduate initial teacher training	*	*	0·1	*	*
Other initial teacher training	0·7	0·8	1·0	0·8	0·5
Postgraduate in-service teacher training	0·9	0·5	0·5	0·7	0·8
Other in-service teacher training	5·2	5·8	5·4	6·0	6·1
Postgraduate and higher degrees	8·8	9·2	10·1	10·6	10·5
University first degree	0·6	0·5	0·5	0·5	0·4
CNAA first degree	8·2	9·7	11·2	12·6	13·8
BEC/TEC Higher Certificates/Diplomas	6·8	12·5	17·4	18·4	17·4
HND/HNC	9·5	4·7	1·5	0·6	0·4
Diploma of Higher Education	0·1	0·1	0·2	0·2	0·2
Professional qualifications	27·6	27·7	27·1	25·6	26·4
College Diploma/Certificates	3·8	4·1	4·4	4·3	4·3
Other advanced qualifications	2·6	1·9	1·5	0·9	0·9
Non-advanced qualifications					
BEC/TEC Certificates/Diplomas	1·1	1·4	1·1	0·8	0·8
OND/ONC	*	*	*	*	*
City and Guilds	5·3	4·1	2·2	1·5	1·2
GCE 'A' level	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·3	0·2
GCE 'O' level	0·1	0·2	0·1	0·2	0·4
CSE/CEE	*	*	*	*	*
Professional qualifications	6·0	5·3	4·8	5·1	4·9
College Diploma/Certificate	1·1	0·9	1·0	1·1	1·4
Other specified qualifications	0·5	0·5	0·7	0·2	0·2
Unspecified qualifications	11·3	9·8	8·9	9·7	9·1
Total part-time and evening only students	100·0	100·0	100·0	100·0	100·0

* = less than 0·1 per cent.

Percentage distribution of part-time and evening only course enrolments in other establishments of further education

	England and Wales 1979	1980	1981	England only 1982	1983
OTHER ESTABLISHMENTS OF FE					
Part-time day and evening only students					
Advanced qualifications					
Postgraduate initial teacher training	*	*	*	*	*
Other initial teacher training	*	*	*	*	*
Postgraduate in-service teacher training	0·1	0·1	0·1	0·1	0·1
Other in-service teacher training	0·7	0·7	0·7	0·8	0·8
Postgraduate and higher degrees	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·2
University first degree	*	0·1	0·1	0·1	*
CNAA first degree	0·1	0·1	0·1	0·1	0·1
BEC/TEC Higher Certificates/Diplomas	1·3	2·3	3·1	3·4	3·3
HND/HNC	1·1	0·6	0·2	0·1	0·1
Diploma of Higher Education	*	*	*	*	*
Professional qualifications	2·9	3·1	3·1	3·1	3·0
College Diploma/Certificates	0·1	0·1	0·1	0·2	0·2
Other advanced qualifications	0·5	0·4	0·3	0·1	0·1
Non-advanced qualifications					
BEC/TEC Certificates/Diplomas	10·3	10·7	9·9	9·0	9·0
OND/ONC	0·2	0·1	*	*	*
City and Guilds	23·8	22·4	20·3	18·4	17·3

	England and Wales		England only		
	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983
GCE 'A' level	5·0	5·1	5·3	5·6	6·0
GCE 'O' level	8·5	8·9	9·4	9·9	9·8
CSE/CEE	*	*	0·1	*	*
Professional qualifications	3·2	6·7	6·7	6·8	7·0
College Diploma/Certificate	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·2
Other specified qualifications	0·4	0·2	0·2	0·3	0·3
Unspecified qualifications	41·4	38·0	39·8	41·6	42·5
Total part-time day and evening only students	100·0	100·0	100·0	100·0	100·0

* = less than 0·1 per cent.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Santo Domingo

Mr. Arnold asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what property is currently rented by Her Majesty's Government for Her Majesty's embassy, Santo Domingo; what arrangements have been made for the termination of the leases; and whether any cost is involved in such arrangements;

(2) what buildings are currently occupied by Her Majesty's embassy, Santo Domingo.

Mr. Renton: We rent our offices, the ambassador's house, and one other house in Santo Domingo. Arrangements have been made for the termination of all the leases without financial penalty at the end of March 1985.

European Community

Mr. Forth asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has made any proposal to the Council of Ministers for changes in the size, representation or composition of European Economic Community institutions following the possible entry of Spain and Portugal to the Community.

Mr. Rifkind: Yes. The United Kingdom has proposed a reduction in the size of the European Commission to one Commissioner per member state after enlargement. The United Kingdom also suggested that on accession the size of some institutions should be held at roughly their present size and the places reallocated to accommodate Spanish and Portuguese nationals. But the Community has now agreed with Spain and Portugal that increases should be on a *pro rata* basis according to the relative sizes of those countries.

Restored Historic Buildings, Leningrad (Exhibition)

Mr. Jim Callaghan asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will arrange for an exhibition relating to restored historic buildings in Leningrad to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Rifkind: I understand that arrangements have been made with the authorities of the House for such an exhibition proposed by the hon. Member to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from 15-19 April.

Diplomatic Representation

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Foreign annd Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing, for each country with diplomatic representation in the United Kingdom, and for each country where the United Kingdom has diplomatic representation, the respective numbers of diplomats in post in each country on 31 January in each of the last five years.

Mr. Renton: The attached table A shows the number of foreign and Commonwealth diplomatic agents in each mission in London on the date in each of the past five years at which our records were updated.

We do not keep precisely comparable records of United Kingdom-based diplomatic representation in posts overseas. The attached table B, which is based on information in "Her Majesty's Diplomatic Service Overseas Reference List" (a copy of which is available for reference in the Library), shows the numbers of United Kingdom-based diplomatic staff of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and other Government Departments in each overseas capital on 31 October of each of the past five years. These figures do not include non-resident representation, except for Chad.

Foreign and Commonwealth Diplomatic Agents in London

	June 1981	July 1982	June 1983	March 1984	31 January 1985
Afghanistan, Republic of	2	3	2	2	2
Algeria	13	15	20	20	22
Antigua and Barbuda	—	3	—	—	2
Argentina (Interests Section, Brazilian Embassy)	21	4	4	4	4
Australia	54	48	40	38	41
Austria	13	13	13	11	14
Bahamas, Commonwealth of the	1	1	1	1	2
Bahrain, State of	6	8	7	7	7
Bangladesh, People's Republic of	16	17	14	17	14
Barbados	12	12	12	11	10
Belgium	12	13	11	12	17
Belize	—	—	1	1	1
Benin, Republic of (non-resident)	6	5	7	7	7
Bolivia	10	7	4	4	4

	June 1981	July 1982	June 1983	March 1984	31 January 1985
Botswana	5	3	4	4	4
Brazil	34	34	35	36	37
Brunei	—	—	—	11	11
Bulgaria, People's Republic of	21	18	17	18	17
Burma, Socialist Republic of the Union of	7	6	8	10	9
Burundi, Republic of (non-resident)	4	5	4	6	6
Cameroon, United Republic of	17	18	17	15	18
Canada	57	51	54	57	62
Central African Republic—Paris (non-resident)	2	12	12	11	11
Chad, Republic of—Brussels (non-resident)	2	4	3	3	2
Chile	14	15	18	16	16
China, People's Republic of	56	66	59	62	63
Colombia	13	12	13	13	13
Congo, People's Republic of (non-resident)	12	12	12	12	11
Costa Rica	4	2	5	7	8
Cuba, Republic of	12	12	12	12	11
Cyprus	24	20	22	20	17
Czechoslovakia, Socialist Republic of	16	14	20	18	18
Denmark	20	19	19	18	20
Djibouti, Republic of (non-resident)	2	2	2	2	5
Dominica, Commonwealth of	2	2	2	3	3
Dominican Republic	8	6	7	10	11
Eastern Caribbean States	—	—	10	10	8
Ecuador	6	7	6	7	8
Egypt, Arab Republic of	72	78	70	66	67
El Salvador	2	1	2	1	1
Equatorial Guinea, Republic of	1	2	2	2	3
Ethiopia, Provisional Military Goverment of Socialist	9	7	8	9	9
Fiji	5	5	6	4	4
Finland	17	16	17	16	16
France	48	53	52	54	55
Gabon, Republic of	4	5	4	5	4
The Gambia	6	6	6	9	10
Germany, Federal Republic of	50	48	49	51	47
German Democratic Republic	17	13	17	17	17
Ghana	43	50	43	34	35
Greece	21	20	24	26	25
Grenada	3	4	4	5	5
Guinea, Republic of (non-resident)	8	8	8	4	3
Guyana	14	11	10	10	10
Haiti, Republic of	1	1	1	2	3
Holy See	—	2	2	2	2
Honduras	4	3	5	6	11
Hungary, People's Republic of	14	12	12	11	10
Iceland	3	4	4	5	5
India	71	75	68	71	73
Indonesia	17	20	21	23	25
Iran, Islamic Republic of	9	11	12	13	15
Iraq, Republic of	37	50	44	30	28
Republic of Ireland	15	14	12	14	15
Israel	30	39	35	38	43
Italy	21	22	24	26	25
Ivory Coast	8	8	8	8	7
Jamaica	25	21	23	25	25
Japan	50	49	51	57	57
Jordan, Hashemite Kingdom of	22	22	19	20	21
Kenya	25	25	25	24	24
Kiribati (non-resident)	—	1	1	1	1
Korea, Republic of	19	16	18	15	15
Kuwait, State of	14	16	17	19	22
Laos, People's Democratic Republic of	2	2	3	2	2
Lebanon	5	6	7	5	5
Lesotho, Kingdom of	3	3	3	5	5
Liberia, Republic of	6	6	7	8	7
Libya, People's Bureau of the Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya; 1985 Libyan interests section, Saudi Arabian Embassy	25	19	23	22	1
Luxembourg	2	1	1	1	1
Madagascar, Republic of (non-resident)	2	2	2	2	2
Malawi, Republic of	9	8	10	11	13
Malaysia	41	43	44	44	45
Mali, Republic of (non-resident)	2	3	3	3	3
Malta	8	7	8	8	8
Mauritania, Islamic Republic of (non-resident)	6	10	9	9	11
Mauritius	9	9	5	5	5
Mexico	30	36	33	31	34

	June 1981	July 1982	June 1983	March 1984	31 January 1985
Mongolia, People's Republic of	3	4	4	3	3
Morocco, Kingdom of	12	12	17	17	16
Nepal	4	4	3	4	4
The Netherlands	19	19	19	18	18
New Zealand	25	25	25	21	21
Nicaragua	4	2	2	2	2
Niger, Republic of (non-resident)	3	3	5	4	5
Nigeria, Federal Republic of	107	99	107	57	46
Norway	19	18	19	19	17
Oman, Sultanate of	12	12	12	12	14
Pakistan	32	37	35	35	35
Panama, Republic of	13	13	12	13	8
Papua New Guinea	5	5	4	6	6
Paraguay	5	6	6	5	5
Peru	15	11	15	14	16
Philippines	13	14	16	17	18
Poland, People's Republic of	27	21	21	22	23
Portugal	14	13	13	14	14
Qatar, State of	7	10	10	11	11
Romania, Socialist Republic of	11	11	9	9	8
Rwanda, Republic of (non-resident)	3	3	3	3	2
Saint Christopher and Nevis	—	—	*	*	*
Saint Lucia	3	3	*	*	*
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	1	1	*	*	*
Saudi Arabia	48	57	54	63	55
Senegal, Republic of	6	7	9	9	10
Seychelles	—	—	—	3	3
Sierra Leone	17	18	13	15	15
Singapore, Republic of	5	5	5	5	5
Solomon Islands (non-resident)	1	—	—	—	—
Somali Democratic Republic	5	7	7	8	7
South Africa, Republic of	26	32	33	32	33
Soviet Union	48	46	42	43	42
Spain	28	27	29	33	28
Sri Lanka	12	14	12	12	8
Sudan, Democratic Republic of	38	37	40	43	42
Swaziland, Kingdom of	5	5	5	5	5
Sweden	23	26	24	23	22
Switzerland	14	14	12	12	13
Syrian Arab Republic	20	18	26	25	25
Tanzania, United Republic of	13	13	12	13	13
Thailand	29	27	29	29	29
Togo	4	4	3	2	2
Tonga	4	4	4	5	4
Trinidad and Tobago, Republic of	16	16	16	13	14
Tunisia	6	6	5	5	6
Turkey	38	33	34	38	33
Uganda	13	12	15	15	16
United Arab Emirates	11	10	10	12	12
United States	122	114	116	119	116
Upper Volta (non-resident) 1985 Burkina	7	5	4	4	5
Uruguay	7	7	7	7	6
Vanuatu (non-resident)	1	1	1	1	1
Venezuela	21	21	21	21	19
Vietnam, Socialist Republic of	6	3	5	4	6
People's Democratic Republic of Yemen	7	8	8	9	10
Yemen Arab Republic	12	11	11	8	7
Yugoslavia, Socialist Federal Republic	13	11	9	8	8
Zaire, Republic of	14	9	7	6	9
Zambia, Republic of	14	16	13	14	15
Zimbabwe, Republic of	11	20	12	21	21
TOTAL	2,381	2,392	2,389	2,386	2,373

* See Eastern Caribbean States.

United Kingdom diplomatic representation overseas
(as at 31 October)

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
Afghanistan	5	5	7	7	6
Algeria	6	7	9	11	11
Angola	4	5	5	5	7
Antigua	1	1	1	1	1
Argentina	21	19	2	4	5
Australia	27	28	31	31	30
Austria	27	28	31	31	30

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
Bahamas	7	6	6	6	6
Bahrain	8	8	8	8	8
Bangladesh	38	37	38	40	40
Barbados	18	16	16	16	17
Belgium	87	89	82	87	83
Belize	—	4	5	6	6
Bolivia	6	6	6	6	6
Botswana	8	6	7	7	7
Brazil	38	31	31	29	30
Brunei	5	3	4	4	5
Bulgaria	11	10	10	10	10
Burma	12	10	9	10	10
Cameroon	9	8	8	9	10
Canada	39	41	40	38	42
Central African Republic	5	5	5	5	5
Chad (accredited from London)	4	3	3	3	3
Chile	11	9	11	11	12
China	44	46	45	50	51
Colombia	9	8	7	8	7
Costa Rica	4	5	4	5	5
Cuba	11	11	11	11	11
Cyprus	17	15	15	15	16
Czechoslovakia	18	17	15	15	16
Denmark	20	18	18	19	19
Dominican Republic	3	3	3	3	3
Ecuador	9	9	9	9	9
Egypt	33	32	34	33	32
Ethiopia	12	12	10	10	11
Fiji	6	6	6	6	6
Finland	13	15	15	15	15
France	72	68	64	62	63
Gabon	2	2	2	3	2
The Gambia	5	5	5	5	5
Germany (Federal Republic)	68	70	73	72	71
Germany (Berlin)	24	23	23	21	22
Germany (Democratic Republic)	13	8	10	10	10
Ghana	20	19	23	23	23
Greece	26	25	26	26	29
Grenada	17	14	17	17	18
Guatemala	3	1	1	1	2
Guyana	12	8	7	7	8
Holy See	2	2	2	2	2
Honduras	3	3	4	4	6
Hong Kong	8	8	7	8	9
Hungary	16	16	15	15	16
Iceland	4	4	3	3	3
India	76	77	75	78	82
Indonesia	24	24	22	22	21
Iran (British interests section)	1	9	9	15	18
Iraq	18	18	19	19	18
Irish Republic	13	13	13	12	13
Israel	16	14	14	14	18
Italy	31	28	26	27	26
Ivory Coast	6	5	6	7	7
Jamaica	18	14	14	16	16
Japan	44	43	39	44	43
Jerusalem	4	4	4	4	5
Jordan	16	16	17	14	17
Kenya	27	26	26	28	29
Kiribati	2	2	2	2	2
Korea	22	21	23	24	24
Kuwait	15	18	22	23	24
Laos	5	3	2	2	2
Lebanon	16	18	9	13	13
Lesotho	5	5	5	5	5
Liberia	4	3	3	3	3
Libya	14	14	16	18	1
Luxembourg	10	11	11	9	10
Madagascar	2	2	2	2	3
Malawi	7	7	9	9	11
Malaysia	23	21	20	19	19
Malta	10	9	7	7	7
Mauritius	7	7	7	6	7
Mexico City	20	27	29	30	32
Mongolia	4	4	4	4	4
Morocco	13	15	13	12	12
Mozambique	5	7	7	7	7

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
Nauru	1	1	1	1	1
Nepal	9	9	9	9	8
Netherlands	21	22	20	19	21
New Zealand	16	16	16	15	15
Nigeria	46	49	48	49	47
Norway	17	19	19	19	19
Oman	14	14	16	15	16
Pakistan	66	60	57	57	58
Panama	6	6	6	6	5
Papua New Guinea	4	4	5	5	5
Paraguay	4	4	4	3	3
Peru	9	9	9	12	11
Philippines	14	13	13	14	14
Poland	28	29	31	31	37
Portugal (including Macao)	18	19	20	18	17
Qatar	6	6	6	8	8
Romania	16	16	17	15	16
Saudi Arabia	41	49	47	61	55
Senegal	8	6	6	6	6
Seychelles	4	4	5	5	5
Sierra Leone	6	6	6	10	8
Singapore	18	20	21	22	20
Solomon Islands	2	2	2	2	2
Somalia	4	5	5	6	7
South Africa	42	41	43	45	46
Soviet Union	46	42	43	45	43
Spain	33	32	35	34	34
Sri Lanka	16	15	14	15	15
Sudan	19	19	21	21	27
Swaziland	5	5	6	5	4
Sweden	14	19	19	19	26
Switzerland	46	40	43	42	43
Syria	16	16	19	19	19
Tanzania	13	13	13	13	12
Thailand	27	25	25	25	25
Tonga	1	1	1	1	1
Trinidad and Tobago	13	11	11	11	11
Tunisia	8	8	8	8	8
Turkey	30	28	30	27	28
Uganda	8	9	11	12	13
United Arab Emirates—Abu Dhabi	12	14	13	15	15
United Arab Emirates—Dubai	9	9	9	9	10
United States	155	154	153	154	154
Uruguay	5	6	11	12	10
Vanuatu	4	4	4	2	2
Venezuela	18	17	18	17	17
Vietnam	5	6	6	6	6
Yemen (North)	13	14	17	18	18
Yemen (South)	7	7	8	5	7
Yugoslavia	18	17	17	17	16
Zaire	7	7	7	8	7
Zambia	16	15	16	15	14
Zimbabwe	21	20	21	22	19
TOTAL	2,377	2,345	2,354	2,406	2,411

Diplomatic Immunity

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects to respond to the report of the Foreign Affairs Committee on the abuse of diplomatic immunities and privileges.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: We expect to give our considered reply to the Foreign Affairs Committee report shortly after the Easter recess.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many British diplomats abroad, broken down by country of posting, have had fixed penalty notices for traffic offences cancelled on grounds of diplomatic immunity in each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: It is our policy to ensure wherever possible that members of our overseas missions do not incur fixed penalty notices for traffic offences. Records are not available centrally of such notices as have nevertheless been incurred, and information on them could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many British diplomats abroad, broken down by country of posting, have had proceedings or inquiries by the police regarding traffic offences, other than fixed penalty notices, cancelled on grounds of diplomatic immunity in each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: Our policy is that we would not expect diplomatic immunity to be unreasonably maintained in cases where waiver would be without prejudice to the work

of the mission. It is not our practice to give details of individual cases where facts have not been established in court. But in the past five years we know of only one case where proceedings or inquiries by the police have been cancelled on grounds of diplomatic immunity.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, pursuant to the answer of 14 March to the hon. Member for Leicester, East, *Official Report*, column 248, concerning diplomatic immunity, he will specify the offences allegedly committed by persons enjoying diplomatic immunity in 1984 included within the category "other".

Mr. Renton: The three alleged offences in this category were indecent assault (two cases) and gross indecency. All three alleged offenders have been transferred from the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what, of the information sought by the hon. Member for Leicester, East regarding years prior to 1984 about offences allegedly committed by persons claiming diplomatic immunity, *Official Report*, columns 248-9, can be provided without incurring disproportionate cost.

Mr. Renton: Details of alleged offences committed before 1982 by persons enjoying diplomatic immunity were given in June 1984 to the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs. The information which could not be provided except at disproportionate cost relates to the number of diplomats transferred before 1982 following representations by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs why his Department did not keep centralised records of offences alleged to have been committed by persons claiming diplomatic immunity prior to 1982; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: Centralised records of offences alleged to have been committed by persons claiming diplomatic immunity have been kept since 1974 by the Home Office. Details were supplied to the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs in June 1984.

Gibraltar

Mr. George Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has received from the Government of Spain any proposals regarding the possible future status of Gibraltar; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. and learned Friend to my hon. Friend the Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. McQuarrie) on 20 March at column *535*.

Peter Nadin

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Islington, North, on 8 February, *Official Report*, column 750, if he has yet received a statement from the Greek Government on the death of Peter Nadin; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: Her Majesty's embassy in Athens has drawn the attention of the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Mr. Nadin's death, and asked for that Ministry's co-operation and that of the appropriate Greek authorities in reviewing the investigations so far made, and to consider what scope there may be for further inquiries into the circumstances of Mr. Nadin's death.

I shall write to the hon. Member, and inform Mr. Nadin's next of kin, when the Greek reply is received.

Inner German Trade Agreement

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the purpose and objective of the inner German trade agreement.

Mr. Renton: Inner German trade is based on a number of agreements and laws, including the Berlin agreement of 20 September 1951 — 16 August 1960, which regulates trade in goods, services and payments between the deutschmark and east mark areas.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the United Kingdom has ever been provided with the opportunity of approving or reviewing the inner German trade agreement.

Mr. Renton: Inner German trade continues to be regulated in part by allied legislation. A protocol on German internal trade and connected problems forms an integral part of the EEC treaty, to which the United Kingdom became a party on 1 January 1973.

Human Rights Conference

Sir Dudley Smith asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about United Kingdom participation in the European ministerial conference on human rights, organised by the Council of Europe in Vienna on 19 and 20 March.

Mr. Renton: My hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General and I represented the United Kingdom at this conference, the purpose of which was to evaluate and consolidate the work of the Council of Europe in the field of human rights. I signed (subject to ratification) the eighth protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights, which introduces improvements in the procedures of the European Commission on Human Rights with a view to reducing delays. There was significant support for the view expressed by the Solicitor-General that a period of consolidation was required rather than radical reform of the machinery. The United Kingdom will play a full part in examining the possibility of further improvements to control machinery of the convention in the appropriate Council of Europe committees. The conference also considered the challenge to human rights posed by new developments in science particularly in biology, medicine and biochemistry. The United Kingdom contributed expert papers including the Warnock report on human fertilisation and embryology.

SCOTLAND

EC (Agriculture Structure Plan)

Mr. Corrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when proposals for the new structure plan for agriculture are expected to come from the EC.

Mr. Younger: Agreement on a new structures regulation was reached at the meeting of the EC Council of Agriculture Ministers on 11-12 March. Agriculture Departments are currently drawing up proposals to give effect to the new regulation and consultations with interested parties on these proposals will be taking place shortly.

Women Prisoners

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many women were held in prisons in Scotland for the years 1982, 1983 and 1984, distinguishing between those held on remand and sentenced prisoners.

Mr. Ancram: The information requested on the numbers in custody in Scottish penal establishments in 1982 was published in appendix No. 3 to the "Prisons in Scotland Report for 1982", Cmnd. 8980. Figures for 1983 were published in table 2 of Scottish Home and Health Department Statistical Bulletin No. 2/1984, "Prisons Statistics Scotland 1983". Copies of both documents are in the Library. During 1984, the average daily population of women held in Scottish penal establishments was 132, of whom 49 were on remand and 83 were persons under sentence; of those 64 were adult prisoners.

Protected Areas

Mr. Corrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland which areas of the west coast of Scotland in the Clyde estuary are protected areas under the Inshore Fishing (Scotland) Act 1984.

Mr. Younger: The Inshore Fishing (Scotland) Act 1984 had not yet been brought into force. The Government are currently studying the comments of interested parties on their latest proposals, which did not include area restrictions within the Clyde estuary, and once decisions are made will publish the necessary orders.

Tranquillisers and Sedatives

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list those voluntary organisations concerned with those who have become addicted to prescribed tranquillisers and sedatives; which of them have applied to his Department for grants; what sum was applied for in each case; for what purpose; and what has been the result.

Mr. John MacKay: I am not aware of any voluntary organisations in Scotland concerned solely with people who have become addicted to prescribed tranquillisers and sedatives; and no such organisation has applied to my Department for grant. There are, however, several voluntary organisations in Scotland receiving Government grants for assisting problem drug takers, and I understand that some of these bodies do offer help to persons who have become addicted to tranquillisers and sedatives.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the number of prescriptions for and the total amount prescribed of *(a)* tranquillisers and *(b)* sedatives in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. John MacKay: The numbers of prescriptions for sedatives and tranquillisers dispensed in Scotland in the years 1975-83 are as follows:

Thousands

Year	*Prescriptions*
1975	*2,279
1976	2,282
1977	2,370
1978	2,376
1979	2,332
1980	2,116
1981	2,098
1982	2,078
1983	1,752

* Prior year's figures not complete.

It is not possible to provide separate figures for tranquillisers and sedatives or to give quantities without incurring disproportionate costs. The 1984 figure is not yet available.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will undertake an inquiry into the incidence of addiction to prescribed tranquillisers and sedatives in each region.

Mr. John MacKay: A fieldwork survey has recently been carried out into the prevalence of drug misuse generally in the Greater Glasgow health board area; and a similar survey is now being undertaken in Edinburgh. Both of these inquiries are being funded by the Scottish Home and Health Department. There are at present no proposals to conduct such inquiries in other areas.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his estimate of the number of persons addicted to prescribed tranquillisers and sedatives.

Mr. John MacKay: No statistics are available centrally which would enable such an estimate to be made.

Strip Searches

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many strip searches were made on women prisoners in Her Majesty's prisons in Scotland for each of the years 1982, 1983 and 1984, distinguishing between prisoners held on remand and sentenced prisoners.

Mr. Ancram: The number of strip searches of female prisoners made in Scotland in 1983 and 1984 was 3,816 and 5,110 respectively. Similar information is not available for 1982 nor is it possible to distinguish in the succeeding years between prisoners held on remand and sentenced prisoners.

Local Authorities (Expenditure)

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of the total expenditure of local authorities in Scotland and of revenue expenditure is met by central Government support in the latest year for which figures are available; and what was the comparable figure in the year 1979-80.

Mr. Younger: On the basis of budget information contained in the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy publication "Rating Review", the percentage of total local authority expenditure met by central Government support in 1979-80 and 1984-85 is as follows:

	per cent.
1979-80	62·3
1984-85	55·4

Notes:

1. For the purpose of this question, total local authority expenditure is relevant expenditure for rate support grant purposes, including loan charges, total rate fund contributions to the housing revenue account and total rate fund contributions to other non-relevant services.
2. Central Government support is specific revenue grants and rate support grant.
3. Actual expenditure and grant may differ from the estimates provided.

Agriculture (Research and Development Funding)

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will institute an inquiry into the delivery and funding of agricultural research and development and advisory services in Scotland.

Mr. John MacKay: My noble Friend the Minister of State is currently reviewing the organisation and funding of these services, in consultation with the interests concerned.

Council House Sales

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he is satisfied that local authorities in Scotland are processing council house sales expeditiously and efficiently; and how many sales are in process within the Banff and Buchan constituency.

Mr. Ancram: The average time taken to process sales in Scotland continues to show an improvement, with sales completed during 1984 taking on average 9·7 months from application to completion. Within the Banff and Buchan constituency, 410 applications to purchase are currently being processed with missives having been concluded in 50 of these.

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to carry out a promotion programme on council house sales in Scotland.

Mr. Ancram: To help promote sales of council houses this spring, we have arranged further screenings of the television advertisement which was the centrepiece of last summer's major campaign to remind tenants of their right to buy and to inform them of the improvements in discounts and eligibility introduced by the Tenants' Rights, Etc. (Scotland) Amendment Act 1984. We intend to mount a further publicity campaign in the autumn.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many persons in the Banff and Buchan constituency are on waiting lists for treatment for hip conditions in National Health Service hospitals in Aberdeen; and what is the average period of time such persons have to wait before treatment is performed;

(2) how many people in the Banff and Buchan constituency have been on waiting lists for treatment for eye defects for less than three months;

(3) how many persons within the Grampian health board area are on waiting lists for treatment for hip conditions in National Health Service hospitals; and what is the average period such persons are required to wait before the treatment is performed;

(4) how many persons are on hospital waiting lists in Scotland in respect of treatment for hip conditions; and what is the average period of time such persons are required to wait before treatment is given.

Mr. John MacKay: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people in the Banff and Buchan constituency have been on hospital waiting lists for treatment for hip conditions for over six months.

Mr. John MacKay: This information is not available centrally.

Grampian Health Board

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) why a board table has been purchased by the Grampian health board for £13,000; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what sums of money have been spent in the years 1983, 1984 and 1985 by the Grampian health board on the upgrading and refurbishment of the board room used by that authority.

Mr. John MacKay: Provision of board room furniture and accommodation is a matter for individual health boards.

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will call for a report from the Grampian health board on the conditions of the staff houses at Ladysbridge hospital, by Banff; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: Provision of staff accommodation is a matter for individual health boards.

Labour Statistics

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the number of job opportunities available to young persons in the 17 to 23-year age group in the Banff and Buchan constituency *(a)* at the start of 1985 and *(b)* at the latest available date.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The information requested is not available; statistics on vacancies are not classified by age group. Opportunities for young people will be enhanced by the expansion of special employment and training measures announced in the Budget.

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will list in the *Official Report* the numbers, separating male and female, of young people unemployed in the Banff and Buchan constituency in the years 1983 and 1984; and what are the latest figures for 1985;

(2) if he will list in the *Official Report* the numbers, showing male and female separately, of the adult population in the Banff and Buchan constituency who were unemployed for more than six months in the years 1983 and 1984; and what are the latest available figures for 1985.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I regret the information is not available in the precise form requested. Unemployment figures for parliamentary constituencies are available only from September 1984 and can be obtained from the House of Commons Library.

Information on the number of unemployed claimants by sex, age and duration in the Banff, Fraserburgh and Peterhead jobcentre areas, within which the Banff and Buchan constituency is located, is available in the House of Commons Library for the periods requested.

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he proposes to take in order to reduce the rate of unemployment for both male and female persons in the Banff and Buchan constituency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The best means of improving employment prospects lies in the Government's strategy, reiterated in last week's Budget statement, of keeping inflation down, offering real incentive for enterprise and restoring competitiveness to industry. This strategy will help the Banff and Buchan constituency as much as the rest of the country. The Government's full range of employment and training measures is available to people in the constituency through the Manpower Services Commission. The Fraserburgh project, a three year self-help initiative, funded by the Scottish Development Agency and the private sector, was launched in October 1984 with the aim of creating 450 jobs and safeguarding another 200 in the next three years.

School Meals

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many school children received free school meals in *(a)* the Grampian region and *(b)* the area covered by Banff and Buchan district council.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The latest information from the school meals census held in January 1984 is that 4,318 pupils in Grampian region received free school meals, of whom 1,124 were in the area covered by Banff and Buchan district council.

Tourism

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if any grants or loans have been made by the Scottish Tourist Board to the Banff and Buchan district council for the promotion of tourism in that area.

Mr. John MacKay: The Scottish Tourist Board has recently given grant assistance to enable Banff and Buchan district council to make improvements to several of its tourist imformation centres and to provide coastal route road signs and a viewpoint indicator panel, and approved grant assistance for conversion of a hostel to a hotel.

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he is satisfied with the liaison between the Scottish Tourist Board and local tourist boards which have been set up by district councils in Scotland; and what joint promotional programmes are in being.

Mr. John MacKay: Liaison between the Scottish Tourist Board and the are a tourist board network is excellent. The Scottish Tourist Board is represented on all area tourist board committees at local level; at national level, co-ordination is achieved through the Scottish Confederation of Tourism, and through joint management meetings, working groups and newsletters.

Current joint promotional schemes include Scotland's travel trade fair, roadshows and exhibitions, and a major new joint advertising campaign.

National Farmers Union (Meeting)

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the president and officers of the National Farmers Union of Scotland to discuss the problems of the livestock and dairy sectors in the industry; and what was the outcome of that meeting.

Mr. John MacKay: My right hon. Friend met the president of the National Farmers' Union of Scotland on Tuesday 20 March for a useful discussion on the full range of the 1985-86 common agricultural policy price proposals, in which the livestock and dairy sectors featured prominently.

Roads Programme

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the up-to-date roads programme for which he has responsibility for *(a)* the Grampian region and *(b)* Banff and Buchan constituency.

Mr. Ancram: In addition to the Laurencekirk bypass and the Scotston to Candy schemes on the A94 which are now under construction, the Scottish Development Department's trunk road programme includes the following major road improvement schemes in Grampian region:

Route and Scheme	*Expected to be ready to start in financial year**
A92 —Tipperty	1986-87
A92 —Ellon Bypass	1986-87
A92 —Murcar to Balmedie	1986-87
A94 —Candy to Stonehaven	1986-87
A952—Inverugie to Balmoor†	1987-88
A952—Midmill†	1987-88
A96 —Bucksburn to Tyrebagger	1986-87
A96 —Forres Bypass	1986-87
A96 —Inverurie Bypass	1987-88

* Actual start dates for schemes depend on the satisfactory completion of design and statutory procedures and on the availability of finance within the Scottish Trunk Road Programme.

† Schemes within the constituency of Banff and Buchan.

Teachers (Dispute)

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate the number of pupil hours lost in Scotland as a result of the present teachers' pay dispute.

Mr. Allan Stewart: We estimate that approximately 4 million pupil hours were lost between 15 January and 14 March 1985 as a result of strike action by Scottish teachers.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the most recent arrangements he has made, in the light of the strike by certain teachers' unions, for pupils in Scotland entered for *(a)* the SCE examinations and *(b)* the CSE examinations; and what are the implications of these arrangements for pupils engaged in standard grade courses.

Mr. Allan Stewart: In view of the instructions which were given by certain unions to Scottish teachers to disrupt procedures associated with the Scottish Certificate of Education examinations in 1985 the Scottish Examination Board put in hand a number of contingency arrangements

which were set out in the answer to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Corrie) on 4 February, at columns 430-31. In addition, the board announced on 7 March that it would, exceptionally, extend its appeal arrangements to allow loss of teaching time before the examinations to be taken into account and to allow appeals for band A and B awards from schools which have suffered seriously from closures this session, provided that in the judgment of the head teacher the disruption was severe enough to have had a significantly adverse effect on the candidate's performance in the examination. The board's awarding standards will be maintained, however, and appeals decisions will depend on the evidence available in terms of either class work or examination script performance.

I understand that those authorities which have a policy of presenting certain candidates for the Certificate of Secondary Education examinations operated by the English examination boards are discussing the possible problems with the examination board concerned and are considering what steps might be taken to safeguard the interests of the pupils.

In addition the Scottish Education Department has written to all education authorities asking them urgently to take steps to limit the harm being done in the present dispute to the prospects of those pupils who are due to sit public examinations this year and next.

The Government is giving urgent consideration to the implications of the teachers' boycott of curriculum development for those pupils now studying standard grade courses for first certification in 1986. Our principal concern is that the arrangements should give all pupils fair opportunity for certification which recognises their achievements, whether or not they have been affected by the teachers' actions; and a further announcement will be made as soon as possible.

Road Construction

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when the dual carriageway from Perth to Aberdeen will be completed; and if he has any plans to extend this route to include a dual carriageway from Aberdeen to Peterhead, St. Fergus and Fraserburgh.

Mr. Ancram: On present plans, approximately nine-tenths of the Perth-Aberdeen route should be dual carriageway by the end of the decade and the remainder will be completed as soon as possible thereafter. Dual carriageway proposals north of Aberdeen are in hand for the A92 at Tipperty, between Murcar and Balmedie, and on the southern section of Ellon bypass. The Scottish Development Department has no plans to extend the dual carriageway beyond Ellon to Peterhead, St. Fergus and Fraserburgh.

Replacement Hip Operation (Cost)

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the average cost of a replacement hip operation at a National Health Service hospital in Aberdeen inclusive of all medical and other ancillary charges; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: The average cost of a replacement hip operation at Woodend hospital—the only hospital in Aberdeen at which this type of operation is performed—is £776.

Teachers (Pay)

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the average salary of *(a)* full-time primary school teachers and *(b)* full-time secondary school teachers, excluding those in promoted posts, in each year since 1973; and if he will give the figures in current prices and in constant prices as at April 1984.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Information about the average salaries of unpromoted teachers and separate figures for primary and secondary teachers prior to 1978 are not available. Details of the average salaries of all teachers from 1978 are set out in the table below:

Average Salary of Full Time Teachers

	Primary		*Secondary*	
At October	£	*Value at April 1984** £	£	*Value at April 1984** £
1978	4,313	7,959	5,349	9,871
1979	4,761	8,035	5,904	9,964
1980	6,868	9,791	8,037	11,458
1981	7,560	9,534	8,725	11,003
1982	8,094	9,113	9,274	10,442
1983	8,614	9,243	9,800	10,515
1984	†9,049	9,236	†10,155	10,365

* Values are based on the movement in the Retail Price Index between January of the relevant year and April 1984.

† Figures for 1984 are estimated as one return is still outstanding.

Urban Aid Programme (Glasgow)

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give early consideration and approval of the urban aid programme submitted by Glasgow district council to his Department on 15 February for a director of the Woodlands Community Trust to assist the revitalisation of this area.

Mr. Ancram: An application for the Woodlands Community Trust project was received from Glasgow district council on 20 February along with other applications. It has been examined but additional information has still to be provided. The Scottish Development Department will be discussing the application with Glasgow district council in the near future.

Peterhead Prison

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what investigation he has initiated into the causes of the disturbances at Peterhead prison in January and March; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: I have, as is usual in such cases, called for reports from the governor. Criminal proceedings are still pending as a result of both disturbances.

Revaluation

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland on how many occasions during the last 20 years a revaluation has taken place; and on how many occasions the results of a revaluation have been implemented.

Mr. Ancram: In relation to all the revaluations in Scotland in the last 20 years—in 1966, 1971, 1978 and

1985 — the results have been implemented. The revaluations of 1978 and 1985 would each have been two years earlier if special steps had not been taken to postpone them.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Attendance Allowance

32. **Mr. Gareth Wardell** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is satisfied with the procedures by which medical officers assess claims for attendance allowance in Wales.

Mr. Newton: The procedures used in Wales for deciding the medical conditions for attendance allowance are identical to those used in other parts of Great Britain. They are kept under review to identify areas where improvements can be made but we have no reason to believe they are unsatisfactory. If the hon. Member has a particular difficulty in mind and will write to me I shall be happy to look into it.

Mr. Higgins asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will investigate the reasons why an application for attendance allowance by a constituent of the right hon. Member for Worthing has taken more than six months to process; and if he will take steps to reduce the delay in processing such applications.

Mr. Newton: I regret that, without the necessary identity details, it has not proved possible to trace the application to which my right hon. Friend refers. If he will let me have the details, I shall have the matter investigated and write to him.

With regard to the general position, we have taken a number of steps to speed up the processing of claims for attendance allowance. Currently, the average time taken to deal with an initial application is 10 weeks. This applies to about 95 per cent. of all cases dealt with. Reviews following disallowance take longer because of the need to obtain further medical evidence in support of the claim.

Polish Home

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many residents and staff there were in the Polish home run by his Department in 1965, 1970, 1975, 1980 and the present time; and how much the Polish home cost, gross and net, in the latest financial year for which figures are available.

Mr. Whitney: The numbers of residents and staff in the Ilford Park Polish home for the years in question were as follows:

	Residents	*Staff*
31 March 1965	480	*
31 March 1970	374	44½
31 March 1975	281	79
31 March 1980	199	78
March 1985	133	63

* Information not available.

These figures include residents formerly housed on the site on a self-contained basis; they exclude nursing staff employed by the Torbay district health authority in the hospital unit.

The cost of running the home for the year 1983-84 was £1,116,530 gross, £704,279 net.

Board and Lodging Payments

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received from directors of institutions for the elderly and mentally disturbed concerning his recent decision to impose a freeze on all board and lodgings payments for residents.

Mr. Whitney: I assume the hon. Member has in mind the proposals on supplementary benefit board and lodging payments which we referred to the Social Security Advisory Committee for consultation in November last year. A list of all those who made representations to the committee is included in its report which was published on 21 March (Cmnd. 9466).

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make it his policy to allow a period of at least one month between publishing new board and lodging payment regulations and their implementation.

Mr. Whitney: I refer the hon. Member to my hon. Friend's statement to the House on 21 March, at column 1008.

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many *(a)* single people aged 16 or 17 years, *(b)* single people aged between 18 and 25 years, *(c)* single people aged between 26 years and retirement age, *(d)* single people aged over retirement age, *(e)* couples without dependent children, *(f)* single parents with one dependent child, *(g)* single parents with two dependent children, *(h)* single parents with three or more dependent children, *(i)* couples with one dependent child, *(j)* couples with two dependent children, and *(k)* couples with three or more dependent children in receipt of supplementary benefit were assessed as boarders living in (i) private rented accommodation, (ii) bed and breakfast accommodation and hotels, (iii) hostels and (iv) common lodging houses in *(a)* December 1982 and *(b)* December 1983; and if he will give this information for Great Britain as a whole, and for each social security region;

(2) what were the average weekly supplementary benefit payments, exlusive of personal allowances, paid to *(a)* single people, *(b)* couples without dependent children, *(c)* single parents with one dependent child, *(d)* single parents with two dependent children, *(e)* single parents with three or more dependent children, *(f)* couples with one dependent child, *(g)* couples with two dependent children and *(h)* couples with three or more dependent children who were assessed as boarders living in (i) private rented accommodation, (ii) bed and breakfast accommodation and hotels, (iii) hostels and (iv) common lodging houses in *(a)* December 1982 and *(b)* December 1983; and if he will give this information for Great Britain as a whole, and for each social security region.

Mr. Whitney: I shall let the hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what were the total supplementary benefit payments, exclusive of personal allowances, paid to *(a)* single people aged 16 or 17 years, *(b)* single people aged between 18 and 25 years, *(c)* single people aged between 26 years and retirement age, *(d)* single people aged over retirement age, *(e)* couples without dependent children, *(f)* single parents with one dependent child, *(g)* single parents with two dependent children, *(h)* single parents with three or more dependent children, *(i)* couples with one

dependent child, *(j)* couples with two dependent children and *(k)* couples with three or more dependent children assessed as boarders living in (i) private rented accommodation, (ii) bed and breakfast and hotel accommodation, (iii) hostels and (iv) common lodging houses during *(a)* the calendar years 1982, 1983 and 1984 and *(b)* the financial years 1981-82, 1982-83 and 1983-84; and if he will give this information for Great Britain as a whole, and for each social security region.

Mr. Whitney: I regret that the information requested is not available.

NHS (Private Patients)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what guidelines he has issued to regional health authorities to scrutinise procedures for monitoring and charging private patients for treatment within the National Health Service.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) on 21 March, at column *592*.

NHS (Spectacles)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has to monitor the level of prices in respect of spectacles after the proposed abolition of National Health Service glasses; and what criteria will be used in deciding which citizens, apart from students under the age of 19 years and social security claimants and children under the age of 16 years, will be eligible for assistance in meeting the cost of buying frames and lenses privately by means of the vouchers which will be available from his Department's offices.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We wish to observe the development of the new market in spectacles before we take final decisions on the nature, scope and date of introduction of the voucher or cash aid system which will eventually replace the general ophthalmic services supply arrangements.

AIDS

Mr. Galley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many cases of acquired immune deficiency syndrome have occurred in West Yorkshire in each of the last three years; and in which district health authority area they have occurred.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: There have been no known cases of acquired immune deficiency syndrome in West Yorkshire in the last three years.

Inequalities in Health

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services why, pursuant to his reply of 14 March, *Official Report*, column *241*, it is no longer possible to produce costings compatible with the figures given earlier for the Black report's recommendations 10, 12, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28 and 29; and what is the likely present cost of implementing the same recommendations.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The estimates given earlier of the costs of implementing these recommendations were either updatings of figures given in the report, which themselves were not always precise estimates, or were based on arbitrary assumptions about demography and benefit rates. Since the Black report was produced in 1980, there have been policy changes which affect what might be involved in implementing these recommendations, and there is more recent demographic information. The earlier estimates do not therefore form a realistic basis for further useful estimates. The recommendations would certainly result in expenditure on a scale which it would be unrealistic to contemplate and we do not consider the work of producing detailed estimates of present costs would be justified.

Community Health Councils

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his policy regarding misconduct as it relates to the dismissal of community health council members under regulations which will become effective on 1 April.

Mr. John Patten: Under the new Community Health Council Regulations it will be for each regional health authority to determine, in the light of views sought from the appointing body and the community health council itself, whether the personal or professional misconduct of a CHC member renders him unfit to be a member and therefore justifies dismissal. The provision was introduced following criticism in the courts of its absence from earlier regulations. Copies of the National Health Service (Community Health Council) Regulations 1985 and the explanatory circular HC(85)11 are in the Library.

Drug Misuse

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much of the £10 million central initiative for drug misusers has *(a)* been applied for and *(b)* been allocated.

Mr. John Patten: To date £7·5 million has been approved.

Tranquillisers and Sedatives

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will undertake an inquiry into the incidence of addiction to prescribed tranquillisers and sedatives in different parts of the United Kingdom.

Mr. John Patten: We have no plans to undertake an inquiry. We are, however, aware of research being carried out into dependence on prescribed tranquillisers and sedatives at the institute of psychiatry at the Maudsley hospital.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his estimate of the number of persons addicted to prescribed tranquillisers and sedatives.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested is not collected centrally.

Severe Weather Payments

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table similar to that shown in paragraph 7429 of the "S Manual," covering the period from 6 January to 9 March for each area affected by the exceptionally severe weather conditions.

Mr. Whitney: The information requested is set out by weather station in the following table. The DHSS local offices served by each weather station were listed in my reply to the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) on 18 February, at columns *389-93*.

Week	Weekly per cent.	13 Week per cent.	8 Week per cent.
Aberporth			
6 January 1985—12 January 1985	—	—	—
13 January 1985—19 January 1985	36	4	6
20 January 1985—26 January 1985	—	5	10
27 January 1985—2 February 1985	—	4	9
3 February 1985—9 February 1985	—	3	8
10 February 1985—16 February 1985	34	7	14
17 February 1985—23 February 1985	—	8	16
24 February 1985—2 March 1985	—	8	13
3 March 1985—9 March 1985	—	8	11
Birmingham			
6 January 1985—12 January 1985	—	—	—
13 January 1985—19 January 1985	36	2	9
20 January 1985—26 January 1985	—	3	11
27 January 1985—2 February 1985	—	3	10
3 February 1985—9 February 1985	—	4	10
10 February 1985—16 February 1985	42	8	17
17 February 1985—23 February 1985	—	11	19
24 February 1985—2 March 1985	—	12	18
3 March 1985—9 March 1985	—	12	14
Bournemouth			
6 January 1985—12 January 1985	34	3	3
13 January 1985—19 January 1985	39	8	11
20 January 1985—26 January 1985	—	8	15
27 January 1985—2 February 1985	—	8	15
3 February 1985—9 February 1985	—	7	13
10 February 1985—16 February 1985	40	10	19
17 February 1985—23 February 1985	—	12	21
24 February 1985—2 March 1985	—	14	20
3 March 1985—9 March 1985	—	15	15
Bristol			
6 January 1985—9 February 1985	—	—	—
10 February 1985—16 February 1985	36	—	10
17 February 1985—23 February 1985	—	2	12
24 February 1985—2 March 1985	—	3	11
3 March 1985—9 March 1985	—	4	6
Finningley			
6 January 1985—9 February 1985	—	—	—
10 February 1985—16 February 1985	27	6	14
17 February 1985—23 February 1985	—	8	15
24 February 1985—2 March 1985	—	10	16
3 March 1985—9 March 1985	—	11	14
Heathrow			
6 January 1985—12 January 1985	—	—	—
13 January 1985—19 January 1985	34	—	6
20 January 1985—26 January 1985	—	—	10
27 January 1985—2 February 1985	—	—	10
3 February 1985—9 February 1985	—	—	9
10 February 1985—16 February 1985	39	5	15
17 February 1985—23 February 1985	—	8	18
24 February 1985—2 March 1985	—	9	16
3 March 1985—9 March 1985	—	11	12
Honnington			
6 January 1985—12 January 1985	37	—	4
13 January 1985—19 January 1985	—	4	11
20 January 1985—26 January 1985	—	4	14
27 January 1985—2 February 1985	—	4	14
3 February 1985—9 February 1985	—	6	14
10 February 1985—16 February 1985	40	10	20
17 February 1985—23 February 1985	—	13	22
24 February 1985—2 March 1985	—	14	20
3 March 1985—9 March 1985	—	15	15
Plymouth			
6 January 1985—12 January 1985	—	—	—
13 January 1985—19 January 1985	39	9	12
20 January 1985—26 January 1985	—	8	13
27 January 1985—2 February 1985	—	7	12
3 February 1985—9 February 1985	—	4	8
10 February 1985—16 February 1985	36	7	15
17 February 1985—23 February 1985	—	8	16
24 February 1985—2 March 1985	—	8	12
3 March 1985—9 March 1985	—	9	7

North-West RHA (Membership)

Mr. David Young asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many of the Minister's nominations to the North-West regional health authority over the last 10 years from Bolton have had political affiliations to Labour, Conservative or other political parties; and when the last person with Labour political affiliations was nominated.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Since we appoint all regional health authority chairmen and members for their personal qualities and not to represent sectional or particular interests, we do not hold full records of political affiliations.

Private Nursing Homes

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people over the statutory retirement age are currently residing in private nursing homes in Cheshire the charges for which are borne wholly or partly by his Department.

Mr. Whitney: Separate figures for supplementary pensioners in private nursing homes in Cheshire are not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the total cost to the Government of subsidising the maintenance charges for elderly people in private nursing homes in each of the last three years for which figures are available.

Mr. Whitney: Expenditure on supplementary pensioners in private and voluntary residential care and nursing homes, based on December figures for each year, is as follows:

	£ million
1981	23
1982	34
*1983	90

* Provisional.
Source: Annual Statistical Inquiries.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people over the statutory retirement age are currently resident in private nursing homes in England and Wales and for whom maintenance costs are borne wholly or partly by the Department of Health and Social Security.

Mr. Whitney: Information is not available in the form requested. At December 1983 it is provisionally estimated that some 23,000 pensioners were resident in private and voluntary residential care and nursing homes in Great Britain and were in receipt of supplementary benefit.

Source: Annual Statistical Inquiry

Dental Treatment

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Social Services to what factors he attributes the fall in the numbers of teeth crowned by general dental practitioners in England and Wales in 1983.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: It is not possible to be definite, but it is very likely that the rise in the price of gold made it uneconomic for a time to prescribe gold crowns. The number of teeth crowned in 1984 however was higher than in 1982.

Therapists

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the current shortfall of funded posts for occupational therapists in the National Health Service in total and percentage terms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Figures in the form requested are not available centrally, but the results of a recent sample survey by health authorities suggest that nationally about 15 per cent. of funded posts for occupational therapists were unfilled after three months.

Limited List Prescribing

Mr. John Browne asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will consider the establishment of a local forum in which health authorities can adjudicate individual demands for exceptions to his revised prescribed list of drugs.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We are currently discussing with the medical profession the need for and the possible form of an appeal mechanism which would enable a doctor to prescribe drugs not on our selected list at National Health Service expense in exceptional circumstances.

Legal Aid

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether that part of the L code which deals with section 22 of the Legal Aid Act is currently being rewritten; and who is being consulted about it.

Mr. Newton: The rewriting of that part of the L code which deals with section 22 of the Legal Aid Act 1974 has not yet commenced. The L code consists of departmental technical and management instructions for which external consultation is not appropriate.

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will now revoke that part of the L code that deals with section 22 of the Legal Aid Act.

Mr. Newton: The reference to section 22 of the Legal Aid Act 1974 in the L code will be considered when the relevant part of the code is rewritten. Meanwhile, the authority for legal and assessment officers to pass information to other officers for purposes not specified in section 22(1) of the Legal Aid Act 1974 remains suspended.

Earnings-related Pension

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what would be the total saving in each year until 2000 from the abolition of the state earnings-related pension scheme.

Mr. Whitney: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Child Benefit

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what would be the cost in a full financial year of raising child benefit by *(a)* 6 per cent. and *(b)* in line with the rise in tax thresholds.

Mr. Whitney: It would cost £200 million to raise child benefit by 6 per cent. and £320 million to raise it in line with the percentage increase in the married man's tax allowance announced in the Budget statement.

Supplementary Benefit (Young Persons)

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his most recent estimate of the total yearly cost of supplementary benefit payments to 16 and 17-year-olds; and how many are currently claiming benefit.

Mr. Newton: The most recent estimate of supplementary benefit expenditure on 16 and 17-year-olds is that given in my reply to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) on 11 January, at column *572*. The number of 16 and 17-year-olds receiving supplementary benefit at December 1983, the most recent date for which figures are available, was 174,000.

Youth Training

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the precise savings involved in supplementary benefits as a result of the introduction of the second year of the youth training scheme.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to my hon. Friend's reply to the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) on 22 March, at columns *644-46*.

NHS (Pay Scales)

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many persons working in the National Health Service are paid less than at a full-time rate of £80 a week, how many of these are full-time or part-time, how many in each case are paid respectively £10, £20, £30 or £40 less than £80 a week, and what would be the cost of raising the incomes of all these persons to £80 a week?

Mr. John Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 18 March 1985, c. *382*.]: Information is not available in the form requested. Following is the estimated proportion of full-time staff (including students and trainees) receiving average gross weekly earnings in the pay bands shown:

Average gross Weekly earnings	*Percentage of total full-time staff*
Under £41	—*
Under £51	0·1(1)

Average gross Weekly earnings	*Percentage of total full-time staff*
Under £61	0·3(2)
Under £71	1·6(2)
Under £81	5·4

* Less than 0·05 per cent.

(1) Includes apprentice engineers, plumbers and electricians aged 16, and some ancillaries aged 16 or 17.

(2) As for (1), plus clerical officers, typists and machine operators aged 16 or 17 and student technicians.

The estimates are based on returns supplied by 10 English regions and include unpaid absences.

Information is not available on the cost of raising to £80 per week all incomes below £80 and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Cohort Studies (Funding)

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will list in the *Official Report* the cohort studies currently receiving funding from his Department, giving the name of the research body, the name and subject of the research and the amount of funding from his Department in the current year and in total; when the funding is due to expire; and what plans he has to renew it in each case.

Mr. John Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 20 March 1985, c. *503*]: Following is the information:

		Funding from department			
Name of research body	*Name and subject of research*	*Current year £ thousand*	*Total £ thousand*	*Funding Expiry Date*	*Plans for renewal*
National Children's Bureau	National Child Development Study—4th Sweep	62·3	662·6	31 December 1984	Financial support for data collection finished at end 1984 but support is continuing to maintain contact with the cohort pending consideration of any future work.
Bristol University	Child Health and Education Survey.	66·3	449·9	31 March 1985	Completed.
Hester Adrian Research Centre, Manchester University	Follow-up study of 448 young mentally handicapped people.	23·1	62·2	30 September 1985	No further support envisaged.
	Effects of early intervention on the occurrence and nature of behaviour problems in children with Down's Syndrome.	Included in centre's general funding	Included in centre's general funding	30 September 1985	Further support will be considered nearer completion date.
MRC Environmental Epidemiology Unit, Southampton General Hospital	Cohort studies of children (i) born to mothers in Seascale W Cumbria; and (ii) who were at school in Seascale.	15·5	15·5	31 December 1985	No further support envisaged.
Oxford Regional Health Authority	Career preference of British Medical Graduates.	71·6	155·3	31 December 1985	Further support is under consideration.
Swansea Research Unit, University College of Swansea	A study of the long term effects of whooping cough in children.	24·4	137·0	31 January 1986	Further support will be considered nearer completion date.
Department of Orthodontics, University of Manchester	Effects of Malocculsion and effectiveness of orthodontic treatment.	23·2	102·6	30 September 1987	Further support will be considered nearer completion date.
Department of Pharmacy, University of Manchester	A study of the careers of women pharmacists.	40·0	40·0	31 March 1985	Study completed.
St. Mary's Hospital Medical School	Further analyses of the National Childhood Encephalopathy Study.	4·6	9·7	2 October 1984	Study completed.
Department of Community Medicine, St. Thomas's Hospital Medical School	National Study of Health and Growth—Phase III.	146·2	717·1	31 December 1986	Further support will be considered nearer completion date.
National Perinatal Epidemiology Unit, Radcliffe Infirmary, Oxford	Examination of the implications of increased chances for very low birthweight infants on patterns of hospitalisation during the first 2 years of life.	Included in unit's general funding	Included in unit's general funding	31 March 1985	A request for further support will shortly be submitted for consideration.
	A study to compare the experiences of women at low obstetric risk in 2 different systems of maternity care.	Included in unit's general funding	Included in unit's general funding	30 April 1985	No further support has been requested.
	A study of a cohort of babies suffering neonatal seizures.	Included in unit's general funding	Included in unit's general funding	—	Ongoing updating and analysis is continuing within the general support of the unit which is currently to 31 December 1987.
King's College, Chelsea, University of London: Nursing Education Research Unit	Clinical Learning Project: to follow selected cohorts of student nurses through their training to ascertain what student nurses learn in clinical areas and what factors promote or inhibit learning.	43·7	234·4	30 September 1985	None.
Institute of Cancer Research, Sutton	Trial of early detection of breast cancer.	189·9	1,028·8 (to date)	Continuing	Continuing.
Department of Epidemiology and Social Research, Manchester University	Cervical cytology call and recall.	Included in unit's general funding	Included in unit's general funding	30 September 1986	None.
	5 year follow-up of women taught breast self-examination.	Included in unit's general funding	Included in unit's general funding	31 July 1986	None.

Name of research body	Name and subject of research	Funding from department: Current year £ thousand	Total £ thousand	Funding Expiry Date	Plans for renewal
Childhood Cancer Research Group, Oxford University	Multiple primary tumours.	Included in unit's general funding	Included in unit's general funding	Related to general support of unit, at present to 31 March 1990	Further support will be considered on expiry of present agreement.
	Health of long-term survivors.	Included in unit's general funding	Included in unit's general funding	Related to general support of unit, at present to 31 March 1990	Further support will be considered on expiry of present agreement.
	Pregnancies and children of survivors.	Included in unit's general funding	Included in unit's general funding	Related to general support of unit, at present to 31 March 1990	Further support will be considered on expiry of present agreement.

Pharmaceutical Price Regulation Scheme

Mr. Hickmet asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) why the National Health Service pays for the sales promotion expenditure of companies within the pharmaceutical price regulation scheme at the rate of 9 per cent. of the value of the industry's sales to the National Health Service; and if he will make a statement;

(2) when the pharmaceutical price regulation scheme will be next reviewed; and if he will make a statement;

(3) whether expenditure on advertising expended by the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry in opposing his limited drugs list proposals will be an allowable expenses within the pharmaceutical price regulation scheme; and if he will make a statement;

(4) pursuant to his reply of 28 February, *Official Report*, column *273*, why allowable sales promotion expenditure of companies within the pharmaceutical price regulation scheme is to be reduced to 9 per cent. of the industry's sales to the National Health Service; how the current figure of 10 per cent. was arrived at; when he next plans to review its level; and if he will make a statement;

(5) pursuant to his replies of 25 February, *Official Report*, column *71*, and 28 February, *Official Report*, column *272*, what steps his Department took in the latest year for which complete returns are available to satisfy itself that expenditure incurred by companies within the pharmaceutical price regulation scheme on representatives, advertising, literature and information items was reasonable; when the last comprehensive review of such expenditure took place; and if he will make a statement;

(6) pursuant to his reply of 28 February, *Official Report*, column *273*, if he will explain the nature of the ad hoc formula which is used to control sales promotion expenditure within the pharmaceutical price regulation scheme; how the formula is applied; what are its components; and if he will make a statement;

(7) pursuant to his answer of 9 January, *Offocial Report*, column *497*, what steps his Department takes to satisfy itself that gifts offered by drugs companies and received by general practitioners do not contravene the advice given by the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry; and if he will make a statement;

(8) how he satisfies himself that expenditure on representatives by companies within the pharmaceutical price regulation scheme is reasonable; what assumptions he makes for this purpose about the level and manner of the remuneration of representatives; what is the source of the information upon which he bases these assumptions; and if he will make a statement;

Mr. Kenneth Clarke [*pursuant to his reply*, 18 March 1985, c. *385-87*]: Formal limitations on sales promotion expenditure which may, under the pharmaceutical price regulation scheme, be accepted as a legitimate cost in the pricing of National Health Service medicines were first introduced in 1976-77. The limit was initially 12 per cent. of industry turnover, reduced by stages to 10 per cent. in 1979-80. As I announced on 8 December 1983, at column 477-78, from 1 April 1985 the limit is being further reduced to 9 per cent. of turnover as one of a number of measures to achieve savings in the National Health Service drugs bill. The formula for applying the overall limit to individual companies will be a fixed sum of £550,000 plus 6 per cent. of turnover. Companies exceeding the limit will be asked to pay to our Department an amount equivalent to the excess.

This means that control is exercised by laying down a maximum level of permitted expenditure, with a financial penalty for exceeding it. Companies decide how best within the code of practice and other constraints to promote their products. We do not involve ourselves in such details as the remuneration of sales representatives.

Information expenses covering such items as issue of data sheets, samples and material for medical symposia are not classed as sales promotion and are therefore dealt with outside the formula described above. They are subject to a general test of reasonableness: where expenditure is judged to be unreasonably high a proportion may be disallowed. For details of information expenses in 1982 I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to him on 25 February, at column *71-72*.

As regards gifts offered by pharmaceutical companies, I refer him to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Penrith and the Border (Mr. Maclean) on 9 January, at column *497*.

The expenditure incurred by companies in supporting the campaign of the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry against the introduction of a selected list of medicines for prescription under the National Health Service will certainly not be treated as an admissible expense under the pharmaceutical price regulations scheme.

Control of sales promotion costs and other aspects of the operation of the pharmaceutical price regulation scheme will be reviewed from time to time.

General Practitioners (Income and Expenses)

Mr. Hickmet asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) pursuant to the reply of 28 February, *Official Report*, column 272, if he will list the expenses incurred by general practitioners which fall within those described as directly reimbursed expenses; how general practitioners claim such expenses; and if he will make a statement;

(2) pursuant to his reply of 28 February, *Official Report*, column 272, if he will itemise the services, in respect of which general practitioners were reimbursed indirectly £9,290 in 1983-84; if he will describe the system by which this money is claimed and paid; and if he will make a statement;

(3) pursuant to his reply of 28 February, *Official Report*, column 272, what was the average total sum which general practitioners actually received from the National Health Service and from all other sources of public money for which he has responsibility, by way of income, fees, expenses or other payments *(a)* in the period from 1 April 1983 to 31 December 1983 (grossed up to give an annual fugure) and *(b)* in the year from 1 January 1984.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke [*pursuant to his reply*, 18 March 1985, c. *385-87*]: Direct reimbursement of expenses incurred in providing general medical services which are allowed by the Inland Revenue may be claimed on the appropriate forms from family practitioner committees for the following:

—trainee practitioner scheme payments;
—the cost of supplying most drugs and appliances;
—doctors' retainer scheme payments;
— the cost of employing locums during a sickness, confinement or prolonged study leave;
—the costs of practice accommodation;
—part of the salaries of certain ancillary staff.

All other allowable general medical services expenses are automatically reimbursed indirectly on an average basis through fees and allowances.

The average sum received by unrestricted general medical practitioners in England in the period 1 April 1983 to 31 December 1983 (grossed up to an annual figure) for the provision of family practitioner services was £41,872. Similarly for the year 1 January 1984 to 31 December 1984 the average sum was £45,588.

Records of sums received by general medical practitioners from health authorities and other sources of public moneys for which my right hon. Friend has responsibility are not held centrally.

VDUs (Health Hazards)

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) whether his Department will be undertaking research into the health risks for men working on visual display units;

(2) what steps his Department is taking to investigate possible hazards for women working on unprotected visual display units.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I have been asked to reply.

The Health and Safety Executive published a research paper in 1980 and a guidance note in 1983, both of which consider the health aspects of operating VDUs. Further guidance is to be published shortly. Current work being undertaken by the executive includes studies on skin problems in VDU operators, possible reproductive problems, the ergonomic design of VDU equipment and the design of workplaces and lighting for VDU operation. The commissioning of further research into aspects of VDU job design is being considered. The Health and Safety Executive continues to keep the subject under review.

NATIONAL FINANCE

EC (Shipping Investment)

Sir Paul Bryan asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has as to the fiscal and other financial regimes applicable to investment in shipping in each of the member countries of the European Economic Community.

Mr. Moore: A study of this subject has been undertaken by the OECD Maritime Transport Committee. I shall arrange for details obtained in connection with that study to be sent to my hon. Friend.

Sir Paul Bryan asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the net present value to the shipowner of the fiscal regimes applicable to investment in shipping in each of the member countries of the European Economic Community, expressed as a proportion of the capital and running costs of a typical ship.

Mr. Moore: Official estimates are not available. I understand that work on this subject has been commissioned by the General Council of British Shipping.

Shipping Industry

Sir Paul Bryan asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many representations he has received from hon. Members urging the case for improved tax treatment for British shipping; and how many he has received urging him to resist such treatment.

Mr. Moore: Hon. Members have referred to me some 26 representations made to them seeking improved tax treatment for British shipping. Thirteen hon. Members have themselves expressed support. Further views were made known when the shipping industry was debated in the House on 17 December. I am not aware of any other representations on the subject.

Technological Equipment (Tax Concessions)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received advocating tax concessions to firms to encourage them to provide technological equipment to universities.

Mr. Moore: A small number. Tax relief is already available for payments for technical education directly connected with the donor's trade and this covers donations of equipment.

Civil Servants (Pensions)

Mr. Andrew Bowden asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the cost of counting in full for pension purposes all service, both unestablished and established, for all serving and retired civil servants *(a)* immediately, *(b)* immediately, but with no recalculation of the lump sum payment nor of pension arrears for retired civil servants and *(c)* on a phased implementation basis over 20 years starting with those retirees over the age of 80 years and with no recalculation of the lump sum nor of pension arrears.

Mr. Hayhoe: An estimate of the cost of allowing unestablished service before 14 July 1949 to reckon in full for Civil Service pension purposes, including the cost of arrears of pension and increased lump sums, is not

available. If no arrears of pension were paid to those who have already retired and there is no change in the basis of calculating lump sum retirement benefits, it has been estimated that the first year cost would be of the order of £34 million. Figures based on a phased implementation over 20 years are not available. If the change were made over 10 years, starting with those now aged 70 and over, the first year cost would be about £18 million. The total cost over 25 years has been estimated to be of the order of £550 million, or £460 million if implementation were phased over 10 years.

EC (Contributions and Receipts)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total amount paid by the United Kingdom to the European Economic Community and the total amount received by the United Kingdom in grant during the calendar year 1984.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Payments to the European Community in 1984 total £3,259 million. Receipts including refunds total £2,837 million.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer by what sum the total contributions and payments made by the United Kingdom to the Common Market since 1 January 1973 have exceeded the grants and subsidies received by the United Kingdom from that body over the entire period; and if he will express the net sum as an amount per day of membership.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Net payments in the period 1 January 1973 to 31 December 1984 amounted to £5,458 million. This is about £1·245 million a day since accession.

Whisky and Fuel (Duty)

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will indicate the total payable in tax and duties on a bottle of whisky at 40 per cent. volume, 75 cl; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will list in the *Official Report* the total payable in duties and tax of all kinds on *(a)* four star, *(b)* three star and *(c)* two star petrol, and also the total payable in duties and tax of all kinds on Derv oil, expressed in pence and percentages against the new average selling price per gallon.

Mr. Hayhoe: The information is as follows:

	Typical price	*Duty and VAT*	*Percentage*
Bottle of whisky	£7·75	£5·74	74
Petrol per gallon			
(a) four star	202·5p	108·0p	53
(b) three star	202·5p	107·7p	54
(c) two star	198·4p	107·4p	54
Derv	200·8p	95·1p	47

The Budget increases in the duty on petrol and derv do no more than keep pace with inflation. The increase in the duty on whisky is well below the rate of inflation, in recognition of the current difficulties of the Scotch whisky industry.

Development Land Tax

Mr. Bell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will assess the impact of the abolition of development land tax on the jobs of those in the Civil Service who levy the tax.

Mr. Moore: About 200 fewer staff will be needed in all as a result of the abolition of development land tax (DLT). Alternative posts will be sought for the 80 staff currently working at Middlesbrough. Everything possible will be done to redeploy staff in accordance with their preferences, and it is hoped that a number of the staff will be found vacancies locally, although some in the mobile grades may move to Inland Revenue offices in other parts of the country.

The other savings arise from a reduction in the DLT work in the local valuation offices throughout Great Britain. This reduction will be taken into account in determining the staffing levels needed in those offices.

Mr. Wrigglesworth asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what impact the abolition of development land tax will have upon Civil Service employment, particularly in Cleveland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: About 200 fewer staff will be needed in all as a result of the abolition of development land tax (DLT). As the work runs down, the 80 staff in the DLT Office at Middlesbrough will be available to fill vacancies in other Inland Revenue offices, so far as possible in the Middlesbrough area. Around 120 fewer staff will be needed in Valuation Offices throughout Great Britain. The reduction in DLT work will be taken into account in determining the staffing levels required in those offices.

Civil Servants (Pay)

Mr. Robert C. Brown asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the average salary for civil servants in the executive officer grade for each year since 1973 in current prices and constant 1983-84 prices.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Tax Exemption

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many people in Scotland will now be exempt from tax as a result of his Budget statement.

Mr. Moore: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

MIRAS

Mr. Stern asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will place in the Library copies of any circulars or official statements of practice or statements of intention issued by the Inland Revenue to major lenders in connection with the mortgage interest tax relief at source scheme in February.

Mr. Moore: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Youth Training

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer on what basis he has concluded that the difference between net costs and gross costs in the introduction of the second year of youth training is £60 million in 1986-87 and £150 million in 1987-88.

Mr. Peter Rees: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Revaluation

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer on how many occasions during the last 20 years a revaluation has taken place; and on how many occasions the results of a revaluation have been implemented.

Mr. Peter Rees: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Johnson Matthey

Mr. Gould asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will take steps to ensure that his review of the supervisory arrangements for the banking system investigates whether Johnson Matthey was warned by the director of the International Maritime Bureau of the risks of lending money to Mr. Mahoud Sipra from 1982 onwards.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

DEFENCE

West Midlands

Mr. John Mark Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he has plans to visit defence installations in the west midlands.

Mr. Butler: My right hon. Friend has no immediate plans to do so.

Royal Artillery Units

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Defence what percentage of war establishment of Royal Artillery units is provided by Regular Army reservists.

Mr. Lee: 12·7 per cent. of the total war establishment of all Royal Artillery field force units is provided by Regular Army reservists. The percentage varies between types of regiment.

Artillery Ammunition

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current number of days provision of artillery ammunition at the initial anticipated expenditure rate presently held in stock; what plans he has for increasing this; what is the time schedule in which such increase will be achieved; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: I regret that this information is classified.

Royal Artillery Guns

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many Royal Artillery guns presently are not deployed for training due to shortage of manpower.

Mr. Lee: 48 Royal Artillery guns are not deployed for training because they are manned by unit reinforcements on mobilisation.

Dassault Falcon

Mr. Robert Atkins asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he anticipates that the Dassault Falcon aircraft leased by Flight Refuelling Ltd. for use at Royal Navy air station, Yeovilton, by the Fleet Air Arm will receive Civil Aviation Authority registration; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: The Falcon aircraft which Flight Refuelling Ltd. will be using to undertake tasks for the Fleet Air Arm are registered with the Federal Aviation Administration. There is no requirement for them to be registered in the United Kingdom for this role. However, the Ministry of Defence, as customer for the service, have asked the Civil Aviation Authority to satisfy themselves that the aircraft in question continue to meet appropriate standards. Agreement has been reached accordingly.

Forkhill Military Base, Armagh

Miss Maynard asked the Secretary of State for Defence what improvements have been carried out at the British military base at Forkhill in County Armagh since 1979; what is the purpose of these improvements; and what is the cost.

Mr. Lee: Between 1978 and 1982 the Royal Engineers constructed a permanent building, replacing temporary ones, at the joint RUC/military base at Forkhill, County Armagh at a cost of £1 million. Since 1982 a number of other minor improvements have been undertaken at a further cost of approximately £200,000, which includes some £50,000 for the purchase of previously requisitioned land and some £100,000 for the demolition of disused buildings.

Insurance Business

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence what arrangements have been made to transfer his Department's claims records held by General Accident either back to his Department or to any new insurance company with effect from 1 April.

Mr. Lee: The question of transfer of records does not arise, as General Accident will remain responsible after the period of the present contract for business which arose within it.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the value of the insurance business conducted, and premiums paid, by his Department for each of the past three financial years; and what were the costs in the previous three financial years.

Mr. Lee: The sums concerned are a matter of commercial confidence between the Ministry of Defence and its insurers.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether the option of performing his Department's insurance responsibilities in-house was costed and considered either before, after or when outside tenders were being assessed.

Mr. Lee: Yes, in-house costs were prepared independently and prior to receipt of commercial tenders, and were considered concurrently with them.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the arrangements his Department is making to transfer its insurance business from General Accident to Guardian Royal Exchange as from 1 April.

Mr. Lee: The intention to transfer this Department's claims work in the United Kingdom in the fields of motor accident and employers' liability to the commercial insurance market was announced on 5 March 1982, at column 245. The contract then placed was for the three-year period 1 April 1982 to 31 March 1985. Competitive tendering has recently been concluded for new contracts for three years from 1 April 1985 resulting in a change of insurance brokers and underwriters.

Nuclear Weapon Testing (Cavanagh Report)

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will now publish the Cavanagh report reviewing the Conseil Européen pour la Recherché Nucléaire weapons testing ranges; and if he will make a statement about the reason for the delay in publication so far.

Mr. Butler: My right hon. Friend has no responsibility for the work of the Conseil Européen pour la Recherché Nucléaire.

Claims Commission (Contract)

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence why the trade union side of his Department was not consulted about the placing of a further contract for the work of the Claims Commission.

Mr. Butler: Competitive tendering, including both in-house costing and external tenders, indicated that the financial advantage of contract operation remained. No new issues of principle or substance were involved. There was therefore no requirement to consult the trade unions on placing of a further contract.

Animals (Experiments)

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he is able, without compromising security, to give figures for the numbers of animals killed during experiments on chemical and biological warfare experiments at Porton Down in 1984 or for the latest period for which figures are available.

Mr. Lee: Records of experiments involving animals are maintained in a form suitable to meet the requirement that the number of such experiments should be reported to the Home Office annually. Information in the form requested is therefore not readily available, but the vast majority of animals used in experiments are killed. In 1983 the total number of animal experiments conducted at the chemical defence establishment, Porton Down, was about 9,500, the majority of which were in the chemical defence field. The figure for 1984 will be available shortly and I will write to the hon. Gentleman.

Departmental Scientific Staff

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the role and composition of the strategic performance analysis group in the scientific staff in his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butler: The strategic systems performance analysis and assessment group is part of the defence scientific staff of the Ministry of Defence.

It provides a monitoring and advisory role on certain scientific matters relating to the operation of the United Kingdom strategic deterrent.

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the nature, composition and responsibility of the Defence Science Division 6, assessments, nuclear materials and wastes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butler: Defence Science Division 6, now designated Science (Nuclear), is part of the Defence scientific staff of the Ministry of Defence. It is responsible for providing scientific and technical advice on aspects of defence nuclear policy.

Atomic Control Office (London)

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the nature and composition and responsibility of the positions at the atomic control office (London); and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butler: The atomic control office (London) is part of the defence scientific staff of the Ministry of Defence. It is responsible for part of the day-to-day administration of the bilateral agreement of July 1958 between the Governments of the United Kingdom and the United States of America for co-operation on the uses of atomic energy for mutual defence purposes—Cmnd. 537, as amended.

Nuclear Bases

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many bases exist in Scotland which are concerned with the storage or deployment of nuclear weapons; and how many such bases exist in the rest of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Butler: It has been the policy of successive Governments neither to confirm nor deny the presence of nuclear weapons at particular locations.

Drug Misuse

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many disciplinary proceedings concerning drug misuse have resulted in discharge from duty of serving members of the armed forces during the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Lee: The number of service personnel discharged from the armed forces for drug related offences in 1984 was as follows:

	Number
Royal Navy/Royal Marines	13
Army	63
Royal Air Force	55
Total	131

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Defence what manpower and financial resources are currently available for the treatment of drug misuse within the armed forces.

Mr. Lee: There are no manpower or financial resources devoted solely to the medical treatment of drug misuse within the armed forces. Such treatment is found within the overall resources available for all types of medical treatment required by the services.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many serving members of the armed forces have been the subject of disciplinary procedures for drug misuse in each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Lee: The numbers of serving members of the armed forces who have been the subject of disciplinary procedures are not centrally available. However, the number of armed forces personnel convicted in military and civilian proceedings on drug-related offences in the years in question is as follows:

Convictions for drug offences

	All services	*Royal Navy/ Royal Marines**	*Army†*	*Royal Air Force*
1980	153	100	39	14
1981	202	100	70	32
1982	122	36	69	17
1983	190	61	114	15
1984	336	44	149	143

* Excludes conviction in civilian courts; includes three Marines for 1983 charged under the Army Act.

† The 1982 figure includes one officer.

Chief of Defence Procurement

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list those commercial firms from which the Chief of Defence Procurement has recently resigned his directorships.

Mr. Butler: Before taking up his appointment as Chief of Defence Procurement, Mr. Peter Levene resigned all his directorships of United Scientific Holdings plc and its subsidiaries. He does not hold any other directorships.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 26 March 1985

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Overseas Aid

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government towards proposals for transferring the United Kingdom overseas aid programme to the responsibility of the European Commission.

Mr. Raison: I am not aware of any such proposals.

ENERGY

Energy Prices

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Energy what was the average domestic price per unit of *(a)* gas, *(b)* electricity and *(c)* domestic fuel oil in (i) May 1979, (ii) May 1984 and (iii) January 1985.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: The information requested is given in the table.

	May 1979	*April 1983*	*May 1984*	*January 1985*
Average price of gas (including standing charge) to domestic credit meter consumers in Great Britain using 400 therms per annum				
Pence per therm	17·9	43·0	44·7	44·7
Average price of electricity (including standing charge) to consumers in England and Wales on the standard domestic tariff using 3,300 kWh per annum				
Pence per kWh	3·191	5·924	6·027	6·027
Average price of standard grade burning oil				
Pence per litre	9·90	22·08	18·99	21·60

Sources: BGC; Electricity Council; Department of Energy.

The April 1983 figures illustrate that since then gas and electricity prices have actually fallen in real terms.

Redundant Mineworkers

Mr. Maude asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether he will take steps to ensure that mineworkers who have been disqualified from receiving unemployment benefit after taking voluntary redundancy under the redundant mineworkers payments scheme during the recent dispute suffer no financial loss as a result of accepting in good faith the National Coal Board's offer of redundancy.

Mr. David Hunt: All claims for national insurance benefits are decided by independent adjudicating authorities specially appointed under the Social Security Act. I am continuing to monitor the position of mineworkers who have accepted redundancy but who have been disqualified from receiving unemployment benefit because of the dispute.

Nuclear Reactors

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Energy what research he is sponsoring into the use of fuels other than plutonium for fast breeder nuclear reactors.

Mr. Goodlad: None.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Social Security Commissioner (Appeals)

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Attorney-General how many decisions were made in 1984 by the Social Security Commissioner on appeals *(a)* by the Secretary of State for Social Services and *(b)* by the claimant, for the decision of a medical appeals tribunal concerning mobility allowance; and in what numbers of cases the appeal (i) succeeded and (ii) resulted in award of the allowance.

The Attorney-General: No decisions were made on appeals by the Secretary of State and 62 on appeals by the claimant. Fifty-one appeals, including one association appeal, succeeded. I understand that the information requested regarding the actual award of the allowance is not immediately available, but I will write to the right hon. Member shortly.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Attorney-General if he will give details of the average time taken to grant leave of appeal to the Social Security Commissioners in cases concerning *(a)* mobility allowance and *(b)* attendance allowance; and if he will in each case also give details of the average time between receipt of an appeal after leave to appeal has been granted and a decision on that appeal.

The Attorney-General: The Lord Chancellor will write to the right hon. Member.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Attorney-General how many decisions were made in 1984 by the Social Security Commissioner on appeals *(a)* by the Secretary of State for Social Services and *(b)* by the claimant in cases concerning attendance allowance; and in what number of cases the appeal (i) succeeded and (ii) resulted in award of the allowance.

The Attorney-General: Two decisions were made on appeals by the Secretary of State and 44 appeals by the claimant. Twenty-six appeals, including one by the Secretary of State, succeeded. The information requested on the actual awards is not immediately available but I will write to the right hon. Member shortly.

Coal Industry Dispute

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Attorney-General how many miners arrested for picket line offences in England and Wales have had jury trials.

The Attorney-General: According to the information available, as at 15 March 1985 the cases of 158 defendants indentified as arising in some way from the miner's dispute had been disposed of by the Crown court whether following trial or otherwise.

TRANSPORT

Railways (Electrification)

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the total level of expenditure planned for the electrification of railways in each of the next five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: I understand that BR's latest forecasts of expenditure on currently approved electrification schemes, excluding rolling stock, are:

	£ million (mid-1984 prices)
1985-86	65·0
1986-87	49·7
1987-88	51·1
1988-89	43·1
1989-90	24·8

Marine Pilotage

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the organisations which have made submissions on his consultative document on marine pilotage; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Erith and Crayford (Mr. Evennett) on 13 March at column *139*. The following organisations and groups have commented on the consultative document.

Aberdeen Harbour Board
Amalgamated Gloucester Pilots
Amoco (U.K.) Limited
Anglian Water Authority
Associated British Ports
Association of Forth Pilots
Association of Liverpool Pilot Apprentices
Association of Pilotage Authorities of the United Kingdom
Barry Dock Pilots' Association
Bartlett Brothers (Hauliers) Limited
Blyth Harbour Commission
Borough of Boston
Boston and Spalding Pilotage Authority
Brightlingsea Harbour Commission
British Aggregate Construction Materials Industries
British Motor Ship Owners Association Limited
British Ports Association
British Shippers' Council
British Tugowners Association
British Waterways Board
Port of Bristol Authority
Bristol Pilotage Authority
Bristol Steamship Owners Association
Chartered and International Shipbrokers' P and I Club Limited
Clyde Pilotage Authority
Clyde Pilots
Clyde Port Authority
Company of Watermen and Lightermen
Cowes Harbour Commissioners
Crouch Harbour Authority
Dart Harbour and Navigation Authority
Deal and Walmer Inshore Fishermen's Association
Dover Harbour Board
Dundee Port Authority
Essex Naturalists' Trust Limited
Esso Petroleum Company Limited
Falmouth District Pilot Boat Association
Falmouth Docks and Engineering Company
Falmouth Harbour Commissioners
Federation of Dredging Contractors
Port of Felixstowe
Folkestone Yacht and Motor Boat Club
Forth Pilotage Authority
Forth Ports Authority
Fowey Harbour Commissioners
Frinton and Walton Town Council
Gardline Shipping Limited
General Council of British Shipping
Gloucester Harbour Trustees
Gloucester Pilotage Authority
Gravesend Pilots' Cutter Committee
Gravesham Borough Council
Great Yarmouth Pilot Service
Great Yarmouth Port and Haven Commissioners
Great Yarmouth Port Users' Association
Hartlepool Pilotage Authority
Harwich Harbour Board
Harwich Town Council
Hoo Ness Yacht Club
Hoverspeed
Humber District Wharf Owners' Association
Humber Pilots Society
Institute of Chartered Shipbrokers
Institute of Chartered Shipbrokers, East Anglia Branch
International Maritime Pilots Association
Ipswich Pilots
Ipswich Port Authority
Ipswich Port Users
Ipswich and Suffolk Chamber of Commerce Industry and Shipping
John Lee Barber and Company Limited
Joint Committee of London Sea Pilots
Joint Executive Committees of UK Marine Pilots (representing the United Kingdom Pilots Association and the Maritime Pilots' Branch of the Transport and General Workers Union)
Kent County Council
Kent Trust for Nature Conservation
King's Lynn Conservancy Board
Lerwick Harbour Trust
Littlehampton Harbour Board
Liverpool Pilots' Association
Liverpool Shipowners' Association
Liverpool Steamship Owners' Association
Londonderry Port and Harbour Commissioners
London General Shipowners' Society
London Sea Pilots (West) Association Limited
London Sea Pilots (South) Cinque Ports Pilots' Committee
London Sea Pilots (North) Committee
Lothian Regional Council
Manchester Helmsmen's Association
Manchester Pilots' Association
Manchester Ship Canal Company
Manchester Steamship Owners' Association
Medina Borough Council
Medway Pilots Committee
Medway Ports Authority
Mercantile Marine Service Association
Mersey Docks and Harbour Company
Milford Haven Conservancy Board
Milford Haven District Pilots
Milford Haven District Pilotage Authority
Mistley Quay and Forwarding Company Limited
Motor Barge Owners Association
National Federation of Sea Anglers
National Waterways Transport Association
Nature Conservancy Council
Neath Harbour Commissioners
Newport Harbour Commissioners

North Devon District Council
Orkney Islands Council
Passenger Shipping Association
Penwith District Council
Penzance Pilots and Boatmen
Peterhead Bay Authority
Peterhead Pilotage Authority
Pilotage Commission
Pilots National Pension Fund
Port Talbot Pilotage Authority
River Thames Pilots Committee
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
Royal Yachting Association
Sand and Gravel Association Limited
Scarborough Borough Council
Sea Angling Liaison Committee of Gt. Britain and Ireland
Sealink British Ferries
Shetland Islands Council
Shoreham Port Authority
Sir William Reardon Smith and Sons Limited
Solent Protection Society
Southampton and Isle of Wight Pilots
South East Wales Pilots Association
Sunderland Pilotage Authority
Swansea Pilotage Authority
Tay Pilots
Tees and Hartlepool Port Authority
Tees Pilotage Authority
Tees Pilots Association
Tees Wharf Operators Association
Teignmouth Harbour Commission
Teignmouth Pilots
Teignmouth Quay Company Limited
Thames Water Authority
Thanet District Council
Tideway Sea Club
Borough of Torbay
Torbay and Brixham Shipping Agents Limited
Torridge District Council
Transport and General Workers Union — Docks Waterways and Fishing Group
Transport and General Workers Union — Regions No. 1 and 4
Transport on Water Association
Trent Pilots Association
Trent Wharfage Limited
Trinity House, Hull
Trinity House, London
Trinity House London Pilotage Committee
Trinity House, Newcastle-upon-Tyne
Trinity House Pilotage Department Staff Association
Trinity House Sub-commissioners of Pilots for Falmouth, Ipswich, Penzance, Poole and Teignmouth
Port of Tyne Authority
Tyne Pilotage Authority
Wells Harbour Commissioners
Whitehaven and Maryport Pilotage District
Wisbech Pilotage Authority

In-Car Telephones

Mr. Roger King asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he is satisfied about the safety aspect of the use by car drivers whilst on the move of in-car telephones.

Mrs. Chalker: Drivers with in-car telephones should never use them whilst on the move. My Department's manual "Driving" advises that drivers should stop before making or receiving a call and I understand that British Telecom and other manufacturers offer similar advice. While there appears to be an increase in the use of in-car telephones, there is at present no evidence to suggest that they are giving rise to any road safety hazard, but I shall be keeping a close watch on the situation.

MOT Testing Scheme (Examiners)

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he will announce the new conditions of appointment for authorised examiners under the MOT testing scheme.

Mrs. Chalker: From 13 May 1985 applications for new authorisations for MOT testing will again be accepted following the ending of the embargo on applications introduced on 5 May 1983.

Applicants and existing examiners will have to meet more stringent conditions of appointment, in line with the Department's aim of raising the standard of the MOT testing scheme.

This is to be achieved through higher standards of entry to the scheme. Applicants will have to satisfy the Department as to their repute and financial standing; stiffer requirements will apply to premises and equipment specifications, and better working conditions will be required for the tester. There is to be increased security for test certificates, and provision will have to be made for motorists to observe the test being carried out.

New applicants will be required to meet the new conditions in full. Existing examiners will have five years in which to comply, but requirements on pit dimensions and guard rails will not apply to them. Where changes in ownership of a testing station take place, the new conditions will apply after one year. Existing examiners are to have one year in which to provide improved security arrangements.

In order that these new conditions should not reduce the availability of MOT testing in rural areas, the existing testing stations in "remote rural areas" will be extended to cover stations doing fewer than 500 tests a year and more than 10 miles by road from the nearest station which meets, or will be required to meet, the full conditions of appointment. Existing examiners in this category will be able to represent to my Department their case for exemption from those of the new conditions which it would be impracticable for them to meet.

PRIME MINISTER

Civil Service (Pay)

Q10. **Mr. Patrick Thompson** asked the Prime Minister by what amount Civil Service pay has increased since 1979.

The Prime Minister: For the main grades, increases in pay between 1 April 1979 and 1 April 1984 have ranged between 57 and 84 per cent. Average non-industrial Civil Service earnings increased by 71 per cent. over that period.

Franks Committee

Q16. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Prime Minister if, in the light of further relevant documents which have become available, she will reconvene the Franks committee on the events leading up to the Falklands conflict.

The Prime Minister: No.

Mr. Chernenko (Funeral)

Q115. **Mr. Latham** asked the Prime Minister whether she will make a statement on her recent visit to Moscow to attend the funeral of the late Mr. K. Chernenko.

The Prime Minister: Accompanied by my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary, I attended the funeral of the late President Chernenko on 13 March. After the ceremonies, I made a call on the new General Secretary, Mr. Gorbachev, and had a good and useful discussion which lasted a little under an hour. While I was in Moscow I was able to have meetings with President Zia, President Machel, Vice President Bush and Secretary Shultz, Prime Minister Mulroney, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and Prime Minister Gonzalez.

In my talks with Mr. Gorbachev I stressed the hope of the Government and people of the United Kingdom that the Geneva arms talks would be successful and result in increased security at a lower level of weapons. Mr. Gorbachev raised the question of the American strategic defence initiative. I drew his attention to the significance of the four points which I had agreed with President Reagan at Camp David in December, and which were reaffirmed during my visit to Washington in February.

We touched briefly on relations between our two countries and agreed that we should develop contacts in a wide variety of fields so that we could achieve a better understanding and thus contribute towards an improvement in East-West relations.

Research (Code of Conduct)

Q121. **Sir David Price** asked the Prime Minister whether she will open discussions with the appropriate learned societies to agree an updated voluntary code of conduct on all medical, biological and bio-chemical research which is consistent with the dignity and sanctity of human life.

The Prime Minister: There are voluntary codes of conduct on scientific research involving humans, which have been drawn up by scientific and professional organisations. Each code deals with an aspect of such research. In addition, the Medical Research Council has published guidelines on research involving embryos fertilised in vitro. It is for the organisations themselves to ensure that these guidelines remain relevant both to the conduct of research and to the legitimate concerns of the community at large.

Engagements

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 26 March.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for 26 March.

Mr. Alton asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for 26 March.

Mr. Greenway asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for 26 March.

Mr. John Mark Taylor asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 26 March.

Mr. Pike asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 26 March.

Mr. Parry asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 26 March.

Mr. Fisher asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 26 March.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 26 March.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Peter Levene

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Prime Minister on which date the contract with Mr. P. Levene, head of defence procurement, was signed.

The Prime Minister: 19 March 1985.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Prime Minister when she first met Mr. P. Levene, new head of defence procurement, in an official capacity.

The Prime Minister: It would be neither practicable nor desirable for me to answer questions about where and when I meet specific officials or private named individuals; and I do not propose to do so.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Prime Minister why the new head of defence procurement, Mr. P. Levene was not considered suitable for a certificate of qualification from the Civil Service Commissioners.

The Prime Minister: I have nothing to add to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member on 21 March at column 570.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

University Students

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has for each university in the United Kingdom, as to the total number of *(a)* full-time and *(b)* part-time students enrolled at the institution for each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Peter Brooke: The information is as follows:

University or College	Full-time 1973	Part-time 1973	Full-time 1974	Part-time 1974	Full-time 1975	Part-time 1975	Full-time 1976	Part-time 1976
Aston	3,818	270	4,137	296	4,529	287	5,072	344
Bath	3,025	191	3,181	320	3,351	254	3,519	427
Birmingham	7,575	348	7,757	409	7,980	511	8,479	548
Bradford	3,521	842	3,822	902	4,175	457	4,448	476
Bristol	6,203	510	6,349	445	6,637	453	6,717	473
Brunel	2,019	978	2,209	1,116	2,375	1,088	2,414	1,018
Cambridge	10,799	942	10,873	864	10,849	913	10,986	986
City	2,099	251	2,126	271	2,202	360	2,498	393
Durham	3,881	96	4,060	98	4,192	132	4,318	141
East Anglia	3,118	59	3,276	66	3,472	91	3,562	97
Essex	2,031	56	2,003	36	2,294	50	2,499	87
Exeter	3,581	363	3,751	405	4,076	449	4,177	470
Hull	3,894	254	3,953	257	4,174	259	4,563	192
Keele	2,058	134	2,176	371	2,320	422	2,346	450
Kent	2,598	63	2,605	71	3,008	82	3,296	130
Lancaster	3,104	188	3,419	213	3,828	229	4,168	248
Leeds	9,348	671	9,187	612	9,480	644	9,657	661
Leicester	3,568	463	3,676	525	3,774	582	4,009	530
Liverpool	7,053	401	7,073	442	7,151	376	7,443	449
London Graduate School of Business Studies	170	—	158	—	194	—	229	—
London University	34,881	7,746	35,260	7,722	35,941	8,015	37,060	8,131
Loughborough	3,104	232	3,398	228	3,684	277	3,934	247
Manchester Business School	132	2	123	6	132	10	139	6
Manchester	9,529	764	9,966	787	10,381	850	10,532	829
University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology	3,339	110	3,422	104	3,540	196	3,793	155
Newcastle	6,409	395	6,437	422	6,682	317	6,967	373
Nottingham	5,696	503	5,806	528	5,988	606	6,208	628
Oxford	11,367	988	11,345	1,007	11,591	1,216	11,779	1,221
Reading	5,093	274	5,079	253	5,329	270	5,401	314
Salford	3,462	267	3,734	225	3,968	230	4,270	270
Sheffield	6,638	251	6,777	235	7,121	232	7,392	298
Southampton	4,639	302	5,067	311	5,437	274	5,763	311
Surrey	2,576	346	2,471	415	2,770	313	2,982	262
Sussex	3,772	157	3,952	170	4,191	176	4,341	142
Warwick	2,991	144	3,334	157	3,944	180	4,279	392
York	2,642	64	2,667	65	2,814	72	2,896	88
Total England	189,733	19,625	194,629	20,354	203,574	20,873	212,136	21,787
Aberystwyth U.C.	2,771	9	2,861	9	2,974	9	3,092	10
Bangor U.C.	2,444	155	2,614	152	2,720	118	2,909	137
Cardiff U.C.	3,755	264	4,071	196	4,568	253	4,608	321
St. David's, Lampeter	411	3	471	3	536	13	574	19
Swansea U.C.	3,391	70	3,222	72	3,221	165	3,421	220
Welsh National School of Medicine	402	49	566	10	587	9	687	14
University of Wales Institute of Science and Technology	2,234	53	2,387	47	2,530	59	2,717	55
Total Wales	15,408	603	16,192	489	17,136	626	18,008	776
Total England and Wales	205,141	20,228	210,821	20,843	220,710	21,499	230,144	22,563
Aberdeen	5,204	124	5,208	114	5,325	110	5,348	107
Dundee	2,745	157	2,667	164	2,758	190	2,844	196
Edinburgh	9,268	732	9,425	886	9,337	883	9,330	800
Glasgow	8,619	859	8,863	903	9,241	1,122	9,543	1,144
Heriot-Watt	2,298	296	2,609	292	2,792	316	2,900	188
St. Andrews	2,965	135	3,034	133	3,037	121	3,134	267
Stirling	2,075	49	1,995	94	2,075	94	2,199	111
Strathclyde	5,779	710	5,943	716	5,983	674	6,337	628
Total Scotland	38,953	3,062	39,744	3,302	40,548	3,510	41,635	3,441
Total Great Britain	244,094	23,290	250,565	24,145	261,258	25,009	271,779	26,004

University or College	Full-time 1973	Part-time 1973	Full-time 1974	Part-time 1974	Full-time 1975	Part-time 1975	Full-time 1976	Part-time 1976
Queen's, Belfast	5,563	886	5,502	914	5,735	933	5,799	926
Ulster, Coleraine	1,569	212	1,617	314	1,721	375	1,743	407
Total Northern Ireland	7,132	1,098	7,119	1,228	7,456	1,308	7,542	1,333
Total United Kingdom	251,226	24,388	257,684	25,373	268,714	26,317	279,321	27,337

University or College	Full-time 1977	Part-time 1977	Full-time 1978	Part-time 1978	Full-time 1979	Part-time 1979	Full-time 1980	Part-time 1980
Aston	5,460	339	5,557	388	5,599	417	5,306	540
Bath	3,537	277	3,561	257	3,478	209	3,581	205
Birmingham	8,707	603	8,919	661	8,929	758	8,884	956
Bradford	4,825	388	4,934	396	5,018	348	5,060	322
Bristol	6,775	486	6,755	499	6,894	454	7,010	525
Brunel	2,553	948	2,722	801	2,762	1,024	2,826	1,026
Cambridge	11,043	958	11,299	1,023	11,337	962	11,479	1,055
City	2,708	430	2,834	415	2,670	377	2,825	358
Durham	4,358	226	4,301	199	4,728	186	4,770	193
East Anglia	3,687	97	3,872	132	4,085	162	4,206	141
Essex	2,671	120	2,795	159	2,878	192	2,970	190
Exeter	4,281	557	4,949	614	4,963	706	5,064	712
Hull	4,919	346	5,192	303	5,453	314	5,498	505
Keele	2,500	423	2,690	424	2,818	420	2,801	441
Kent	3,728	179	3,809	253	3,835	294	3,956	313
Lancaster	4,432	287	4,531	310	4,652	287	4,627	380
Leeds	10,026	740	10,297	840	10,720	849	10,885	930
Leicester	4,061	654	4,208	755	4,542	690	4,789	651
Liverpool	7,329	546	7,435	483	7,540	531	7,859	530
London Graduate School of Business Studies	216	12	224	10	227	8	229	13
London University	37,829	8,608	39,337	8,419	39,892	8,642	40,538	8,704
Loughborough	5,075	377	5,151	470	5,198	604	5,399	695
Manchester Business School	149	7	138	4	145	7	162	6
Manchester	10,710	866	10,982	918	11,102	1,077	11,327	1,109
University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology	3,758	132	3,862	141	3,832	310	4,137	460
Newcastle	7,280	447	7,619	515	7,712	503	7,805	516
Nottingham	6,367	604	6,500	638	6,847	645	7,053	685
Oxford	12,162	1,154	12,203	1,195	11,829	1,676	11,802	1,717
Reading	5,623	338	5,849	357	5,707	344	5,819	360
Salford	4,157	184	4,376	332	4,584	398	4,549	452
Sheffield	7,553	312	7,576	374	7,724	359	8,369	428
Southampton	5,966	275	6,106	347	6,217	371	6,168	483
Surrey	3,156	282	3,309	359	3,272	379	3,255	421
Sussex	4,336	164	4,321	201	4,441	220	4,463	227
Warwick	4,530	303	4,378	270	4,908	333	5,002	447
York	3,042	125	3,163	186	3,252	188	3,357	162
Total England	219,509	22,794	225,754	23,648	229,790	25,244	233,830	26,858
Aberystwyth U.C.	3,157	14	3,173	16	3,133	17	3,224	94
Bangor U.C.	3,048	116	2,978	145	2,853	159	2,962	187
Cardiff U.C.	5,060	456	5,347	448	5,474	542	5,724	542
St. David's, Lampeter	587	26	665	26	713	24	767	43
Swansea U.C.	3,534	257	3,846	186	3,904	269	4,022	273
Welsh National School of Medicine	697	22	778	28	732	49	742	49
University of Wales Institute of Science and Technology	2,662	56	2,808	64	2,854	66	2,961	77
Total Wales	18,745	947	19,595	913	19,663	1,126	20,402	1,265
Total England and Wales	238,254	23,741	245,349	24,561	249,453	26,370	254,232	28,123
Aberdeen	5,249	120	5,457	149	5,512	171	5,590	179
Dundee	2,850	187	2,867	199	2,796	227	3,060	209
Edinburgh	9,713	934	9,869	930	9,542	749	9,783	884
Glasgow	9,486	1,148	9,404	1,251	9,727	1,314	9,830	1,299
Heriot-Watt	2,983	196	3,066	229	3,074	344	3,205	365
St. Andrews	3,198	215	3,277	129	3,398	108	3,348	98

University or College	Full-time 1977	Part-time 1977	Full-time 1978	Part-time 1978	Full-time 1979	Part-time 1979	Full-time 1980	Part-time 1980
Stirling	2,448	146	2,645	162	2,692	227	2,925	310
Strathclyde	6,344	600	6,455	508	6,544	474	6,707	472
Total Scotland	42,271	3,546	43,040	3,557	43,285	3,614	44,448	3,816
Total Great Britain	280,525	27,287	288,389	28,118	292,738	29,984	298,680	31,939
Queen's, Belfast	5,878	928	5,873	934	6,105	948	6,248	963
Ulster, Coleraine	1,732	464	1,661	501	1,683	480	1,686	409
Total Northern Ireland	7,610	1,392	7,534	1,435	7,788	1,428	7,934	1,372
Total United Kingdom	288,135	28,679	295,923	29,553	300,526	31,412	306,614	33,311

University or College	Full-time 1981	Part-time 1981	Full-time 1982	Part-time 1982	Full-time 1983	Part-time 1983
Aston	5,057	569	4,524	528	4,054	574
Bath	3,614	251	3,578	267	3,730	286
Birmingham	8,848	997	8,821	958	8,736	917
Bradford	4,878	317	4,733	313	4,574	348
Bristol	7,067	427	7,022	434	6,907	412
Brunel	2,838	1,014	2,703	959	2,654	811
Cambridge	11,663	968	11,447	935	11,598	911
City	2,776	388	2,753	387	2,798	537
Durham	4,813	211	4,694	236	4,704	300
East Anglia	4,334	367	4,133	388	4,031	458
Essex	3,208	172	3,184	200	3,188	177
Exeter	5,055	721	5,000	730	4,758	785
Hull	5,619	645	5,396	515	5,025	526
Keele	2,881	419	2,803	424	2,729	404
Kent	4,197	339	4,145	399	4,159	410
Lancaster	4,612	405	4,486	432	4,438	457
Leeds	10,914	1,076	10,721	1,108	10,569	1,096
Leicester	4,855	649	4,707	684	4,668	644
Liverpool	8,066	528	7,516	505	7,519	558
London Graduate School of Business Studies	232	14	233	12	252	72
London University	40,893	8,854	40,694	8,604	40,512	8,614
Loughborough	5,403	706	5,487	740	5,232	600
Manchester Business School	176	29	193	41	206	52
Manchester	11,325	1,249	10,917	1,189	10,931	1,205
University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology	4,504	426	4,630	246	4,301	284
Newcastle	7,726	510	7,633	527	7,538	485
Nottingham	7,055	685	6,987	685	6,829	749
Oxford	11,803	1,718	11,729	1,751	11,708	1,843
Reading	5,780	335	5,744	472	5,576	513
Salford	4,347	489	4,143	623	3,835	697
Sheffield	7,907	483	7,834	621	7,648	570
Southampton	6,200	484	6,202	449	6,416	503
Surrey	3,316	477	3,257	507	3,240	581
Sussex	4,469	284	4,325	289	4,360	313
Warwick	5,320	445	5,227	443	5,377	481
York	3,436	129	3,429	171	3,338	198
Total England	235,187	27,780	231,030	27,772	228,138	28,371
Aberystwyth U.C.	3,232	97	3,216	120	2,981	135
Bangor U.C.	2,983	182	2,854	191	2,673	199
Cardiff U.C.	5,514	532	5,299	605	5,103	551
St. David's, Lampeter	765	59	749	64	739	71
Swansea U.C.	3,887	283	3,890	249	3,695	257
Welsh National School of Medicine	728	17	746	22	743	37
University of Wales Institute of Science and Technology	2,945	76	2,811	72	2,801	65

University or College	Full-time 1981	Part-time	Full-time 1982	Part-time	Full-time 1983	Part-time
Total Wales	20,054	1,246	19,565	1,323	18,735	1,315
Total England and Wales	255,241	29,026	250,595	29,095	246,873	29,686
Aberdeen	5,557	215	5,498	190	5,470	239
Dundee	3,272	193	3,294	183	3,198	121
Edinburgh	9,898	920	9,791	894	9,866	1,013
Glasgow	9,996	1,558	9,986	1,824	10,043	2,106
Heriot-Watt	3,186	340	3,284	357	3,185	380
St. Andrews	3,426	119	3,369	146	3,454	144
Stirling	2,743	337	2,608	372	2,470	358
Strathclyde	6,876	477	6,969	450	7,163	579
Total Scotland	44,954	4,159	44,799	4,416	44,849	4,940
Total Great Britain	300,195	33,185	295,394	33,511	291,722	34,626
Queen's, Belfast	6,376	988	6,561	1,005	6,645	1,196
Ulster, Coleraine	1,823	440	2,010	426	2,226	497
Total Northern Ireland	8,199	1,428	8,571	1,431	8,871	1,693
Total United Kingdom	308,394	34,613	303,965	34,942	300,593	36,319

Teachers (Pay)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will take steps to increase the amount of money available to local education authorities to enable them to improve their current pay offer to teachers.

Sir Keith Joseph: No, but the employers and teachers know that I stand ready to receive and consider salary structure proposals and, if I judge them negotiable, good for education, and affordable, to put them to my colleagues for their consideration. I cannot guarantee the outcome of any such consideration but in any event talks on salary structure broke down over three months ago when the teacher side refused to continue discussions.

Further and Higher Education (Science Facilities)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what discussions he is having about establishing a range of schemes for promoting further places in science as opposed to arts faculties in further and higher education and about the levels of financing for universities and polytechnics.

Mr. Brooke: My right hon. Friend will be seeking advice from the University Grants Committee and other interested bodies about the distribution of the £43 million being made available for additional high quality engineering and technology places announced on 19 March 1985 at cols 482-84. The Government will continue to promote a significant shift in the balance of provision towards scientific, technological and vocational subjects across higher education as a whole. These matters will be further considered in the proposals for the future development of higher education which the Government intend to publish later this year. Future levels of financing for higher education will be considered in future public expenditure surveys in the usual way.

Research Councils

Mr. Warren asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish and place in the Library a list of titles and proposals of all the alpha grade research projects by each of the research councils in the financial year 1984-85 to date.

Mr. Brooke: Full details of alpha grade research projects from all research councils are not yet available for 1984-85, but the overall number thus graded exceeded 3,000 in each of the four years 1980 to 1984, and the list of titles and proposals asked for could not be provided except at disproportionate cost.

A and O-level Passes

Mr. Beith asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) on 12 February, *Official Report*, column 126, whether the table of O-level passes includes passes by pupils remaining in the sixth form with the intention of taking A-levels.

Mr. Dunn: Yes, it includes all leavers from both the fifth and sixth forms with five or more higher grades at O-level or CSE, regardless of whether A-levels were also obtained.

Food Standards

Mr. Coombs asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make it his policy to issue guidance to local education authorities about meals in schools in line with the nutritional standards recommended in the Committee on Medical Aspects of Food Policy (COMA) report.

Mr. Dunn: No. Under section 22 of the Education Act 1980, it is for local education authorities to decide what

food they should provide to pupils at school. They have access to a wide range of authoritative advice on nutritional standards.

Pupil-Teacher Ratios

Mr. Allan Roberts asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the pupil-teacher ratio in Sefton local authority nursery education in January 1980 and January 1985, respectively.

Mr. Dunn: The pupil-teacher ratio in nursery schools and classes in Sefton in January 1980 was 22·9; in January 1984, the latest date for which information is available, it was 25·1.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has concerning pupil-teacher ratios in different subjects in schools in England and Wales.

Mr. Dunn: Pupil-teacher ratios cannot readily be applied to individual subjects within a school. Information on average class sizes by subject is as follows. It is derived from a survey carried out by this Department in the autumn of 1977 of the staffing of a sample of maintained secondary schools in England and Wales.

Subject group	*Average class size*
English	23·7
Mathematics	23·3
Physical education	22·6
General science	24·5
Biology	20·2
Chemistry	19·3
Physics	20·0
History	22·1
Geography	22·3
Economics	14·2
Social studies	18·5
French	23·8
Music	20·2
Religious education	23·4
Metalwork and woodwork	15·1
Technical drawing	17·1
Shorthand and typewriting	17·4
Home economics	14·9
Art/craft	18·1
Remedial	11·8
All other subjects	19·6
All subjects	20·8

No comparable information is available about other schools in England and Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what has been the average pupil-teacher ratio in schools in England and Wales in each of the years since 1977.

Mr. Dunn: The pupil-teacher ratios overall and within maintained primary and secondary schools in England since 1977 are as follows:

	Primary	*Secondary*	*Overall**
1977	23·9	17·0	19·7
1978	23·6	16·9	19·4
1979	23·1	16·7	18·9
1980	22·7	16·6	18·7
1981	22·6	16·6	18·6
1982	22·5	16·6	18·5
1983	22·3	16·5	18·1
1984	22·1	16·2	17·9

* The overall pupil-teacher ratio relates the number of all full-time equivalent pupils in maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools to the full-time equivalent of qualified teachers paid by local education authorities and employed for service in these schools.

The information for Wales is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Animals (Experiments)

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on his policy relating to the inclusion of animal dissection and experimentation in school syllabuses.

Mr. Dunn: The Department has issued advice on the care and maintenance of living animals in schools; the use of such animals is normally restricted to observation of behaviour and growth and to husbandry. I refer my hon. Friend to the answer on dissection which I gave yesterday to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks).

Education Expenditure

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what has been the average expenditure per pupil in schools in England and Wales in each of the years since 1977.

Mr. Dunn: Average expenditure per pupil is available for England and Wales for the financial years 1977-78 and 1978-79. Since 1979-80 my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales kept separate information on the costs of education in Wales; but unit costs remain broadly comparable with earlier years. On this basis the net recurrent institutional expenditure per full-time equivalent pupil in maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools and in special education was as follows in each year, in cash terms:

Cost per pupil

£ (cash)

Financial years England and Wales	*Nursery schools**	*Primary schools*	*Secondary schools*	*Special education*
1976-77	—	294	454	1,337
1977-78	656	323	487	1,447
1978-79	699	367	539	1,662
England only				
1979-80	817	429	612	1,932

Financial years England and Wales	Nursery schools*	Primary schools	Secondary schools	Special education
1980-81	989	547	771	2,454
1981-82	1,112	619	867	2,763
1982-83	1,140	680	944	3,059
1983-84 (provisional)	1,229	724	1,010	3,439

* Reliable figures are not available for the years before 1977-78.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what has been the total expenditure upon teachers' salaries in schools in England and Wales in each of the years since 1977.

Mr. Dunn: The expenditure in each financial year since 1976-77 by local education authorities in England and Wales on the salaries of school teachers was as follows:

*Expenditure on teachers' salaries**

	£ million cash
1976-77	2,418
1977-78	2,597
1978-79	2,885
1979-80	3,265
1980-81	4,132
1981-82	4,583
1982-83	4,845
1983-84†	5,069

* Includes salaries plus employers' contributions to national insurance and superannuation.
† Provisional.

Youth Service Policy

Mr. Stern asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to issue the circular on youth service policy.

Mr. Dunn: The circular has been issued today and copies have been placed in the Library.

Pupils (Statistics)

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will list in the *Official Report* the proportion of pupils in comprehensive, secondary modern and grammar schools respectively, in each local education authority in 1979 and each subsequent year for which figures are available.

Mr. Dunn [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 March 1985, c. 481]: To provide the information requested for the past six years would incur disproportionate cost. However, the following table lists that for 1979 and 1984.

Percentage of pupils in maintained secondary schools in England in 1979

	1984			1979		
	Comprehensive	Secondary Modern	Grammar	Comprehensive	Secondary Modern	Grammar
Barking	100	0	0	100	0	0
Barnet	91	0	6	92	0	6
Bexley	48	22	11	38	31	13
Brent	100	0	0	100	0	0
Bromley	94	0	6	77	8	9
Croydon	100	0	0	99	1	0
Ealing	100	0	0	100	0	0
Enfield	94	0	6	94	0	6
Haringey	100	0	0	100	0	0
Harrow	81	0	0	86	0	0
Havering	100	0	0	100	0	0
Hillingdon	97	3	0	100	0	0
Hounslow	100	0	0	97	0	3
Kingston upon Thames	8	74	18	0	84	16
Merton	100	0	0	100	0	0
Newham	100	0	0	100	0	0
Redbridge	91	0	9	91	0	9
Richmond upon Thames	100	0	0	100	0	0
Sutton	29	47	24	25	53	22
Waltham Forest	100	0	0	100	0	0
Inner London	94	0	0	92	0	1
Birmingham	90	0	7	94	0	5
Coventry	100	0	0	99	0	0
Dudley	97	0	0	97	0	0
Sandwell	96	0	0	97	0	0
Solihull	94	0	0	96	0	0
Walsall	95	0	5	95	0	5
Wolverhampton	97	0	3	94	0	5
Knowsley	100	0	0	100	0	0
Liverpool	95	0	2	56	24	13
St. Helens	100	0	0	100	0	0
Sefton	98	0	0	97	0	0
Wirral	64	19	17	59	23	18
Bolton	96	0	0	24	53	19
Bury	90	0	0	12	66	15

	1984			1979		
	Comprehensive	Secondary Modern	Grammar	Comprehensive	Secondary Modern	Grammar
Manchester	87	0	0	93	1	1
Oldham	100	0	0	97	3	0
Rochdale	100	0	0	85	10	5
Salford	92	0	0	92	0	0
Stockport	99	0	0	100	0	0
Tameside	92	0	0	13	66	21
Trafford	5	59	36	6	62	32
Wigan	95	0	0	95	0	0
Barnsley	97	0	0	100	0	0
Doncaster	100	0	0	100	0	0
Rotherham	98	0	0	98	0	0
Sheffield	100	0	0	100	0	0
Bradford	100	0	0	100	0	0
Calderdale	47	30	23	43	33	24
Kirklees	89	4	2	80	12	4
Leeds	100	0	0	100	0	0
Wakefield	100	0	0	97	3	0
Gateshead	100	0	0	100	0	0
Newcastle upon Tyne	100	0	0	100	0	0
North Tyneside	95	0	0	96	0	0
South Tyneside	100	0	0	100	0	0
Sunderland	100	0	0	100	0	0
Isles of Scilly	100	0	0	100	0	0
Avon	97	0	2	97	1	2
Bedfordshire	96	0	0	97	0	0
Berkshire	84	9	7	82	10	8
Buckinghamshire	25	44	31	21	49	30
Cambridgeshire	97	0	0	98	0	0
Cheshire	98	0	0	81	13	4
Cleveland	92	0	0	95	0	0
Cornwall	97	0	0	86	8	5
Cumbria	97	1	1	74	16	9
Derbyshire	100	0	0	96	2	1
Devon	71	17	9	56	26	11
Dorset	47	22	13	35	28	17
Durham	99	0	0	91	6	3
East Sussex	95	0	0	79	12	2
Essex	89	3	5	83	6	6
Gloucestershire	62	21	18	57	26	17
Hampshire	91	0	0	92	0	1
Hereford and Worcester	97	0	2	78	16	5
Hertfordshire	100	0	0	99	1	0
Humberside	99	0	0	99	0	0
Isle of Wight	100	0	0	100	0	0
Kent	45	35	17	43	38	11
Lancashire	89	6	3	88	6	3
Leicestershire	96	0	0	97	0	0
Lincolnshire	40	40	20	36	45	19
Norfolk	95	1	3	45	37	18
North Yorkshire	78	12	8	72	17	10
Northamptonshire	100	0	0	100	0	0
Northumberland	99	0	0	100	0	0
Nottinghamshire	98	0	0	95	2	1
Oxfordshire	98	0	0	99	0	0
Shropshire	90	3	2	64	22	11
Somerset	97	0	0	91	4	2
Staffordshire	99	0	0	91	5	2
Suffolk	100	0	0	95	4	1
Surrey	90	0	0	90	0	0
Warwickshire	65	23	7	63	24	7
West Sussex	95	0	0	95	0	0
Wiltshire	90	6	4	86	9	5
England	89	5	3	83	9	5

Note:

The percentages for each LEA will not necessarily add to 100 because secondary pupils in sixth form colleges, middle deemed secondary schools, technical and other schools have been excluded.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Philip Trusty and Alan Chard (Trial Evidence Review)

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will review the evidence of converted terrorist Billy Williams upon which Philip Trusty, Alan Chard and others were convicted at the Old Bailey in 1975.

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. and learned Friend is having inquiries made in order to establish whether such a review is necessary.

Prisoners (Razor Blades)

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if prisoners are ever issued with razor blades for shaving which have been used previously by other prisoners.

Mr. Mellor: No. In most establishments inmates are issued weekly with their own disposable safety razor. In others, razor blades are issued individually to inmates each day under a paper wrapper bearing the inmate's name and returned to the landing staff daily in the same way.

British Union of the Abolition of Vivisection

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis asking for what purpose the police entered the offices of the British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection on 20 March; who issued the warrant; and what material was removed;

(2) if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to why the police removed a list of names of hon. Members from the offices of the British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection on 20 March.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis informs me that with a search warrant issued by Horseferry road magistrates' court his officers entered the premises of the British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection in connection with the theft on 16-17 March of documents from the Wellcome Research Laboratories, Beckenham, Kent. A large quantity of documents were removed, some of which have now been recognised as irrelevant to this police inquiry and are accordingly being returned to the British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection. The list of names to which the hon. Member refers has been so returned.

Drunkenness (Statistics)

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether, in view of the policy currently being introduced by several police forces, he will ensure that the number of persons cautioned for drunkenness offences will appear in the official statistics.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The information requested is published annually in a Home Office statistical bulletin "Offences of Drunkenness, England and Wales", a copy of which is in the Library of the House. The next issue is planned for September 1985.

Coal Industry Dispute

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will publish in the *Official Report* information on the mining dispute showing the number of arrests in each police area from 13 March 1984 to 5 March 1985.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The number of arrests connected with the miners' dispute in police force areas in England and Wales was as follows:

Police force area	*Number of arrests*
Cleveland	58
Cumbria	25
Derbyshire	1,192
Durham	487
Dyfed-Powys	16
Essex	212
Greater Manchester	274
Gwent	236
Hampshire	11
Humberside	121
Kent	311
Lancashire	26
Leicestershire	54
Merseyside	195
Metropolitan	255
Northumbria	637
North Wales	31
North Yorkshire	163
Nottinghamshire	2,417
South Wales	509
South Yorkshire	1,533
Staffordshire	417
Sussex	5
Thames Valley	3
Warwickshire	197
West Yorkshire	423
Total	9,808

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the effect of policing the mining dispute on crime figures in non-mining areas.

Mr. Mellor: No satisfactory estimate can be made of the effect which the redeployment of police officers may have had on the crime figures in non-mining areas. Any such effects would be masked by the normal variations in the figures for each kind of offence within each police force area.

Probation Centres

Mr. Harvey asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the guidelines for consultation with local communities in which it is proposed to set up a new probation centre.

Mr. Mellor: This is a matter left to the discretion of area probation committees which are aware of the need to consult local communities.

Leeds Prison

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the general review of rule 43 procedures at Leeds prison, which was planned in 1981, was carried out.

Mr. Mellor: The report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons in 1981 recommended that the

governor of Leeds prison should improve the quality of life of prisoners segregated under prison rule 43 for their own protection. As a result, the governor was asked to consider ways of improving conditions for rule 43 prisoners within resource constraints, and the facilities and regime of these prisoners have been improved. Action was also taken to reduce the number of these prisoners held at Leeds.

After-care Grant Scheme

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, in view of the freeze on the development of further after-care hostels, he will seek to complete the review of the after-care grant scheme as a matter of urgency.

Mr. Mellor: Work on the review is progressing as speedily as is practicable.

Prisoners (Segregation)

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many male and how many female prisoners are currently segregated under rule 43 *(a)* for their own protection and *(b)* for good order and discipline.

Mr. Mellor: The most up-to-date information centrally available on adult convicted males is for 31 August 1984 when:

(a) 572 were segregated for their own protection;
(b) 94 for good order and discipline.

Figures are not available for female or for male unconvicted prisoners.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if any action has been taken to set up a specialist unit for rule 43 prisoners in the north of England, as recommended by the Chief Inspector of Prisons in 1981;

(2) whether any more specialist units for rule 43 prisoners, similar to those at Maidstone and Gloucester, are planned.

Mr. Mellor: In addition to units at Gloucester, Maidstone and Wakefield prisons, it is planned to open a further special unit at Parkhurst prison to which prisoners serving long sentences who are segregated under rule 43 for their own protection may be transferred to enable them to resume association with other prisoners. The unit will be operated on lines similar to those described in Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons' report 1981. I accept that an increase in provision in the north of England would provide a better geographical balance of accommodation, but it has not so far been possible to identify a suitable location because of the constraints upon accommodation generally. We shall continue to keep the position under review.

The hon. Member may also wish to note that units for vulnerable prisoners have now been set up at Gartree and Albany prisons: allocation to these facilities is not at present managed centrally.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if any action has been taken, as recommended by the Chief Inspector of Prisons in 1981, to transfer segregated prisoners to other prisons where they are not known and where it might be possible for them to relinquish rule 43 status.

Mr. Mellor: It is our policy that all cases of prisoners segregated under prison rule 43 should be reviewed at regular intervals. Prison governors are required to submit reports to regional offices of the prison department on prisoners segregated under rule 43 for their own protection at monthly intervals making recommendations for future action and in doing so are required to consider whether it would be possible to enable the prisoner to be removed from rule 43 by means of transfer to another establishment. In the prison department's reply to the report of the Chief Inspector of Prisons for 1981, it was promised that consideration would be given to enabling transfers to take place between, as well as within, regions. Arrangements for such transfers have since been developed between all four regions of the prison department.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many fewer prisoners are currently segregated under rule 43 than when the Chief Inspector of Prisons reported on the matter in 1981.

Mr. Mellor: The inspectorate report stated that 714 convicted adult males were segregated for their own protection in July 1981. Comparable figures for July 1984 show 578, a reduction of 136. The most recently available figure is for August 1984 at which time the number was 572.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners are currently segregated under rule 43 at Leeds prison.

Mr. Mellor: On 22 March 1985 the figures for prisoners segregated under rule 43 at Leeds prison were as follows:

	Number
For their own protection	
unconvicted	16
convicted	45
	61
For reasons of good order and discipline	
unconvicted	4
convicted	1
	5

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if any action has been taken to improve the physical conditions, in particular the plumbing and sanitary arrangements, of accommodation for segregated prisoners at Durham prison.

Mr. Mellor: A programme of refurbishing all the existing recesses at Durham prison is currently under way. Some improvements to the drainage facilities in A wing, where segregated prisoners are accommodated, have already been undertaken. Further improvements to the recesses on this wing will be carried out over the next year.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if segregated prisoners have now been allocated a separate area at Birmingham prison;

(2) whether all young offenders segregated under rule 43 at Birmingham prison now have access to the prison's education facilities.

Mr. Mellor: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether steps have been taken to ensure

that the authorisation procedure for rule 43 prisoners is properly followed in all establishments, as recommended by the Chief Inspector of Prisons.

Mr. Mellor: Recommendations concerning the need to adhere to the procedures laid down for authorising the segregation of prisoners under rule 43 of the prison rules have been made by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons in a number of reports on individual establishments. It is primarily the responsibility of the governor to ensure that these recommendations are followed. However, where the Chief Inspector has made recommendations of this nature, compliance with the procedures is monitored in the course of routine operational assessments by regional offices of the prison department. It has also been monitored through a series of follow-up visits by the deputy director general of the prison service to establishments which have been inspected and I understand that in general observance of the procedures has been found to be satisfactory.

Crime Statistics

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the latest crime statistics.

Mr. Brittan: I am disappointed that recorded crime in England and Wales increased by 8 per cent. in 1984, following a reduction of 1 per cent. in 1983. The Government have a clear strategy for dealing with crime by strengthening the police, extending the prison building programme, improving the effectiveness of all the criminal justice services and other measures. More has still to be done, but I am satisfied that our programme is realistic and effective.

Immigration

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the average daily prison population of those detained under Immigration Act powers during 1984.

Mr. Mellor: In 1984 the average number of persons detained under the Immigration Act 1971 in prison department establishments in England and Wales was 143.

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will provide a table indicating the total number of people served with detention orders under Schedule 3 paragraph 2(2) of the Immigration Act during 1983 by nationality and category.

Mr. Waddington: The following table gives the available information. The breakdown by category of deportation could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Detention orders served under paragraph 2(2) of Schedule 3 of the Immigration Act, 1971 in 1983

	Number of persons
Foreign nationals	
Bolivia	1
Burma	1
Columbia	2
Eygpt	2
France	1
Hungary	1
Iran	1
Italy	2
Japan	1
Morocco	1
Pakistan	2
Philippines	2
Poland	1
Portugal	1
Sudan	1
Tunisia	1
Turkey	7
Total	28
Commonwealth citizens	
Cyprus	3
Ghana	8
Hong Kong BDTC's	1
India	4
Jamaica	1
Mauritius	2
Nigeria	9
St Helena BDTC	1
Seychelles	1
Sri Lanka	3
Uganda	1
Zimbabwe	1
Total	35
All persons	63

NORTHERN IRELAND

Roadworks (Carrickfergus)

Mr. Beggs asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will take steps to publicise in the area of Carrickfergus affected by major road works the entitlement of residents to claim compensation under the Land Acquisition and Compensation Order (N.I.) 1973 in respect of property devaluation on account of noise arising from the roadworks.

Mr. Chris Patten: Yes; the claim period under the Land Acquisition and Compensation (N.I.) Order 1973 starts 12 months after completion of the relevant scheme, and in accordance with normal practice an appropriate notice will be published in the local press at about that time.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the latest available figures which indicate unemployment in each parliamentary constituency and each electoral ward in Northern Ireland.

Dr. Boyson: The numbers of unemployed claimants in each parliamentary constituency in Northern Ireland at 14 February 1985 are set out. As there are more than 500 electoral wards in Northern Ireland, I will write to the hon. Gentleman giving February unemployment figures for each electoral ward.

Numbers of Unemployed Claimants by Parliamentary Constituency in Northern Ireland at 14 February 1985

Parliamentary Constituency	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*
Belfast East	3,091	1,330	4,421
Belfast North	6,388	2,155	8,543
Belfast South	3,773	1,721	5,494
Belfast West	9,580	2,518	12,098
East Antrim	4,876	2,140	7,016
East Londonderry	6,403	2,098	8,501
Fermanagh and South Tyrone	6,241	2,151	8,392
Foyle	9,677	2,366	12,043
Lagan Valley	3,956	1,917	5,873
Mid-Ulster	6,363	2,073	8,436
Newry and Armagh	6,286	2,355	8,641
North Antrim	4,442	1,578	6,020
North Down	2,588	1,468	4,056
South Antrim	4,285	1,775	6,060
South Down	4,317	1,970	6,287
Strangford	2,676	1,524	4,200
Upper Bann	4,839	2,037	6,876
NI Totals	89,781	33,176	122,957

Social Security Offices

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the electoral wards served by each social security office in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Chris Patten: Information in the form requested is not readily available and could be compiled only at disproportionate cost.

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the latest available figures which indicate the number of people claiming supplementary benefit at each social security office in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Chris Patten: The numbers receiving supplementary benefit on 12 February 1985 were as follows:

Social Security Office	*Claimants*
Andersonstown	6,571
Antrim	5,824
Armagh	4,676
Ballymena	5,718
Ballymoney	4,330
Ballynahinch	1,262
Banbridge	3,185
Bangor	4,240
Carrickfergus	2,973
Coleraine	5,756
Cookstown	3,376
Corporation Street	10,999
Downpatrick	2,281
Dungannon	5,528
Enniskillen	7,990
Falls Road	8,970
Holywood Road	8,545
Kilkeel	1,326
Knockbreda	6,287
Larne	2,906
Limavady	3,105
Lisburn	6,311
Londonderry	14,244
Lurgan	5,422
Magherafelt	4,487
Newcastle	1,690
Newry	9,190
Newtownabbey	5,749
Newtownards	4,251
Omagh	4,716
Portadown	3,722
Shaftesbury Square	6,190
Shankill	5,613
Strabane	6,151

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what figures are available to indicate the number of persons claiming unemployment benefit, who are not also receiving supplementary benefit, at each social security office in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Chris Patten: The numbers of people receiving unemployment benefit only are estimated twice yearly on a sampled basis. The latest available information is as follows:

	Number
Andersonstown (Belfast)	505
Antrim	870
Armagh	680
Ballymena	740
Ballymoney	430
Ballynahinch	210
Banbridge	495
Bangor	770
Carrickfergus	655
Coleraine	805
Cookstown	360
Corporation Street (Belfast)	980
Downpatrick	280
Dungannon	480
Enniskillen	725
Falls Road (Belfast)	555
Holywood Road (Belfast)	1,125
Kilkeel	265
Knockbreda (Belfast)	785
Larne	355
Limavady	365
Lisburn	1,120
Londonderry	1,275
Lurgan	690
Magherafelt	440
Newcastle	195
Newry	855
Newtownabbey	1,250
Newtownards	825
Omagh	585
Portadown	695
Shaftesbury Square (Belfast)	785
Shankill (Belfast)	740
Strabane	385

Women Prisoners (Armagh)

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give the monthly breakdown since November 1982 of the number of women held in Her Majesty's prison, Armagh, indicating for each month the number held on remand and the number sentenced and distinguishing between those remanded or sentenced for scheduled and non-scheduled offences.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 March 1985]: The details requested are set out in the following table:

	Remand		Sentenced		Total Female Population
	Scheduled	Non Scheduled	Scheduled	Non Scheduled	
1982					
November	13	11	33	6	63
December	13	3	34	5	55
1983					
January	10	5	35	8	58
February	8	4	34	11	57
March	10	4	35	9	58
April	8	4	36	9	57
May	8	2	32	5	47
June	11	4	29	5	49
July	10	3	28	4	45
August	7	3	26	3	39
September	9	2	29	6	46
October	7	2	27	13	49
November	8	2	27	9	46
December	8	—	25	9	42
1984					
January	8	3	25	9	45
February	7	1	26	8	42
March	7	—	26	9	42
April	7	—	26	4	37
May	9	3	25	6	43
June	9	—	26	8	43
July	8	3	25	4	40
August	9	1	23	3	36
September	9	1	20	4	34
October	9	1	20	1	31
November	10	2	21	8	41
December	8	—	20	10	38
1985					
January	8	3	20	15	46
February	8	4	19	8	39

The figures include those detained in the young offenders' centre.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Industrial Activity (Merseyside)

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the latest figure for the level of industrial activity on Merseyside; and how this compares with the equivalent month in 1979.

Mr. Trippier: While there is no single figure which can be used as an index to denote the level of industrial activity on Merseyside, in the period between end-1979 and end-1983, the total business stock on Merseyside increased from 20,633 to 21,629.

Redditch

Mr. Forth asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many applications have been received from, and how many applications granted to, companies in the Redditch area for assistance under the terms of the new assisted area status of the regional development policy.

Mr. Trippier: Under section 7 of the Industrial Development Act 1982, three applications for assistance have been received from companies in the Redditch area and these are being considered by officials.

EC (Spain and Portugal)

Mr. Forth asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what estimate he has made of the effect on the amount of European regional development fund money received by the United Kingdom of the possible entry of Spain and Portugal to the European Economic Community.

Mr. Trippier: Such estimates are not practicable in the absence of information about the ERDF quota ranges for Spain and Portugal and the future size of the ERDF budget.

Laser Technology

Mr. Skeet asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what Government funds have been allocated for laser technology *(a)* for metal cutting, *(b)* for communication techniques and *(c)* for other purposes.

Mr. Butcher: The Department of Trade and Industry is currently supporting a number of projects concerned with laser technology. The total cost of these projects is approximately £20 million, of which the Department is providing funding as follows: *(a)* £1·6 million for metal cutting, *(b)* £2·85 million for communications and *(c)* £570,000 for other purposes.

Mineral Exploration

Mr. Skeet asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement about the review of the scheme for providing grants for mineral exploration under the Mineral Exploration and Investment Grants Act 1972.

Mr. Trippier: This review has now been completed, taking into account the wider review of the Department's

support for industrial research and development whose conclusions were announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on 25 March. The central conclusion of the wider review is that the balance of the Department's support should shift away from assistance to projects for individual companies and towards measures promoting widespread benefits across industry.

In line with this conclusion and the planned decrease in real terms in our support for industrial research and development, it has been decided that no further offers of assistance will be made under the mineral exploration grants scheme, which is being brought to an end. Grants in respect of projects for which offers have already been made will be payable under the Act over the next year or so, as claims are received for projects completed.

EC (Anti-dumping Procedures)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if goods and materials entering Germany from East Germany in terms of the inner German trade agreement are subject to the Common Market's anti-dumping procedures; and if the Common Market Commission has any role in supervising these arrangements.

Mr. Channon [*pursuant to the reply*, 25 March 1985]: The Community's anti-dumping procedures do not apply to inner German trade. However, member states can act to ensure that the special provisions for inner German trade do not undermine any anti-dumping measures imposed by the Council or the Commission in the rest of the Community. Member states would wish to maintain contact with the Federal German Government and with the Commission in relation to any such action.

EC (Steel Industries)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has as to the percentage reduction in the numbers employed in the steel industries of the various Common Market countries since the Council of Ministers agreed on a plan to reduce and restructure the industry; and if he will make a statement outlining the extent to which the various nations have fulfilled their agreed obligations in this area of policy.

Mr. Butcher [*pursuant to the reply*, 25 March 1985]: The most recent information on the reduction in the numbers employed in the production of steel products covered by the treaty of Paris in Community member states since 1980 when the steel aids code was agreed is shown in the following table:

TABLE 1
Number of employees ('000)

	1980 average	*January 1985*	*Percentage reduction*
West Germany	201	151·7	24·5
France	114	84·5	25·9
Italy	101	75·7	25·0
Netherlands	21	18·8	10·5
Belgium	47	36·9	21·5
Luxembourg	16	12·3	23·1
United Kingdom	133	61·7	53·6

Source: Eurostat.

In June 1983, the European Commission issued a series of decisions addressed to member states specifying the minimum capacity reductions required between 1980 and the end of 1985. These requirements and the Commission's figures for capacity reductions actually carried out up to 20 March 1985 are shown in the following table:

TABLE 2
'000 tonnes of hot-rolled steel capacity

	Capacity 1980	*Reductions Minimum required*	*Implemented at 20 March 1985*
West Germany	53,117	6,010*	6,370†
Belgium	16,028	3,155	3,183‡
Denmark	941	66	66
France	26,869	5,311	4,143
Italy	36,294	5,834	5,724‖
Luxembourg	5,215	960	1,045‡
Netherlands	7,297	950	82
United Kingdom	22,840	4,500	4,654

Source: Commission of the European Communities.
* Excluding Kloeckner.
† Including Kloeckner.
‡ 250,000 tonnes of reductions have been transferred from Luxembourg to Belgium.
‖ According to the Commission, the 2 million tonnes accounted for by the Italian private sector has been shut down and will be scrapped under Commission supervision.

WALES

Household Statistics

Mr. Anderson asked the Secretary of State for Wales what increase on Office of Population Censuses and Surveys projections he estimates in the number of households in Wales by the year 2001; and if he will make a statement on the implications for housing policy.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: It is estimated that between 1985 and 2001 the number of private households in Wales will increase by approximately 100,000. The total number of private households by 2001 is now projected to be less than the figure underpinning the assessment of housing need which I gave the hon. Gentleman in my answer on 22 October 1984 at column 428. We are considering the implications.

Council Houses (New Tenants)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many local authority dwellings were let to new tenants in the year 1983-84 *(a)* through the waiting list, normal allocation and *(b)* other.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: 11,400 and 2,500, respectively.

Health Authorities (Members' Overseas Trips)

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* the cost to each health authority in Wales of overseas trips by officers of the authorities in each of the past five years.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: This information is not kept centrally and could not be obtained without disproportionate cost.

Roads (Construction Programmes)

Mr. John Morris asked the Secretary of State for Wales if, for each of the following road schemes, he will itemise *(a)* the original programme for construction, *(b)* any slippages in either starting or completion dates and *(c)* the reasons for any slippages identified: A5 Glyn Bends, Ty Nant to Dinmael School, A487 Furnace Bridge, Eglwys Fach, A4042 Penperlleni bypass, M4 Baglan-Lonlas, A40 Pengawse Hill diversion, A40 Carmarthen Eastern bypass, A48 Pont Faen-Coed Hirion-Pound Farm-Pont Pibwr (scheme changed), A48 Cross Hands-Drefach (scheme changed), A55 Bodelwyddan, A55 Rhuallt Hill improvement, A55 Conwy Morfa-Aber (scheme changed), A55 Travellers Inn improvement, A465 Glynneath-Aberdulais, A470 Llanidloes bypass, A470 Pentrebach-Cefn Coed, Ruabon by pass, A483 Welshpool Relief Road, A483 Wrexham-Chester (scheme changed), A487 Port Dinorwic bypass, A487 Pont Seiont Bridge approaches, A4042 Llantarnam bypass, stage 1, stage 2, A55 Northop bypass and A55 Conwy crossing.

Mr. John Stradling Thomas: The information is as follows.

Scheme	*Provisional Planning Start Date in roads in Wales 1983*	*Latest Provisional Planning Start Date where known to be different*
A5 Glyn Bends Tynant-Dinmael School	Jan. 86-Dec. 88	
A487 Furnace Bridge-Eglwys Fach	post 1988	
A4042 Penperlleni Bypass	post 1988	
M4 Baglan-Lonlas	Jan. 86-Dec. 88	
A40 Pengawse Hill Diversion	Jan. 83-Dec. 85	
A40 Carmarthen Eastern Bypass	post 1988	
A48 Nant-y-Caws to Coed Hirion	Jan. 86-Dec. 88	
A48 Cross Hands-Llanddarog Bypass	Jan. 83-Dec. 85	
A55 Bodelwyddan Bypass	Jan. 83-Dec. 85	
A55 Rhuallt Hill Improvement	Jan. 86-Dec. 88	post 1988
A55 Conwy Morfa-Aber		
Penmaenbach-Dwygyfylchi Improvement	Jan. 83-Dec. 85	under review
Llanfairfechan Bypass	Jan. 83-Dec. 85	1986-88
Penmaenmawr Bypass	Jan. 83-Dec. 85	1986-88
Pen-y-Clip Tunnel	Jan. 86-Dec. 88	
Aber Improvement	Jan. 86-Dec. 88	post 1988
A55 Travellers Inn Improvement	Jan. 86-Dec. 88	
A465 Glynneath-Aberdulais	Jan. 86-Dec. 88	
A470 Llanidloes Bypass	Jan. 86-Dec. 88	
A470 Pentrebach-Cefn Coed	Jan. 86-Dec. 88	post 1988
A470 Builthwells Bypass and Llandwedd Junction	Post 1988	
A470 Llanrwst Bypass	Post 1988	
A483 Ruabon Bypass	Jan. 83-Dec. 85	
A483 Welshpool Relief Road	Jan. 86-Dec. 88	Post 1988
A483 Gresford Pulford Bypass (Wrexham-Chester)	Jan. 83-Dec. 85	1986
A487 Port Dinorwic Bypass	Jan. 86-Dec. 88	
A487 Pont Seiont and approaches	Jan. 86-Dec. 88	
A4042 Llantarnam Bypass	post 1988	
A55 Northop Bypass	Jan. 86-Dec. 88	
A55 Conwy Crossing	Jan. 83-Dec. 85	1986

As was made clear in "Roads in Wales 1983," the periods in which schemes are expected to start must be regarded as provisional. The progress of schemes is dependent on the satisfactory completion of the statutory procedures and of engineering design as well as the availability of resources. Thus, the provisional planning start dates adopted at any time are liable to change.

SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND

Procurator Fiscal, Peterhead

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland if he has now made plans to meet the procurator fiscal at the Peterhead sheriff court; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I intend to meet the procurator fiscal of Peterhead at his office on Monday 1 April.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Arms Talks

59. **Mr. Dykes** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to what extent Her Majesty's Government are able to gauge that United Kingdom interests will be safeguarded in the latest round of United States—Soviet disarmament negotiations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: As I told my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) on 13 March, at column 166, we shall continue to maintain close and constant contacts with the United States, both bilaterally and in NATO. These contacts include discussion of our common interests that the Geneva negotiations achieve effective agreements aimed at preventing an arms race in space, terminating it on earth and achieving security with reduced levels of offensive systems on both sides. We shall use appropriate opportunities to ensure that the Soviet Government remain fully seized of our views and interests.

60. **Mr. Roy Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the progress of the Geneva arms talks and Government policy on disarmament.

Mr. Luce: We have warmly welcomed the opening of the talks in Geneva. We recognise that the issues under discussion are complex and intricate. Long and difficult negotiations may well be required if our aim of balanced and verifiable measures of arms control is to be achieved. We hope nevertheless that progress will be made.

62. **Mr. Johnston** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's policy regarding the issues to be discussed at the Geneva talks on disarmament; and what steps he proposes to take to make Her Majesty's Government's position known to the negotiators.

Mr. Luce: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister emphasised during her recent meetings with President Reagan and Mr. Gorbachev that we share the objective of the United States that the negotiations should work out effective agreements aimed at preventing an arms race in space, terminating it on earth and achieving security with reduced levels of offensive systems on both sides.

Chemical Weapons

61. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on progress in multilateral negotiations relating to chemical weapons.

Mr. Luce: At the 1985 session of the Geneva negotiations we and our allies are concentrating on the key issues of verification where we hope to see faster progress than in 1984. As part of this concerted effort, I presented at Geneva on 12 March a new British working paper containing proposals for the routine inspection of civil chemical plants to ensure that under a total chemical weapons ban certain toxic chemicals are not diverted for secret military use. We urge the Soviet Union to join us in building upon this and other Western verification proposals so that a complete ban, which is urgently required, can be achieved quickly.

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Employment what is the latest figure for the number of unemployed; and how many of them are black.

Mr. Alan Clark: The latest available information on unemployment by ethnic origin comes from the revised results of the 1983 labour force survey. These show that in the second quarter of 1983, there was a total of 2,998,000 people unemployed in Great Britain, of whom 215,000 were of non-white ethnic origins.

Mr. Allan Roberts asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish figures in the *Official Report* indicating the levels of unemployment in the constituency of Bootle, in May 1979, June 1983 and in February 1985 of *(a)* 16 to 21-year-old males, *(b)* 16 to 21-year-old females, *(c)* 22 to 35-year-old males, *(d)* 22 to 35-year-old females, *(e)* 35 to 65-year-old males and *(f)* 35 to 65-year-old females.

Mr. Alan Clark: This information is not yet available. Detailed analysis of unemployment in parliamentary constituencies will be available later this year. Unemployment levels by age group for jobcentre areas are in the Library.

Mr. Allan Roberts asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* indicating the level of unemployment in the constituency of Bootle, in May 1979, June 1983 and February 1985, respectively.

Mr. Alan Clarke: The information requested, which is also available in the Library, is as follows:

Bootle Constituency: Numbers of unemployed

	Numbers
May 1979	Not available
June 1983	10,764
February 1985	11,494

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has about the number of building trade workers who are now unemployed in the north-west region; and if he will provide a detailed breakdown of the figures by craft and skill.

Mr. Alan Clark: Results of the 1983 labour force survey indicate that in the north-west region in the second quarter of 1983 there were 40,000 people without a job and looking for work, who had been employed at some time during the previous three years, with their last job in the construction industry. A detailed breakdown of this figure by craft and skill is not possible because of the sampling error that would be involved.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give a breakdown by region of the number of people in employment, whole-time equivalent, in each of the years since 1977; and what percentage this figure represents of total work force in the region in each of those years.

Mr. Alan Clark: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if he will give, from the survey of youth training scheme providers reported to the last meeting of the Manpower Services Commission's youth training board, the number and proportion of trainees on mode A, mode B1 and mode B2 schemes, respectively, who will spend fewer than 13 weeks on off-the-job training;

(2) if he will give, from the survey of youth training scheme leavers reported to the last meeting of the youth training board, the number and proportion of mode A, mode B1, and mode B2 work experience placements provided in each of the industrial categories used in the survey, and in each of the occupational training families;

(3) if he will give, from the survey of youth training scheme providers reported to the last meeting of the Manpower Services Commission's youth training board *(a)* the number and proportion of mode A managing agents who require prospective trainees to have one or more O-levels and *(b)* the number and proportion of mode B1 and mode B2 sponsors, respectively, who require prospective trainees to have one or more O-levels;

(4) if he will give, from the survey of youth training scheme providers reported to the last meeting of the Manpower Services Commission's youth training board, the number and proportion of mode A managing agents who deploy, per 100 trainees *(a)* fewer than three, *(b)* from three to five, *(c)* from six to eight, *(d)* from nine to 11, (e) from 12 to 14 and *(f)* more than 14 full-time equivalent staff in managing, administering, and providing off-the-job training for their scheme.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

"Noise and the Worker"

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Employment how long the health and safety pamphlet, "Noise and the Worker", has been out of print; when it will be reprinted or replaced; and, when it was in print, what measures were taken to ensure that it was available to interested workers.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The pamphlet "Noise and the Worker" (HSW 25), which was first issued in 1963, has been out of print since May 1983, and the Health and Safety Executive has no plans to reprint. While in print HSW 25 was an on-sale publication available through HMSO bookshops.

As part of its current awareness campaign on the problems of industrial noise, HSE has taken a number of initiatives addressed to all sections of industry. In particular, it has issued a free "Noise" leaflet on the protection of workers' hearing.

Hairdressing (Self-employment Grants)

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for Employment what criteria of assessment are applied in awarding self-employment grants to individuals engaging themselves in hairdressing.

Mr. Alan Clark: The same eligibility tests are applied to all applications for the enterprise allowance scheme irrespective of the nature of the proposed business. The conditions which the enterprise must satisfy in order to qualify for support are described in the leaflet EPL124 "Enterprise Allowance Scheme, A Guide", which is available in the Library.

No special conditions apply to hairdressing ventures.

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many individuals have been in receipt of self-employment grants for their establishment in hairdressing in *(a)* Cleveland county, *(b)* the northern region and *(c)* England and Wales.

Mr. Alan Clark: I regret the figures are not available in the form requested. However, experience in the pilot enterprise allowance scheme suggests that about 1 per cent. of those joining the scheme start up in hairdressing.

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of individuals, having received self-employment grants for their establishment in hairdressing, have continued operating in that industry 12 months after the receipt of the grant.

Mr. Alan Clark: No separate information is available on the survival rates of hairdressing businesses set up with the help of the enterprise allowance scheme. However, experience in the pilot scheme suggests that about 70 per cent. of all businesses supported are still trading up to 18 months after joining the scheme.

Budget Changes

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Employment how he calculates his figure of £146 million to be incurred by the Department of Employment as a result of changes announced in the Budget; and if he will list the specific programmes which are to benefit.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Secret Ballots

Sir Humphrey Atkins asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many times in the past 12 months he has met representatives of the Trades Union Congress to discuss balloting procedures; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 March 1985]: My right hon. Friend and I have had no meetings with the TUC on this subject since June last year when the Trade Union Act 1984 was still before Parliament. We are always ready to meet representatives of the TUC to discuss with them how the trade unions can best fulfil their statutory obligations in relation to secret ballots.

Coal Industry

Mr. Barron asked the Secretary of State for Employment if the National Coal Board has applied for any alteration or exemption to the Mines and Quarries Act or other such legislation relating to the coal mining industry in the last six months.

Mr. Peter Bottomley [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 March 1985]: The National Coal Board has not applied during the last six months for any alterations of existing health and safety legislation for coal mines. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Mines and Quarries has received and granted exemptions although the precise numbers are not readily available. Such requests relate to individual mines and come from individual NCB colliery managers. Provisions in mining legislation empower the Health and Safety Executive to grant specific exemptions, so long as the safety of employees will not be prejudiced by the granting of such exemptions, and these exemptions are always subject to conditions on either scope or application and often time.

ENVIRONMENT

Local Authority Funds

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the total of *(a)* rate fund balances, *(b)* special funds and *(c)* capital funds available by local authorities at the end of each financial year from 1974-75 to 1983-84.

Mr. Patrick Jenkin: Based on returns from local authorities, following is the information for England:

	Rate Fund Balances	Balances of Special Funds* (excluding capital funds)	Balances of Capital funds
	£ million	£ million	£ million
At the end of:			
1974-75	493	160	24
1975-76	987	152	75
1976-77	1,289	202	93
1977-78	1,480	264	171
1978-79	1,466	325	238
1979-80	1,156	454	148
1980-81	1,056	445	210
1981-82	1,379	719	211
1982-83	1,420	1,296	269
1983-84†	1,232	1,745	315

*For 1977-78 and earlier years not all non-statutory special funds are included. Details of extent of coverage for individual years may be found in the relevent "Local Government Financial Statistics" publication. Superannuation funds are excluded.
†Provisional.

Planning Zones

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what responses he has received from *(a)* local authorities and *(b)* industry, commerce and the relevant professions to his consultation paper on simplified planning zones; and when he proposes to make a further statement on the matter.

Mr. Macfarlane: My right hon. Friend has received a wide range of responses from local authorities, industry and commerce and professional bodies which he is at present considering. My right hon. Friend hopes to make an announcement shortly.

Control of Pollution Order 1983

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment by what date he expects to revoke the Control of Pollution Act (Exemption of Certain Discharges from Control) Order 1983.

Mr. Waldegrave: Government proposals for a phased withdrawal of the exemptions conferred by the Control of Pollution (Exemption of Certain Discharges from Control) Order 1983 were published in a consultation letter issued on 20 September 1984. Decisions on implementing the revocation of the order will be made when the responses to the consultation letter have been fully considered.

Greater London Council (Mortgages)

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to the number of mortgages the Greater London council has currently effected and the current value of the Greater London council mortgage book; and what he proposes for the Greater London council mortgage book upon abolition.

Sir George Young: I understand that at 31 July 1984, the GLC had outstanding loans totalling £306 million secured on 55,000 mortgages for house purchase and improvement. We intend that, on abolition, the GLC's mortgage account for these loans should pass as a whole to the London residuary body. All the existing terms of the mortgages will be unchanged, including the fixed rates of interest which apply to about half of those loans. The residuary body will be directed to adopt the normal practice of local authorities and leading private lending institutions in managing the account, including in the treatment of any borrowers who fall into arrears. It will be the job of the residuary body to arrange for as many as possible of the transferred mortgages to be refinanced with bodies in the private sector like building socieities and banks, but only with the agreement of the borrower. The prescribed proportion of virtually all the residuary body's mortgage receipts will be distributed among the London boroughs and we intend that this should be done in proportion to HIP allocations. The boroughs will be able to use them to supplement their housing investment programme allocations. By pursuing an active policy of securing refinance, the residuary body may be able to unlock resources for investment in local authority housing in the capital.

London Housing (SHAC Report)

Mr. Malins asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has considered the recent report by SHAC, "The London Housing Aid Centre, Bed and Breakfast: Slum Housing of the Eighties", a copy of which has been sent to him; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: My right hon. Friend and I have read this report with interest. Many of the proposals put forward will be for local authorities to consider. The proposals for Government action are in the main not new, but the views expressed in the report will nonetheless be taken into account. In particular any implications which the present level of public sector capital investment in housing may have for other fields of public expenditure will continue to be carefully considered.

Housing

162. **Mr. Alton** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total housing stock for each housing authority in England and Wales; what is the total number of empty dwellings for each housing authority; and what was the number of council houses built or started in 1984 for each housing authority.

Sir George Young: Each English local authority's estimate of the total dwellings in its area at 1 April 1984 and the number which were vacant, are contained in its housing investment programme return: the figures for each authority are listed in cols A15 and A75, respectively, of the "Print of data from form HIP1 (1984)" which is available in the Library. Reported figures of starts and completions of dwellings for the local authorities and for other owners during the first nine months of 1984, appear in "Local Housing Statistics" No. 72 which is also in the Library.

For information about housing in the Welsh authorities' areas, I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Empty Premises

165. **Mr. Alton** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to the total area of empty *(a)* office space for sale or hire, *(b)* retail premises for sale or hire and *(c)* factory or warehouse space for sale or hire, for each housing authority in England and Wales.

Sir George Young: Vacant floorspace statistics for offices, shops, factories and warehouses are not maintained by the department of the Environment.

The Department does produce detailed estimates of floorspace stock for commercial offices, shops, factories and warehouses by local authority district throughout England, in "Commercial and Industrial Floorspace Statistics, England" published annually. Similar figures for Wales are publishd by the Welsh Office, in "Commercial and Industrial Floorspace Statistics, Wales". Both publications are available in the Library.

Information on vacant office, factory and warehouse floorspace and on take-up of premises is published regularly by a number of leading firms of surveyors and estate agents. The supply of, and demand for, commercial and industrial accommodation is mainly a matter to be determined and monitored by the market.

Town and Country Planning Act

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, further to his answer to the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire of 29 January, *Official Report*, column 127, he has any plans this session to introduce a provision seeking to amend the Town and Country Planning Act to give greater flexibility of the use of commercial and industrial buildings engaged in the field of high technology industries.

Mr. Macfarlane: My right hon. friend proposes to introduce legislation at the earliest available opportunity, but I am unable to give an undertaking that time will be available during the current session.

Wideawake Air Base

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the capital cost of the expansion of the Wideawake air base; and what are the recurrent costs of the facility to Great Britain.

Sir George Young: The total capital cost for providing hardstandings, a fuel pipe line, technical and domestic accommodation for the air base on Ascension Island, amount to approximately £49 million at September 1984 prices. Of this the domestic accommodation cost approximately £18 million and the technical facilities £31 million. Average annual works maintenance costs are expected to be in the region of £1 million.

Local Authorities (Employees)

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out in descending order for each district authority the number of local authority employees per 100 inhabitants allowing for higher tier authority employees and setting out the higher tier authority or authorities involved.

Mr. Waldegrave: The information is as follows:

Staff per hundred population

District	*County*	*Staff per hundred population*
METROPOLITAN DISTRICTS/COUNTIES (ENGLAND)		
Manchester	Greater Manchester	8·31
Newcastle upon Tyne	Tyne and Wear	6·78
Liverpool	Merseyside	6·57
Sheffield	South Yorkshire	6·42
Wolverhampton	West Midlands	6·15
Coventry	West Midlands	5·85
Sunderland	Tyne and Wear	5·84
Bradford	West Yorkshire	5·83
Walsall	West Midlands	5·65
Salford	Greater Manchester	5·60
North Tyneside	Tyne and Wear	5·59
Doncaster	South Yorkshire	5·53
South Tyneside	Tyne and Wear	5·51
Barnsley	South Yorkshire	5·44
Gateshead	Tyne and Wear	5·41
Kirklees	West Yorkshire	5·41
Rochdale	Greater Manchester	5·41
Rotherham	South Yorkshire	5·41
Wakefield	West Yorkshire	5·38
Tameside	Greater Manchester	5·22
Leeds	West Yorkshire	5·10
Calderdale	West Yorkshire	5·02
Sandwell	West Midlands	5·01
Wigan	Greater Manchester	5·00
Birmingham	West Midlands	4·97
Bolton	Greater Manchester	4·97
Oldham	Greater Manchester	4·90
Wirral	Merseyside	4·52
Stockport	Greater Manchester	4·25
Sefton	Merseyside	4·18
Bury	Greater Manchester	4·13
Trafford	Greater Manchester	4·11
Dudley	West Midlands	3·81
Solihull	West Midlands	3·75

Information not available for:
Knowsley (Merseyside)
St. Helens (Merseyside)

NON-METROPOLITAN DISTRICTS/COUNTIES (ENGLAND)		
Kingston-upon-Hull	Humberside	6·13
Middlesbrough	Cleveland	5·95
Hartlepool	Cleveland	5·84
Nottingham	Nottinghamshire	5·82
Stockton-on-Tees	Cleveland	5·82
Chesterfield	Derbyshire	5·69
Scunthorpe	Humberside	5·55
Langbaurgh	Cleveland	5·48
Barrow	Cumbria	5·40
Burnley	Lancashire	5·34
Derwentside	Durham	5·32
Darlington	Durham	5·30
Blackburn	Lancashire	5·26
Derby	Derbyshire	5·24
Easington	Durham	5·24
Sedgefield	Durham	5·24
Bristol	Avon	5·22
Blackpool	Lancashire	5·18
Corby	Northamptonshire	5·17
Great Grimsby	Humberside	5·16
Carlisle	Cumbria	5·10
Mansfield	Nottinghamshire	5·10
Cleethorpes	Humberside	5·07
Rossendale	Lancashire	5·07
Durham	Durham	5·05
Wear Valley	Durham	5·04
Reading	Berkshire	4·99
Northampton	Northamptonshire	4·97
Thamesdown	Wiltshire	4·97
Chester-le-Street	Durham	4·96
East Yorkshire	Humberside	4·96
Stoke-on-Trent	Staffordshire	4·95
Copeland	Cumbria	4·93
Luton	Bedfordshire	4·91
Preston	Lancashire	4·91
Wansbeck	Northumberland	4·91
Bassetlaw	Nottinghamshire	4·88

District	County	Staff per hundred population
North East Derbyshire	Derbyshire	4·87
Slough	Buckinghamshire	4·87
Bolsover	Derbyshire	4·86
Bournemouth	Dorset	4·84
Portsmouth	Hampshire	4·84
Ellesmere Port and Neston	Cheshire	4·81
West Derbyshire	Derbyshire	4·81
Halton	Cheshire	4·80
Blyth Valley	Northumberland	4·79
Bath	Avon	4·78
Hyndburn	Lancashire	4·78
South Lakeland	Cumbria	4·77
Erewash	Derbyshire	4·75
High Peak	Derbyshire	4·75
Brighton	East Sussex	4·74
Ashfield	Nottinghamshire	4·73
Boothferry	Humberside	4·72
Crewe and Nantwich	Cheshire	4·71
Stevenage	Hertfordshire	4·71
Warrington	Cheshire	4·70
Broxtowe	Nottinghamshire	4·69
Norwich	Norfolk	4·69
Holderness	Humberside	4·68
Chester	Cheshire	4·67
Congleton	Cheshire	4·66
Allurdale	Cumbria	4·65
Amber Valley	Derbyshire	4·63
Rushcliffe	Nottinghamshire	4·63
South Derbyshire	Derbyshire	4·63
Vale Royal	Cheshire	4·63
Beverley	Humberside	4·62
Glanford	Humberside	4·62
Lancaster	Lancashire	4·61
York	North Yorkshire	4·61
Lincoln	Lincolnshire	4·60
Newcastle-under-Lyne	Staffordshire	4·59
Wellingborough	Northamptonshire	4·59
Eden	Cumbria	4·58
Gedling	Nottinghamshire	4·58
Watford	Hertfordshire	4·58
Ipswich	Suffolk	4·57
Newark	Nottinghamshire	4·55
Southampton	Hampshire	4·55
Scarborough	North Yorkshire	4·52
The Wrekin	Shropshire	4·52
Cannock Chase	Staffordshire	4·50
Macclesfield	Cheshire	4·49
Nuneaton	Warwickshire	4·47
Tynedale	Northumberland	4·47
Woodspring	Avon	4·46
Alnwick	Northumberland	4·45
South Ribble	Lancashire	4·45
Fylde	Lancashire	4·44
Tamworth	Staffordshire	4·44
Milton Keynes	Buckinghamshire	4·43
Welwyn Hatfield	Hertfordshire	4·43
Wyre	Lancashire	4·43
Chorley	Lancashire	4·42
East Northamptonshire	Northamptonshire	4·41
East Staffordshire	Staffordshire	4·41
Southend-on-Sea	Essex	4·41
Eastbourne	East Sussex	4·40
Berwick-upon-Tweed	Northumberland	4·39
Daventry	Northamptonshire	4·39
North Bedfordshire	Bedfordshire	4·39
Wansdyke	Avon	4·38
West Lancashire	Lancashire	4·38
Stafford	Staffordshire	4·34
South Bedfordshire	Bedfordshire	4·32
Thurrock	Essex	4·32
Wycombe	Buckinghamshire	4·32
Kingswood	Avon	4·31
South Northamptonshire	Northamptonshire	4·31
Cheltenham	Gloucestershire	4·30
Teasdale	Durham	4·29
Harrogate	North Yorkshire	4·28
South Buckinghamshire	Buckinghamshire	4·28
Aylesbury Vale	Buckinghamshire	4·27
Crawley	West Sussex	4·27
Northavon	Avon	4·26
Ribble Valley	Lancashire	4·26
Chaswood	Leicestershire	4·25
Plymouth	Devon	4·24
Chiltern	Buckinghamshire	4·23
Melton	Leicestershire	4·23
North West Leicestershire	Leicestershire	4·23
Sedgemoor	Somerset	4·23
Dacorum	Hertfordshire	4·22
South Shropshire	Shropshire	4·22
Gloucester	Gloucestershire	4·21
Hinckley and Bosworth	Leicestershire	4·20
Lichfield	Staffordshire	4·20
Taunton Deane	Somerset	4·20
Bracknell	Berkshire	4·19
Rugby	Warwickshire	4·19
Rutland	Leicestershire	4·19
Hertsmere	Hertfordshire	4·18
Warwick	Warwickshire	4·17
Cambridge	Cambridgeshire	4·17
Oadby and Wigston	Leicestershire	4·17
Torbay	Devon	4·17
Boston	Lincolnshire	4·16
Harborough	Leicestershire	4·16
Oswestry	Shropshire	4·16
Hereford	Hereford and Worcester	4·15
Rushmoor	Hampshire	4·15
South Staffordshire	Staffordshire	4·15
Richmondshire	North Yorkshire	4·14
Staffordshire Moorlands	Staffordshire	4·14
Blaby	Leicestershire	4·13
Colchester	Essex	4·13
Broxbourne	Hertfordshire	4·12
Kennet	Wiltshire	4·12
St. Edmundsbury	Suffolk	4·12
Craven	North Yorkshire	4·11
Hastings	East Sussex	4·11
North Hertfordshire	Hertfordshire	4·11
West Somerset	Somerset	4·09
Exeter	Devon	4·08
Salisbury	Wiltshire	4·08
North Shropshire	Shropshire	4·07
North Wiltshire	Wiltshire	4·07
Oxford	Oxfordshire	4·07
Waveney	Suffolk	4·07
Wyre Forest	Hereford and Worcester	4·07
Bridgnorth	Shropshire	4·04
Stratford-on-Avon	Warwickshire	4·03
West Wiltshire	Wiltshire	4·03
Great Yarmouth	Norfolk	4·02
Three Rivers	Hertfordshire	4·02
Yeovil	Somerset	4·02
Worcester	Hereford and Worcester	4·01
Gosport	Hampshire	4·00
Dartford	Kent	3·99
South Wight	Isle of Wight	3·99
Hambleton	North Yorkshire	3·98
St. Albans	Hertfordshire	3·98
Epping Forest	Essex	3·97
Test Valley	Hampshire	3·97
Windsor and Maidenhead	Berkshire	3·97
Forest of Dean	Gloucestershire	3·96
Mid-Bedfordshire	Bedfordshire	3·96
Medina	Isle of Wight	3·95
South Hams	Devon	3·95
Christchurch	Dorset	3·93
Brentwood	Essex	3·91
Mid Devon	Devon	3·90
Stroud	Gloucestershire	3·90
East Hertfordshire	Hertfordshire	3·89
Poole	Dorset	3·89

District	County	Staff per hundred population
Ryedale	North Yorkshire	3·89
Worthing	West Sussex	3·89
South Holland	Lincolnshire	3·88
Chelmsford	Essex	3·87
Teignbridge	Devon	3·87
Winchester	Hampshire	3·87
Havant	Hampshire	3·86
Hove	East Sussex	3·86
Mendip	Somerset	3·86
Mid-Suffolk	Suffolk	3·86
Penwith	Cornwall	3·85
Restomel	Cornwall	3·85
Rochford	Essex	3·85
Torridge	Devon	3·85
Braintree	Essex	3·84
Carrick	Cornwall	3·84
Kerrier	Cornwall	3·84
Basingstoke and Deane	Hampshire	3·83
Fenland	Cambridgeshire	3·83
Newbury	Berkshire	3·83
Wokingham	Berkshire	3·83
Caradon	Cornwall	3·82
Forest Heath	Suffolk	3·82
Tendring	Essex	3·82
Fareham	Hampshire	3.81
North Devon	Devon	3·81
Castle Point	Essex	3·80
Eastleigh	Hampshire	3·80
New Forest	Hampshire	3·80
Rother	East Sussex	3·80
Uttlesford	Essex	3·80
North Cornwall	Cornwall	3·78
Suffolk Coastal	Suffolk	3·77
Thanet	Kent	3·77
Adur	West Sussex	3·76
East Hampshire	Hampshire	3·76
Maldon	Essex	3·76
Huntingdon	Cambridgeshire	3·75
Gravesham	Kent	3·74
South Kesteven	Lincolnshire	3·74
East Devon	Devon	3·73
Babergh	Suffolk	3·72
Redditch	Hereford and Worcester	3·72
Cotswold	Gloucestershire	3·71
Dover	Kent	3·70
Kettering	Northamptonshire	3·69
Lawes	East Sussex	3·69
West Devon	Devon	3·69
Maidstone	Kent	3·68
East Lindsey	Lincolnshire	3·67
West Dorset	Dorset	3·67
Hart	Hampshire	3·66
Wychavon	Hereford and Worcester	3·66
Canterbury	Kent	3·65
Cherwell	Oxfordshire	3·65
East Cambridgeshire	Cambridgeshire	3·65
Ashford	Kent	3·63
West Lindsey	Lincolnshire	3·62
Arun	West Sussex	3·61
North Dorset	Dorset	3·61
Shepway	Kent	3·61
South Oxfordshire	Oxfordshire	3·59
Swale	Kent	3·59
North Kesteven	Lincolnshire	3·57
Tunbridge Wells	Kent	3·56
Purbeck	Dorset	3·55
Rochester-upon-Medway	Kent	3·55
South Cambridgeshire	Cambridgeshire	3·55
Vale of the White Horse	Oxfordshire	3·55
Horsham	West Sussex	3·54
Leominster	Hereford and Worcester	3·53
West Oxfordshire	Oxfordshire	3·53
Wealden	East Sussex	3·52
Wimborne	Dorset	3·51
Breckland	Norfolk	3·50
Bromsgrove	Hereford and Worcester	3·50
Tunbridge and Malling	Kent	3·50
South Hereford	Hereford and Worcester	3·49
Mid-Sussex	West Sussex	3·48
Gillingham	Kent	3·47
West Norfolk	Norfolk	3·47
Sevenoaks	Kent	3·44
Epsom and Ewell	Surrey	3·42
Woking	Surrey	3·38
Shrewsbury and Atchan	Shropshire	3·37
Reigate and Banstead	Surrey	3·33
South Norfolk	Norfolk	3·33
Mole Valley	Surrey	3·30
Elmbridge	Surrey	3·29
Broadland	Norfolk	3·26
Guildford	Surrey	3·25
Runnymede	Surrey	3·25
Spelthorne	Surrey	3·22
Surrey Heath	Surrey	3·15
Waverley	Surrey	3·14
Tardridge	Surrey	3·12

Information not available for:
Basildon (Essex)
Castle Morpeth (Northumberland)
Chichester (West Sussex)
Harlow (Essex)
Leicester (Leicestershire)
Malvern Hills (Hereford and Worcester)
North Norfolk (Norfolk)
North Warwickshire (Warwickshire)
Pendle (Lancashire)
Peterborough (Cambridgeshire)
Selby (North Yorkshire)
Weymouth and Portland (Dorset)

Notes:

1. The figures relate to total number of employees (full time and part time).

2. Employees of county councils have been distributed to the districts pro rata to the population in each district, and added to the number of employees in each district.

Rate Capping

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if any meetings with local authority associations have been arranged for future dates to discuss with him the operation of his rate-capping policy; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will list all the representations he has received from local authority associations, individual local authorities or groups of local authorities requesting a meeting with him to discuss the operation of his rate-capping policy; what response he has made in each case; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will list the criteria he uses in deciding whether a group of local authorities which has requested a meeting with him to discuss the operation of his rate-capping policy is representative; and if he will make a statement;

(4) if he will make it his policy, in arranging meetings with local authorities to discuss the operation of his rate-capping policy, to see groups of authorities together where common problems have been identified.

Mr. Patrick Jenkin: Following the meeting which I held with leaders of some rate-capped and certain other local authorities on 4 February, I have been sent copies of resolutions passed by a number of those authorities, and

have received other correspondence from them, including requests for further joint negotiations. I have noted the contents of the resolutions.

For the reasons set out in my answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Watson) on 14 March at column *219*, I have no intention of negotiating with this group of authorities, which is unrepresentative of local government as a whole.

I have made it clear that I am not prepared to reconsider the rate limits or the precept limits or the rate support grant settlement for 1985-86.

There is now no excuse for any rating authority to delay setting a lawful rate.

Housing Defects (Assistance)

Mr. Barron asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many local authorities are currently giving assistance by way of either a repurchase or reinstatement grant under the Housing Defects Act 1984; and what are the totals in each case.

Sir George Young: Under the Housing Defects Act 1984, which came into effect on 1 December 1984, local housing authorities have a duty to provide assistance, upon application, to eligible owners. Information about the number of authorities currently giving assistance is not available.

Local Government Officers (Fraud)

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has concerning the number of cases of fraud involving local government officers in the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Waldegrave: Prior to the establishment of the Audit Commission in 1983 the Chief Inspector of Audit issued an annual report which contained a detailed breakdown of reported frauds. The following numbers of frauds were reported involving local authority employees for the three years ending 31 March 1982:

Year	*Cases*
1979-80	118
1980-81	114
1981-82	116

Copies of the reports of the Chief Inspector of Audit are available in the House of Commons Library, giving further information.

With the transfer of responsibility to the Audit Commission in 1983, an annual report was not published for 1982-83. The Audit Commission did publish an annual report for the year ended 31 March 1984, but this contains only brief details of cases of fraud exceeding £500 and does not show the number of cases involving local authority employees. However, I understand from the Commission that local authority employees were involved in the following numbers of cases exceeding £500:

Year	*Cases*
1982-83	56
1983-84	52

Figures are not available for petty frauds involving less than £500. If my hon. Friend requires further information I am sure that the Audit Commission would be pleased to assist, subject to the provisions of section 30 of the Local Government Finance Act 1982. This precludes the Commission from providing information about a particular body or person without the consent of the body or person to whom the information relates.

My hon. Friend may be interested to know that the Audit Commission will be publishing on Thursday 28 March a report on computer assisted frauds.

GLC (Farms)

Mr. Shersby asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy towards ownership of the farms owned by the Greater London council in the green belt after 1 April 1986.

Mr. Macfarlane: Any farms on land acquired by the GLC or its predecessors under the Green Belt (London and Home Counties) Act 1938 would be transferred in accordance with my statement of decisions on 1938 Act land, a copy of which I have placed in the Library. I have said that I am fully committed to the protection of this land, which I regard as inalienable.

Colne Valley Regional Park

Mr. Shersby asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy with regard to the future of the Colne valley regional park following abolition of the Greater London council.

Mr. Macfarlane: I hope soon to meet the hon. Member, other hon. Members, and the leader of the London borough of Hillingdon to discuss future arrangements for the regional park.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Self-employed Persons

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* for the years 1977-78 onwards the number and total incomes of self-employed persons in agriculture and horticulture by range of income; and whether he will specify separately the total amount for the group capital allowances, stock relief and losses.

Mr. Moore: I regret that information for years before 1980-81 could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. For 1980-81 to 1982-83 — the latest year for which information is available — the information provided in the table is in terms of tax units (that is, a maried couple is counted as one unit); self-employed persons in agriculture and horticulture comprise single people and husbands whose main source of income, usually but not always the largest source, is self-employment income from those trades.

Range of total income (lower limit) £	1980-81 Number of tax units '000	1980-81 Amount of total income £ million	1981-82 Number of tax units '000	1981-82 Amount of total income £ million	1982-83 Number of tax units '000	1982-83 Amount of total income £ million
Nil or Negative	3	−3	5	−3	5	−2
1	7	5	15	7	8	4
1,000	48	89	41	74	40	70
2,500	80	290	71	259	75	275
5,000	40	246	47	289	47	292
7,500	21	181	23	201	29	246
10,000	19	223	28	330	27	331
15,000	7	125	7	119	11	192
20,000	10	330	13	410	13	426
All ranges	236	1,490	250	1,690	255	1,830

	£ million	£ million	£ million
Capital Allowances	384	368	368
Stock Relief	133	104	81
Losses	32	54	40

Source: Surveys of Personal Incomes 1980-81, 1981-82 and 1982-83.

Notes:

Total income includes investment income and is before personal allowances. Non-taxable social security benefits are excluded. Profits from self-employment included in total income are after deducting capital allowances, stock relief, losses and allowable expenses.

Figures for 1981-82 and 1982-83 are for the trade classification based on the standard industrial classification (SIC), (Revised 1980). Figures for 1980-81 use the 1968 SIC and are not strictly comparable because they will include certain activities (for example, hiring out agricultural machinery without operatives) no longer classified to agriculture and horticulture.

EC (VAT Base)

Mr. Deakins asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing *(a)* the European Economic Community harmonised value added tax base for 1984 and 1985, together with the authorised percentage payable for both years and *(b)* the amount payable by the United Kingdom under own resources, in European currency units and pound sterling, for 1984 and 1985, together with the amounts paid so far in 1985, indicating any advance payments and their amounts in European currency units and pound sterling: and if he will estimate the date at which the authorised own resources based on the 1984 European Economic Community budget will be equalled by payments in 1985.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Details of the value added tax base and authorised percentage for 1985 are not available as the Community has no 1985 budget, and until a budget is adopted it is not possible to assess when payments of own resources in 1985 will equal the payment made in 1984.

The other information requested is as follows:

A. (i) the 1984 EC harmonised VAT base is 14,377 mecu*;

(ii) the authorised percentage for 1984 was one per cent.

B. (i) The amount payable by the United Kingdom under own resources as shown in the Supplementary and Amending Budget No. 1 for 1984 is 5,516,349,726 ecus†, the sterling equivalent being £3,406,809,188‡‖.

(ii) The United Kingdom's 1985 own resources contribution (including overdrafts and advances) paid to the EC to 20 March amounts to £919,712,957·73¶, which is equivalent to 1,539,982,482 ecus at the exchange rate on 20 March.

C. There have been three advances in 1985, £99 million in January, £125 million in February and £115 million in March; equivalent to 165,767,226 ecu, 209,302,053 ecu and 192,557,889 ecu respectively at the 20 March rate of exchange. The actual payment made in March was reduced to £61·2 million, which allowed for the recovery of the current overdrawing.

* In addition Greece made a financial contribution to the Community budget in 1984 of 224,156,962 ecus.

† Includes non-VAT own resources of 2,682,390,000 ecu, and a negative amount of previous financial years own resources of 93,042,074 ecus carried forward into 1984.

‡ Converted at the Community budget exchange rate of £=1·619213 ecus.

‖ The amount actually paid in 1984 varied from the figure for the following reasons:—

(a) Non VAT own resources are paid upon the basis of the sums collected in pound sterling by the United Kingdom;

(b) fluctuations in the exchange rate.

¶ own resources payments made to the Community in 1985 have been adjusted to recover the amount of the moneys overdrawn by the Commission under article 12(2) of Council regulation 2891/77. Neither the advances under article 10(2) of regulation 2891/77 nor the 12(2) overdraft facilities add to the total resources to be paid by the United Kingdom to the Community in 1985; not increase the amount the Community is authorised to spend in 1985.

VAT

Mr. Kaufman asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many persons are registered for value added tax in Cumbria, Lancashire, Greater Manchester, Merseyside and Cheshire; and if he will give the numbers registered in each economic classification for value added tax purposes.

Mr. Lawson: As at 2 March 1985 the number of persons registered for VAT at local VAT offices situated within these five areas totalled 165,713. The breakdown is as follows:

	Number
Cumbria	21,721
Lancashire	76,128
Greater Manchester	20,048
Merseyside	13,345
Cheshire	34,471

I regret that statistics categorising registered persons by turnover and trade classification are maintained on a national basis only.

European Monetary System

Mr. Skeet asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the essential conditions necessary to be established before the United Kingdom joins the European monetary system.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The United Kingdom is already a member of the European monetary system, but sterling does not participate in the exchange rate mechanism. Participation would require assessment of a wide range of factors. But we would in particular need to be satisfied that it would be consistent with the effective conduct of our monetary policies and that entry would not introduce instability into the mechanism. We do not believe that this is the case at present.

Exchange Rate

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the change in the real exchange rate of the pound since the last quarter of 1976 to the latest available date against the deutschmark, French franc, United States dollar, yen and gilder.

Mr. Ian Stewart [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 March 1985, c. *598*]: The information is as follows:

Percentage change in sterling's real exchange rate fourth quarter 1976 to fourth quarter 1984*

	Percentage changes
Deutschmark	+50·5
French franc	+37·9
United States dollar	−6·3
Yen	+8·7
Netherland gilder	+37·2

* The real exchange rate is calculated here by using the nominal bilateral exchange rates adjusted for movements in United Kingdom price movements relative to those in the countries of its major competitors (using GDP deflators).

Such comparisons can be misleading, as they are highly sensitive to the particular time period chosen.

MIRAS

Mr. Stern asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will place in the Library copies of any circulars or official statements of practice or statements of intention issued by the Inland Revenue to major lenders in connection with the mortgage interest tax relief at source scheme in February.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 March 1985]: My hon. Friend is probably referring to a letter of 1 February sent to all MIRAS lenders by the Inland Revenue central unit, which covered a number of aspects concerning the operation of the MIRAS scheme. I am arranging for copies of this letter to be placed in the House of Commons Library, as my hon. Friend requests.

Johnson Matthey Bankers

Mr. Gould asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will take steps to ensure that his review of the supervisory arrangements for the banking system investigates whether Johnson Matthey was warned by the director of the International Maritime Bureau of the risks of lending money to Mr. Mahoud Sipra from 1982 onwards.

Mr. Ian Stewart [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 March 1985]: It is not the intention of the review to conduct a detailed inquest into JMB's past commercial judgments. Its purpose is to consider the present system for banking supervision in the United Kingdom and whether any changes in supervisory procedures are called for in the light of the problems at Johnson Matthey Bankers.

CIVIL SERVICE

Senior Civil Servants

Mr. Eggar asked the Minister for the Civil Service if he will list by Department the number of civil servants at principal and assistant secretary level who have resigned voluntarily from the service in each of the years 1980 to 1984; and if he will state their age at date of resignation and number of years service.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 March 1985, c. *632*]: Table 1 gives the number of resignations from the grades of principal and assistant secretary from 1980 onwards. It also expresses these as a percentage of the staff in post at the beginning of each year. Table 2 breaks down numbers of resignations by Department. Table 3 breaks them down by age and length of service.

Table 1
Resignations of Assistant Secretaries and Principals 1980-84

	1980	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
Assistant Secretaries					
Number	7	8	8	7	*6
Per cent.	0·6	0·7	0·8	0·7	*0·6
Principals					
Number	41	34	32	39	45
Per cent.	0·9	0·8	0·8	0·9	1·1

* The assistant secretary grade was subsumed into grade 5 from 1 January 1984. The figure quoted is an estimate of the number of staff who were previously assistant secretaries.

Table 2

Resignations of assistant secretaries and principals 1980-84
By Department

Department	1980		1981		1982		1983		*1984	
	Assistant secretary	Principal	Assistant secretary	Principal	Assistant secretary	Principal	Assistant secretary	Principal	†Assistant secretary	Principal
CO/MPO/CSD	1	4	—	—	—	—	—	4	—	—
Treasury	3	—	1	4	1	4	1	8	1	7
Defence	—	1	1	2	2	5	1	3	—	3
Home Office	—	1	—	1	—	2	—	—	—	3
DOE/Transport	1	2	—	5	—	1	—	4	—	9
Scottish Office	1	1	1	—	—	2	—	—	—	1
Employment Group	—	3	1	5	1	4	1	2	—	1
DES	—	—	2	1	—	1	—	4	—	1
DHSS	—	8	1	5	1	1	1	1	—	1
MAFF	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	3	1	2
DTI	1	8	—	3	1	1	1	6	2	4
Inland Revenue	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	—
Other departments	—	12	1	8	2	9	2	4	2	13
Total	7	41	8	34	8	32	7	39	6	45

* Provisional.
† Subsumed in Grade 5 from 1 January 1984.

Table 3

Resignations of assistant secretaries and principals 1980-84
By age and length of service

	1980		1981		1982		1983		*1984	
	Assistant secretary	Principal	Assistant secretary	Principal	Assistant secretary	Principal	Assistant secretary	Principal	†Assistant secretary	Principal
Age (years)										
Under 30	—	3	—	4	—	4	—	2	—	2
30-34	1	9	—	9	—	9	—	14	1	9
35-39	2	4	3	2	2	5	1	10	1	17
40-44	—	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	2	6
45-49	1	3	—	6	2	2	1	2	1	4
50-54	—	5	—	1	1	3	1	4	—	2
55 or more	3	16	4	11	2	7	2	6	1	5
Total	7	41	8	34	8	32	7	39	6	45
Length of service‡										
Under 5	2	6	—	7	2	4	2	2	—	6
5-9	—	5	—	11	1	11	1	17	1	14
10-14	3	5	3	1	2	4	1	7	1	10
15-19	—	4	1	3	1	2	—	2	1	9
20-24	—	2	—	1	—	—	—	2	2	2
25-29	—	1	1	2	—	2	—	1	—	1
30-34	—	7	—	3	—	3	—	2	—	1
35 or more	2	11	3	6	2	6	3	6	1	2
Total	7	41	8	34	8	32	7	39	6	45

* Provisional.
† Subsumed in Grade 5 from 1 January 1984.
‡ Years.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Pesticides

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will provide a list of toxic substances imported into the United Kingdom that are banned in the country of production, including specifically those which are used as pesticides in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Trippier: I have been asked to reply.

The information requested is not available. Controls on the import and use of toxic substances are based on decisions by the United Kingdom regulatory authorities, observing European Community obligations where appropriate.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Management Information System

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will name and describe each form used as part of his Department's management information system.

Mr. Whitney: The Department's management information system uses statistical returns made on forms MR150, MR250, MR251, MR650 and MR351. Generally working sheets are used in local offices to collect and collate the statistics but not all of the statistics are obtained in this way; some are, for example, extracted from local office registers. The table lists the statistical return forms and the actual working sheets which are used on a regular basis; additional forms may be used for "ad hoc" inquiries and so on.

Return Form	Working Sheets
(1) MR150: 4-weekly return on contributory benefits	MR101, MR102, MR103, MR104, MR140, MR205, MR302, EF482
(2) MR250/MR251: 4-weekly returns on supplementary benefits	MR201/MR221, MR202/MR222, MR203, MR205, MR206/MR226, MR207/MR227, MR225, MR240, MR241, MR302, MR303, EF482
(3) MR650: 4-weekly return on contributory and supplementary benefits	MR302, MR640
(4) MR351: quarterly return on contributory and supplementary benefits	MR341
(5) MR350: "ad hoc" inquiries (obsolete with effect from 10 April 1985)	MR340 (obsolete with effect from 10 April 1985)

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information in respect of supplementary benefit case-check visits is given in regular reports from local offices as part of his Department's management information system.

Mr. Whitney: The Department's management information system collects supplementary benefit visiting information in three major categories—new claim visits, repeat claim visits and all other visits. Case-check visits—that is where a claimant's full circumstances are re-examined during a visit—are included in each of these categories and separate figures are not available.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will place copies in the Library of report forms MR150, MR250/251, MR650 and MR351 used as part of his Department's management information system.

Mr. Whitney: Yes.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list and describe the performance indicators contained in the regular four-weekly reports made from local offices as part of his Department's management information system.

Mr. Whitney: The table lists and describes the performance indicators contained in the regular four-weekly reports made from local offices, as part of the Department's management information system.

Most of the performance indicators relate, in a percentage form, to work which was cleared (processed) during the four-week statistical period to the work which was available. The work available consists of the total work on hand. It would not be possible to clear all of the work during the four-week period as further inquiries and so on have to be made and this will vary according to the type of work.

The performance indicators are one means by which management monitors the progress of work.

Contributory benefits

The calculations used to determine the performance indicators at (1)-(6) below is:

$$\frac{\text{Work processed}}{\text{Work available}} \times 100$$

Performance Indicator	Description
1. Sickness Benefit	Relates to claims for sickness and invalidity benefits.
2. Maternity Allowance	Relates to claims for maternity allowance.
3. Retirement Pension Claims	Relates to claims for retirement pension.
4. Retirement Pension Load	Relates to queries and changes arising after retirement pension has been finally put into payment.
5. Contributions Files	Relates to queries arising on national insurance contributions and liability.
6. Contributions Pouches	Relates to less complex contributions matters which do not merit a file being made up.
7. Contribution files over 6 weeks old	This indicator expresses the number of contribution files over six weeks' old as a percentage of the contribution files which are outstanding at the end of the return period.
8. Short Term Contributory Benefit Payment Accuracy	This indicator expresses the number of errors found as a result of managerial checks of payments as a percentage of the total number of benefit payments thus checked.

Supplementary benefits

The calculations used to determine the performance indicators at (1)-(5) below is:

$$\frac{\text{Work processed}}{\text{Work available}} \times 100$$

Performance Indicator	Description
1. Non Caller Claims	Relates to all new and repeat claims to supplementary benefit which are dealt with by post or by visit.
2. Caller Claims	Relates to all new and repeat claims to supplementary benefit which are dealt with by an interview at the local office.
3. Local Officer 1 visits	Relate to cases which require a home visit and can be in respect of a new or repeat claim to supplementary benefit or as a result of matters arising on an existing claim.
4. Local Officer 2 visits	Relate to cases which require a home visit and can be in respect of a new or repeat claim to supplementary benefit or as a result of matters arising on an existing claim.
5. Assessment Review	Relates to assessment changes or further assessment action arising on a case after supplementary benefit has been put into payment.
6. Supplementary Benefit Payment Accuracy	This indicator expresses the number of errors found as a result of managerial checks of payments as a percentage of the total number of benefit payments thus checked.

Personal Social Services

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the latest available data on personal social services gross current expenditure, including joint finance, in similar form to that provided in 1984 to the Social

Services Committee and published on page 14 of HC 395; and if he will publish a similar table showing *(a)* net current expenditure in constant prices, *(b)* gross unit costs, *(c)* net unit costs and *(d)* activity levels.

Mr. John Patten: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Neonatal Mortality

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will initiate consultations between paediatricians and officials of his Department to discuss the provision of resources to regional health authorities to enable them to improve facilities and trained staff levels in paediatric units in order to reduce the number of deaths of new-born babies.

Mr. John Patten: It is for regional health authorities to consider what improvements are required in their neonatal services and then, using the resources already allocated to them, to take action in the light of local needs and priorities.

Children in Care (School Attendance)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many children in care over statutory school leaving age attend school; and what guidance he issues to local authorities about enforcing school attendance on a child in care who is over statutory school leaving age.

Mr. John Patten: Information is not available centrally on the number of children in care who are attending school beyond school leaving age. No guidance about enforcement has been issued. In promoting a child's welfare, and having ascertained his wishes and feelings, local authorities may make whatever educational arrangements are reasonable for such children.

Benefits

Mrs. Currie asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to publish the report of the Social Security Advisory Committee on the Supplementary Benefit (Single Payments) Amendment Regulations 1983, and the Government's response.

Mr. Whitney: We have today laid the committee's report and the Government's response before the House.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. Allan Roberts asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many people in the constituency of Bootle have been on hospital waiting lists for major operations for over one year since May 1979;

(2) if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table indicating the number of people on hospital waiting lists in the constituency of Bootle for major operations, categorising each operation with its respective waiting list, in May 1979, June 1983 and February 1985, respectively.

Mr. John Patten: Waiting list information is available centrally by the specialty of treatment and not by operation. The available information for the South Sefton district health authority, which covers the Bootle constituency area, is given in the tables. In general, figures on waiting lists are believed to include a significant proportion of duplicated entries and patients who no longer require treatment. The amount of overstatement cannot readily be estimated, but is thought to exceed 10 per cent. nationally and could be considerably more. About half of all admissions to hospital are immediate, and many of those on waiting lists already have a planned date of admission.

Number of persons on in-patient waiting lists for admission to surgical specialties in NHS hospitals in South Sefton District Health Authority on 30 September

Year	Urgent		Non-urgent		Total cases
	All cases	Cases on list for more than one month	All cases	Cases on list for more than one year	
1979	38	6	5,354	1,792	5,392
1980	38	30	4,833	1,974	4,871
1981	51	21	5,531	2,207	5,582
1982	17	4	6,011	2,254	6,028
1983	14	2	5,883	2,138	5,897
1984 (provisional)	28	nil	4,809	1,281	4,837

Number of persons on in-patient waiting lists for admission to NHS hospitals in South Sefton District Health Authority on 30 September

Surgical specialty	1979	1983	*1984
General surgery	1,241	1,506	1,145
Ear, nose and throat	1,623	1,559	644
Orthopaedics	1,470	1,771	1,696
Ophthalmology	133	43	34
Urology	97	83	93
Oral surgery	285	484	573
Neurosurgery	189	112	97
Gynaecology	354	339	555
Total	5,392	5,897	4,837

* Provisional.

Mr. Allan Roberts asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to achieve the reduction of hospital waiting lists by 20 per cent.

Mr. John Patten: Before the health service industrial action in 1982, hospital inpatient waiting lists had fallen by 17 per cent. from 752,400 in March 1979 to 622,500 in March 1982. The latest available figure, for September 1984, is 682,000 (provisional), some 9 per cent. lower than the December 1982 figure of 746,100 and we expect this downward trend to continue. In general, figures on waiting lists are believed to include a significant proportion of duplicated entries and patients who no longer require treatment. The amount of overstatement cannot readily be estimated, but is thought to exceed 10 per cent.

nationally and could be considerably more. About half of all admissions to hospital are immediate, and many of those on waiting lists already have a planned date of admission.

Mobility Allowance

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will break down the national figure for the number of people in receipt of mobility allowance on 31 December 1984 by the length of time for which the awards were made.

Mr. Newton: The information is as follows:

	Number
Awards of 1 year	8,330
Over 1 year and up to and including 2 years	22,620
Over 2 years and up to and including 3 years	5,520
Over 3 years and up to and including 4 years	660
Over 4 years, but not up to age 75	18,040
Up to age 75	271,530
Awards for life under the Mobility Allowance (Vehicle Scheme Beneficiaries) Regulations 1977	26,120

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many reviews of mobility allowance there were during the currency of an award in 1984 nationally which were instituted *(a)* by the insurance officer and *(b)* by the claimant; and in what proportion and number the allowance was withdrawn.

Mr. Newton: The information is as follows:

	Reviews at request of adjudication officer	*Reviews at request of claimant or his representative*
Number	75	287
Number in which allowance withdrawn	54	268
Percentage in which allowance withdrawn	72	93

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will give details of the numbers of decisions there were in 1984 on renewal claims for mobility allowance *(a)* nationally and *(b)* in each social security region; and if in each case he will give the proportion and number which were awarded;

(2) if he will give details of the number of decisions made on mobility allowance applications in 1984 *(a)* nationally and *(b)* in each social security region; and if he will in each case state the number of decisions in which an award of the allowance was made.

Mr. Newton: The information for Great Britain is as follows:

	Initial claims	*Renewal claims*	*Total*
Number of decisions	108,050	23,950	132,000
Number of awards	73,600	19,900	93,500
Percentage awarded	68·1	83·1	70·8

I regret that separate information is not available for each social security region.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will break down by age the numbers of those receiving *(a)* mobility allowance and *(b)* attendance allowance; and if he will break down the numbers awarded each allowance during 1984 in the same way.

Mr. Newton: The available information is as follows:

*Mobility Allowance**

Age	*Recipients of mobility allowance*
Up to 9	7,260
10 - 14	9,600
15 - 19	10,820
20 - 24	11,095
25 - 29	9,390
30 - 34	10,770
35 - 39	15,380
40 - 44	17,920
45 - 49	23,990
50 - 54	35,245
55 - 59	54,410
60 - 64	79,630
65 - 69	49 435
70 - 74	1,260
Total	336,205

Age	*Recipients of mobility allowance under the Mobility Allowance (Vehicle Scheme Beneficiaries) Regulations 1977*
Under 16	3
16 - 19	4
20 - 24	19
25 - 29	635
30 - 34	1,290
35 - 39	2,035
40 - 44	1,810
45 - 49	1,955
50 - 54	2,315
55 - 59	2,970
60 - 64	4,055
65 - 69	3,365
70 - 74	2,915
75 - 79	1,730
80 - 84	660
85 and over	250
Total	26,011

* Numbers at 11 March 1985

I regret that information about the number of awards of mobilty allowance is not available by age groups.

Attendance Allowance

Age	*Recipients of attendance allowance†*
2 - 15	57,000
16 - 19	13,000
20 - 24	15,000
25 - 29	11,000
30 - 34	10,000
35 - 39	10,000
40 - 44	9,000
45 - 49	10,000
50 - 54	13,000

Age	Recipients of attendance allowance†
55 - 59	20,000
60 - 64	30,000
65 - 69	33,000
70 - 74	47,000
75 - 79	54,000
80 - 84	56,000
85 and over	81,000
Total	469,000

Age	Awards in 1984
2 - 15	10,138
16 - 19	1,016
20 - 24	1,003
25 - 29	1,111
30 - 34	1,473
35 - 39	1,941
40 - 44	2,259
45 - 49	3,119
50 - 54	4,541
55 - 59	7,320
60 - 64	11,959
65 - 69	14,052
70 - 74	22,314
75 - 79	28,964
80 - 84	32,160
85 and over	38,400
Total	181,770

† Estimates as at 31 March 1984, the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people were in receipt of mobility allowance at 31 December 1984 nationally; and if he will break down the national figure by social security region and the rate per thousand population in each region.

Mr. Newton: The available information is as follows. I regret that it is not possible to give a regional breakdown.

	Number in receipt of mobility allowance*	Rate per 1,000 population (mid-1983 estimates)
England	281,940	6·0
Scotland	40,515	7·9
Wales	30,365	10·8

* Includes recipients under the Mobility Allowance (Vehicle Scheme Beneficiaries) Regulations 1977.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services in the case of initial and renewal claims for mobility allowance, how many appeals by claimants from a decision of an insurance officer were decided upon by medical boards and how many appeals from a decision of a medical board were decided upon by a medical appeal tribunal in 1984; and in each case what number was successful.

Mr. Newton: The available information is as follows:

	Numbers
Appeals and references decided by medical board	14,750
Decided in claimant's favour	4,800
Appeals decided by medical appeal tribunal	3,933
Decided in claimant's favour	1,107

I regret that it is not possible to identify initial and renewal claims separately.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average length of time between receipt of a claim for mobility allowance and the issue of an order book *(a)* when the allowance is awarded on the initial application, *(b)* when it is awarded by a medical board and *(c)* when it is awarded by a medical appeal tribunal on appeal from a board.

Mr. Newton: The time taken from receipt of a claim for mobility allowance until an order book is received by a successful claimant is about eight and a half weeks where the award is made by the adjudication officer on the basis of a report by an examining medical practitioner, and about 16 weeks where the allowance is awarded by a medical board. Such information is not available about claims which go on appeal either to a medical board or to a medical appeal tribunal because the length of time between the disallowance of a claim and the making of the appeal varies so widely. However, the average time taken by a medical board or medical appeal tribunal to deal with an appeal is five and a half weeks and 99 18 weeks respectively.

Mr. Clay asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many claims have been made for mobility allowance; how many claims for mobility allowance have been rejected; how many appeals to local tribunals against decision to reject payment of mobility allowance have been made; and how many of these appeals have been found in favour of the claimant in each of the social security regions, in each of the past five years.

Mr. Newton: The available information is as follows:

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
Total decisions made in each year on initial claims	85,730	60,770	88,100	106,800	108,050
Total decisions resulting in disallowance	25,550	19,330	29,100	36,950	34,450

Details of appeals and references to local tribunals on the non-medical conditions for mobility allowance in the years to 1983 are given in "Social Security Statistics 1984", table 15.20. It is not possible to break down the information into social security regions. Equivalent details for 1984 are not yet available.

Attendance Allowance

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what number and proportion of reviews of attendance allowance awards initiated by him in 1984 followed notification of a change in circumstances by the claimant.

Mr. Newton: None. Notification of change of circumstances by the claimant is treated as an application for review by the claimant.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average length of time between receipt of a claim for attendance allowance and the issue of an order book *(a)* when the allowance is awarded on the initial application and *(b)* when it is awarded after a review.

Mr. Newton: At 28 February, the latest date for which information is available, the times taken for payment to be sent to the claimant were *(a)* 10 weeks, *(b)* 18 weeks.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will list the number of applications for renewal of attendance allowance in 1984 nationally and in each social security region; and in each case what proportion and number *(a)* were awarded (i) the higher rate and (ii) the lower rate on the initial application, *(b)* requested a review after (i) refusal of the allowance and (ii) award of the lower rate and *(c)* upon review were (i) awarded the lower rate and (ii) awarded the higher rate, (iii) had the lower rate increased to the higher rate and (iv) had the lower rate withdrawn;

(2) if he will list the number of applicants for attendance allowance in 1984, nationally and in each social security region; and in each case what number and proportion *(a)* were awarded (i) the higher rate and (ii) the lower rate on the initial application, *(b)* requested a review after (i) refusal of the allowance and (ii) award of the lower rate and *(c)* upon review were (i) awarded the lower rate, (ii) awarded the higher rate, (iii) had the lower rate increased to the higher rate and (iv) had the lower rate withdrawn;

(3) if he will list the number of awards of attendance allowance which were made in 1984 nationally and in each social security region; and if he will break down the national figure by the length of time for which they were made.

Mr. Newton: The information available is as follows. It relates to decisions given in 1984, not to applications made in that year. For Great Britain, the total number of decisions made was 239,774 of which 67,445 (28·1 per cent.) resulted in a higher rate award; 114,325 (47·7 per cent.) resulted in a lower rate award. A regional breakdown is given in the tables.

Table 1

Attendance allowance—initial decisions 1984

Region	*Number of decisions*	*Higher rate awards*		*Lower rate awards*	
		Number	*Per cent.*	*Number*	*Per cent.*
January to March					
Northern	2,225	556	25·0	983	44·2
Yorkshire and Humberside	5,532	1,523	27·6	2,691	48·6
East Midlands and East Anglia	4,186	1,183	28·3	2,001	47·8
London North	6,908	1,886	27·3	3,453	50·0
London South	9,057	3,446	38·0	4,723	52·1
London West	77	35	45·5	34	44·1
South Western	5,195	1,701	32·7	2,674	51·5
West Midlands	7,762	1,655	21·3	4,075	52·5
North West (Manchester)	5,879	1,181	20·1	3,093	52·6
North West (Merseyside)	4,376	1,814	41·4	1,867	42·7
Scotland	6,208	1,198	19·3	2,412	38·9
Wales	6,216	2,489	40·0	2,409	38·8
*April to December**					
Northern	4,570	1,174	25·7	2,325	50·9
Yorkshire and Humberside	22,753	5,653	24·8	10,048	44·2
East Midlands	3,669	1,007	27·4	1,928	52·6
East Anglia	1,477	427	28·9	792	53·6
South East (GLC)	11,904	3,954	33·2	5,714	48·0
South East (Remainder)	36,257	11,220	30·9	18,405	50·8
South West	13,828	4,061	29·4	7,116	51·4
West Midlands	25,877	7,159	27·7	12,776	23·0
North West	24,171	6,651	27·5	12,118	50·1
Scotland	17,092	3,333	19·5	6,936	40·6
Wales	14,585	4,139	28·4	5,752	39·4

* Since April 1984 statistics have been collected by reference to standard regions.

Table 2

Attendance allowance—renewal decisions 1984

Region	*Number of decisions*	*Higher rate awards*		*Lower rate awards*	
		Number	*Per cent.*	*Number*	*Per cent.*
North Eastern	2,646	874	33·0	1,301	49·2
Midlands	4,614	1,735	37·6	2,200	47·7
London North	3,215	1,060	33·0	1,752	54·5
London South	3,328	1,333	40·1	1,541	46·3
South West	1,224	473	38·6	578	47·2
North West (Manchester)	1,283	502	39·1	597	46·5
North West (Merseyside)	1,736	694	40·0	783	45·1

Region	Number of decisions	Higher rate awards		Lower rate awards	
		Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.
Scotland	1,515	409	27·0	708	46·7
Wales	1,640	710	43·3	686	41·8
North Fylde Central Office	29,909	10,332	34·5	19,577	65·5
Great Britain	51,110	18,122	35·5	29,723	58·2

Table 3

*Attendance allowance—reviews 1984**

Region‡	Requests for review†				Result of review					
	After refusal of award		After award		Awards made¶ after disallowance		Award increased from lower to higher rate		Award reduced● or withdrawn	
	Number	Percentage of all decisions■	Number	Percentage of all decisions■	Number	Percentage of all decisions■	Number	Percentage of all decisions■	Number	Percentage of all decisions■
Northern•	139	0·4	115	0·3	49	0·2	55	0·2	6	—
North Eastern	1,613	4·8	2,844	8·5	917	2·7	2,227	6·7	121	0·4
East Midlands#	610	1·8	1,036	3·1	319	1·0	756	2·3	70	0·2
London North	1,445	4·3	2,634	7·9	963	2·9	2,077	6·2	128	0·4
London South	862	2·6	3,268	9·8	511	1·5	2,537	7·6	158	0·5
London West•	4	—	35	0·1	2	—	27	—	2	—
South West	587	1·8	2,053	6·2	359	1·1	1,692	5·1	81	0·2
Midlands	1,244	3·7	2,681	8·0	676	2·0	1,949	5·8	138	0·4
North West (Manchester)	1,053	3·2	1,679	5·0	530	1·6	1,300	3·9	61	0·2
Merseyside	753	2·3	1,658	5·0	410	1·2	1,351	4·0	51	0·2
Scotland	2,110	6·3	2,014	6·0	1,129	3·4	1,365	4·1	67	0·2
Wales	1,256	3·8	1,681	5·0	674	2·0	1,309	3·9	62	0·2
Great Britain	11,676	35·0	21,698	65·0	6,539	19·6	16,645	49·9	945	2·8

* It is not possible to distinguish between reviews on initial claims and reviews on renewal claims.
† Details are of reviews because of dissatisfaction with the award or because of a change in the need for attention or supervision.
‡ Comparisons cannot readily be made because of changes in social security regions.
‖ It is not possible to provide separate figures for lower rate awards.
¶ It is not possible to distinguish between lower and higher rate awards.
● It is not possible to distinguish between reviews which led to withdrawal from those which resulted in a lower rate.
■ These percentages are overstated to an extent because some decisions on renewal claims are taken at North Fylde central office (see table 2).
• Till June 1984.
Till September 1984.

Table 4

Attendance allowance awards (new and renewal claims) 1984

Duration of awards (years)	Number
Fewer than one	1,930
One fewer than two	20,286
Two fewer than three	26,104
Three fewer than four	9,134
Four fewer than five	4,268
Five and over	15,178
Life*	163,858
Total	240,758

* Includes certificates awarded to children up to 16th birthday.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the number of people in receipt of attendance allowance at each rate at 31 December 1984; and if he will break down the figures by *(a)* social security region, *(b)* the rate per 1,000 population in each region and *(c)* the rate per 1,000 of population over 65 years of age in each region.

Mr. Newton: The total number of people estimated to be in receipt of attendance allowance at 31 March 1984, the latest date for which figures are available, is as follows:

	Number
Higher rate	192,000
Lower rate	277,000

The analysis requested will take a few weeks to prepare. I shall reply as soon as it is ready.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the number of reviews of attendance allowance during the currency of an award in 1984, nationally and in each social security region, which were instituted *(a)* by him and *(b)* by the claimant; and in case what was the number and proportion in which (i) the

allowance was withdrawn, (ii) the existing award was retained, (iii) the higher rate was decreased to the lower rate and (iv) the lower rate was increased to the higher rate.

Mr. Newton: The information available is in the table. It relates to decisions given in 1984 and not to applications made in that year.

Attendance allowance 1984
Reviews instituted at request of claimant after award*

Region†	*Total number of reviews after award*	*Award reduced or withdrawn*‡		*Award maintained*		*Award increased from lower to higher rate*	
		Number	*Per cent.*	*Number*	*Per cent.*	*Number*	*Per cent.*
Northern‖	115	6	5·2	54	47·0	55	47·8
North Eastern	2,844	121	4·2	496	17·5	2,227	78·3
East Midlands¶	1,036	70	6·8	210	20·2	756	73·0
London North	2,634	128	4·9	429	16·3	2,077	78·8
London West‖	35	2	5·7	6	17·1	27	77·2
South West	2,053	81	3·9	280	13·7	1,692	82·4
Midlands	2,681	138	5·1	594	22·2	1,949	72·7
North West Manchester	1,679	61	3·6	318	19·0	1,300	77·4
North West Merseyside	1,658	51	3·1	256	15·4	1,351	81·5
London South	3,268	158	4·8	573	17·5	2,537	77·6
Wales	1,681	62	3·7	310	18·4	1,309	77·9
Scotland	2,014	67	3·3	582	28·9	1,365	67·8
Great Britain	21,698	945	4·3	4,108	19·0	16,645	76·7

* Includes reviews because of dissatisfaction with the award and because of a change in the need for attention and supervision.
† Comparisons cannot readily be made because of changes in social security regions.
‡ It is not possible to distinguish between reviews which led to the withdrawal of the allowance and those which resulted in a lower rate.
‖ To 29 June.
¶ To 29 September (no decisions made in these regions after these dates).

Attendance allowance 1984
Reviews instituted at request of Secretary of State after award

*Great Britain**	*Number*	*Per cent.*
Total number of reviews after award	850	
Award withdrawn	318	37
Award maintained	428	51
Award reduced from higher to lower rate	72	8
Award increased from lower to higher rate	32	4

* It is not possible to provide a breakdown by social security region.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services for the last three years for which figures are available what was the number and proportion of reviews of attendance allowance decisions with an outcome favourable to the appellant in which the award was backdated to the date from which it would have been payable had the initial claim succeeded.

Mr. Newton: The numbers of reviews of attendance allowance made because the claimant was dissatisfied with the original decision, and which had an outcome favourable to the claimant, are as follows:

	Numbers
1982	6,978
1983	8,085
1984	9,116

Backdating applied in all these cases.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people requested a review of an attendance allowance decision on the grounds that *(a)* the first decision was wrong and *(b)* their condition had deteriorated.

Mr. Newton: In 1984 the numbers were *(a)* 15,175 *(b)* 16,838.

Mr. Clay asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many claims have been made for attendance allowance; of these, how many claims for attendance allowance have been rejected; how many appeals to local tribunals against decisions to reject payment of attendance allowance have been made; and how many of these appeals have been found in favour of the claimant in each of the social security regions in each of the past five years.

Mr. Newton: Information on claims and decisions unfavourable to the claimant is as follows:

	1980	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
Initial claims received in each year	147,000	167,000	193,000	233,000	258,000
Total decisions made in each year on initial claims	139,000	149,000	182,000	217,000	240,000
Total decisions resulting in initial disallowance	40,000	41,000	46,000	58,000	58,000

Details of appeals and references to local tribunals against disallowance of the non-medical conditions for attendance allowance in the years to 1983 are given in "Social Security Statistics 1984," table 14.20. It is not possible to break down the information into social security regions.

Equivalent details for 1984 are not yet available.

Medicines Act (Infringements)

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services on how many occasions during 1984 his Department has *(a)* investigated infringements of the Medicines Act, *(b)* warned companies that the Act was being infringed and requested remedial action and *(c)* prosecuted companies for infringement of the Act; and why publicity is not given to such investigations.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I shall let the right hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

NHS Computer Policy Committee

Mr. Chope asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will make a statement on the future of the National Health Service computer policy committee and the steering group on health services information.

Mr. John Patten: We have been reviewing the management of the work which needs to be done centrally on management information and information technology for NHS hospital and community health services. As soon as the NHS managment board is in place, we propose to strengthen arrangements at the centre in two main ways.

First, the NHS computer policy committee and the steering group on health services information will be wound up and replaced by a single information advisory group. The new group will be chaired by the member of the board who is responsible for information matters. It will have no executive responsibilities, but will be asked to advise the board on strategic issues and management priorities in the information field. We are consulting regional health authorities on the membership of the group, which will consist primarily of senior managers from regions and districts.

Secondly, the work which needs to be done at the centre will be brought under the direct control of the management board, through the same board member. A substantial proportion of this work will continue to be undertaken by health authority staff.

I take this opportunity to pay tribute to the considerable achievements of the computer policy committee and the steering group on health services information.

High Rent Area Authorisation

Mrs. Beckett: asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the number of tenants who will be adversely affected by the proposed changes in the threshold for high rent area authorisations effective from 1 April *(a)* in authorities which will lose the authorisation entirely and *(b)* in authorities which will continue to receive an authorisation but at a higher threshold, and if he will estimate the average loss per tenant (i) in authorities losing authorisation for both public authority and private tenants, (ii) in authorities losing authorisation in respect of public authority tenants alone, (iii) in authorities losing authorisation in respect of private tenants alone, (iv) in respect of authorities losing class authorisations and (v) in authorities continuing to receive an authorisation but at a higher threshold.

Mr. Whitney [*Pursuant to his reply*, 5 March 1985, c. *515-16*]: Information on which to base the detailed estimates requested is not available. However, we estimate that nationally some 120,000 claimants will be affected by the proposed changes to the high rent scheme. This is higher than the figure originally estimated because more authorities are now participating in the high rent scheme. Claimants living in an area where the authority will retain its high rent authorisation will lose an average of 42p per week. Losses for claimants living in an area where the authority will lose its high rent authorisation will depend on the level of rent paid.

DEFENCE

Northern Europe

2. **Mr. Marlow** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the United Kingdom commitment to the defence of Northern Europe.

Mr. Stanley: There is a strong United Kingdom commitment, through NATO, to the defence of the NATO countries of northern Europe. This commitment is reflected in the fact that 3 Commando Brigade, as part of the United Kingdom/Netherlands amphibious force, and the United Kingdom mobile force have the reinforcement of the northern region as their principal role. The United Kingdom also makes a significant contribution to the Allied Command Europe mobile force which has options to deploy there. In addition, RAF Jaguars are specifically assigned to the northern region, and Harriers and Tornados are assigned to SACEUR's strategic air reserve which could also be deployed there.

Strategic Defence Initiative

8. **Mr. Hoyle** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received from the United States Government concerning the strategic defence initiative.

49. **Mr. Haynes** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what recent discussions he has had with North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's allies on the strategic defence initiative.

Mr. Butler: My right hon. Friend has discussed the strategic defence initiative with the United States Secretary of Defence on a number of occasions, most recently when he accompanied the Prime Minister to the United States in February.

18. **Mr. Batiste** asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make a statement concerning British participation in the strategic defence initiative.

43. **Mr. Boyes** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what input, financial or manpower, the United Kingdom will make towards the United States star wars research project; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butler: I can add little to the written answer I gave my hon. Friend on 15 March. I can confirm that we shall be discussing shortly with the United States Government how best to pursue this matter. As far as United Kingdom

industry is concerned, it has a wide range of expertise in relevant areas of technology and we have already received expressions of interest from several of our leading defence companies. It is our intention to ensure that United Kingdom industry is kept as fully informed as possible.

22. **Mr. Tony Lloyd** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give his assessment of the effect of the United States strategic defence initiative on Britain's defence capability.

Mr. Butler: The strategic defence initiative is a long-term research programme still in its early stages. Its overall aim is to enhance deterrence, the maintenance of which is central to the security of the nations of the NATO alliance.

Anti-nuclear Protest Groups

11. **Mr. Terry Lewis** asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether any civil servants in his Department are currently required, as part of their responsibilities, to monitor the activities of anti-nuclear protest groups.

15. **Mr. Corbett** asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether any civil servants in his Department are currently required, as part of their responsibilities, to monitor the activities of anti-nuclear protest groups.

28. **Mr. Loyden** asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether any civil servants in his Department are required, as part of their responsibilities, to monitor the activities of anti-nuclear protest groups.

Mr. Stanley: As stated in reply to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang) on 9 April last year, it is the Ministry of Defence's responsibility to be aware of any activities which might have security or operational implications, and to follow closely the public debate on nuclear issues. This work is undertaken by staff across the Ministry of Defence as part of their normal duties.

Trident Missile

17. **Mr. Flannery** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a further statement on the development of the Trident programme.

27. **Mr. Dobson** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a further statement on the development of the Trident programme.

55. **Mr. Tony Banks** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a further statement on the development of the Trident programme.

Mr. Butler: The programme for replacing Polaris with Trident in the mid-1990s is proceeding satisfactorily and on schedule. Tenders have now been received from Vickers Shipbuilding and Engineering Limited for the construction of the first of the four United Kingdom Trident class submarines, and negotiations are in hand with a view to concluding a contract by the end of 1985. As regards the strategic weapon system, the full-scale engineering development phase has been under way in the United States for some time and is making good progress. As far as the development of the Clyde submarine base is concerned, on 7 March the Secretary of State for Scotland gave his approval to the Department's notice of proposed development subject to a number of requirements being met in order to minimise, as far as possible, the impact of the proposed developments.

33. **Mr. Cohen** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is his latest estimate of the cost to Britain of Trident missiles.

Mr. Butler: I refer to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence to the hon. Members for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang), for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) and for Leeds, West (Mr. Meadowcroft) on 29 January at columns 134-37.

38. **Mr. Wallace** asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he is satisfied with control of servicing arrangements for the Trident missile system.

Mr. Butler: Yes.

44. **Mr. Norman Atkinson** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what implications there would be for Trident if the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics goes ahead in the development of a defence in space against ballistic nuclear weapons.

Mr. Butler: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces on 26 February 1985 at column 157.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether the purchase of Trident from the United States includes the transfer of warhead design or components.

Mr. Butler: The nuclear warheads to be fitted in the British Trident D5 missile system will be of British design and manufacture.

Cruise Missiles

19. **Sir William van Straubenzee** asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether, in view of the disarmament negotiations opening in Geneva, he will consider postponing the further deployment of cruise missiles.

Mr. Stanley: No. We have, however, always made it clear that NATO's deployment, which is planned to be completed over a five year period, can be halted, modified or revised at any time if results in arms control negotiations warrant it. To halt our own deployment of intermediate nuclear forces unilaterally would perpetuate the very substantial superiority of the Soviet Union in this area and remove any incentive on it to negotiate reductions.

American W82 Shell

20. **Mr. McWilliam** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if it will be possible to fire the American W82 shell from the British/German/Italian FH70 howitzer.

Mr. Butler: Although the W82 shell is the same calibre as the FH70 howitzer, we have made no attempt to ascertain whether in fact the shell is suitable for use with the FH70. In any case, the question does not arise, since the FH70 howitzer in United Kingdom service has no nuclear role and is not intended to be a nuclear delivery system.

Chemical Weapons

21. **Mr. Cyril D. Townsend** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if the United Kingdom would be prepared to accept the pre-positioning of either the present generation of United States chemical weapons, or a possible new generation of such weapons, in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: No such request has been made to us. Like the United Kingdom, the United States Government have made clear that they are fully committed to seeking a comprehensive, verifiable and world-wide ban on chemical weapons at the conference on disarmament in Geneva.

NATO Nuclear Planning Group

23. **Mr. Fatchett** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the current meeting of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation nuclear planning group.

31. **Mr. Barron** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the current meeting of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation nuclear planning group.

42. **Mr. Stott** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the current meeting of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation nuclear planning group.

46. **Mr. Strang** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement concerning his meeting with North Atlantic Treaty Organisation Ministers on 26 March.

Mr. Stanley: The current meeting of the nuclear planning group in Luxembourg is one of a series of bi-annual meetings of NATO defence Ministers, the purpose of which is to discuss nuclear matters within the alliance.

25. **Mrs. Clwyd** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what proposals he will be putting to the meeting of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation nuclear planning group on 26 and 27 March.

Mr. Stanley: My right hon. Friend will, as usual, be making his full contribution to the discussions of the NATO nuclear planning group today and tomorrow. The details of the discussions are confidential, but a communiqué will be issued at the end of the meeting.

European Anti-ballistic Missile System

24. **Mr. McTaggart** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on proposals for a European anti-ballistic missile system.

Mr. Butler: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Members for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) and for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short)

Defence Procurement Costs

26. **Mr. Eggar** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what rate of inflation in defence procurement costs he expects up to 1987-88; and whether he expects to differ from general inflation in the United Kingdom economy.

Mr. Butler: The extent to which future rates of inflation in defence procurement may differ from inflation in the economy generally will be influenced by factors which cannot be reliably predicted, such as differences in the pattern of inputs and in productivity. It will be my Department's aim to reduce procurement costs through continued emphasis on value for money and the exercise of competition.

Royal Dockyards

29. **Mr. Duffy** asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he intends to introduce his White Paper on the future of the royal dockyards.

Mr. Lee: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Cornwall, South-East (Mr. Hicks) earlier today.

United Kingdom Forces Overseas (Motor Vehicles)

30. **Sir John Farr** asked the Secretary of State for Defence to what extent it is his policy for forces personnel serving overseas to be provided whilst on duty with motor vehicles made in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Lee: We buy British vehicles whenever it is sensible, practicable and consistent with our international obligations to do so. We resort to overseas procurement only when this offers substantial advantages of cost, performance and time scale. At present over 95 per cent. of our motor vehicles come from United Kingdom-based suppliers.

Bomber Command (Medal)

32. **Mr. Beaumont-Dark** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will consider striking a medal in recognition of the service of Bomber Command air crews in the 1939 to 1945 war.

Mr. Lee: No. While we do, of course, accept that many acts of courage and heroism during wartime went unrecognised, the striking of new medals for service during the second world war came to an end many years ago and no further review is contemplated.

P120 Aircraft

34. **Mr. Favell** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is his assessment of the relative advantages to the British aviation industry of developing P120 as opposed to the European fighter aircraft.

Mr. Butler: Evaluation of possible means of satisfying the need for a replacement for Jaguar and Phantom aircraft is proceeding. It would be premature to comment on the relative merits of the P120 and EFA at this stage.

RAF Molesworth

35. **Mr. Fisher** asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make a statement on the present state of security at Molesworth.

Mr. Stanley: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs) by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement on 1 March 1985 at column 298.

Defence Establishments (Security)

36. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if, in the light of the case of R. *v* Rigley and McCarthy, he has taken further measures to ensure the security of establishments where defence equipment is produced.

Mr. Butler: No special measures have been taken as a result of this case; but we do continuously review security arrangements of companies which have classified defence contracts.

Phantom and Jaguar Aircraft (Replacement)

37. **Mr. Carter-Jones** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what progress has been made with the Phantom and Jaguar replacement.

Mr. Butler: I have nothing to add to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Preston (Mr. Thorne).

Offshore Patrol Vessel II Programme

39. **Mr. Malone** asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many representations he has received concerning the future of the offshore patrol vessel II programme.

Mr. Lee: Three. No decision has been taken yet on whether to order any additional Castle class offshore patrol vessels (OPV II).

Soviet Union (SS Missiles)

40. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the current types and deployment of SS missiles targeted by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on Western Europe.

Mr. Stanley: The situation as at the early part of last year was set out in figure 11 "The Balance of Nuclear Forces" on page 43 of Vol. I of the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1984. All those SS missiles shown as longer range INF, shorter range INF and short range forces in Europe would be directed towards Western Europe. In addition, some of the strategic system SS missiles could also be targeted on Western Europe. This data will be revised in the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1985.

Crown Proceedings Act

41. **Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will seek to amend section 10 of the Crown Proceedings Act.

Mr. Stanley: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave earlier today to the right hon. Member for Stoke on Trent, South (Mr. Ashley).

Tornado Aircraft

45. **Mr. Latham** asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make a further statement on the progress of the deployment of the air defence variant of the Tornado.

Mr. Butler: The first two Tornado F2s were delivered to RAF Coningsby last year for ground training and familiarisation. Crew training for the operational conversion unit has started at British Aerospace, Warton. The Tornado F2 will enter front-line service next year as planned, although some rephasing of the deployment plan will be necessary as a result of delays during the development of the air intercept radar.

British Army of the Rhine

47. **Mr. Soames** asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he next proposes to review force levels in the British Army of the Rhine.

Mr. Stanley: We stand by our commitment to maintain the strength of BAOR at not less than 55,000 in peace, consistent with our obligations under the Brussels treaty. Within that commitment, the detailed composition of BAOR is under constant review to achieve the optimum and most cost-effective mix of forces.

Nuclear Artillery

48. **Mr. Stephen Ross** asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has taken steps to include on the agenda of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's nuclear planning group the deployment in Europe of nuclear artillery shells.

Mr. Stanley: Nuclear planning group agendas are confidential.

Reserve Forces (Recruitment)

50. **Mr. Patrick Thompson** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about recruitment to the reserve forces since March 1984.

Mr. Lee: With the greater emphasis on the role and importance of the reserve forces, the need to recruit the necessary volunteer reservists is increasingly important.

The following is a table showing the intake for the reserves from 31 March 1984 to 31 September 1984.

Volunteer Services
Intake—31 March 1984-30 September 1984

Service	*Intake*	*Total Strength as at 30 September 1984*
RNR	473	5,226
RMR*	134	1,047
TA	18,756	71,425
R. Aux AF	342	1,156
RAFVR	7	61
Totals	19,712	78,915

* RMR figures cover period 31.3.84-31.12.84

Measures to further improve levels of recruitment are currently in hand.

Stockholm Conference

51. **Mr. James Lamond** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if anyone from his Department has participated in the work of the United Kingdom delegation to the Stockholm conference on security and confidence building in Europe.

Mr. Butler: I assume the hon. Member is referring to the Stockholm conference on disarmament in Europe, which was set up under the auspices of the conference on security and co-operation in Europe to discuss confidence and security-building measures in the military field.

Staff of the defence arms control unit work closely with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on a day-to-day basis in evaluating reports from and formulating advice to the United Kingdom delegation to CDE. In addition DACU staff occasionally attend sessions of the CDE, and are directly involved in consultations with members of the United Kingdom delegation on visits to London. Two members of the delegation are on secondment from the Ministry of Defence.

Royal Irish Rangers

52. **Sir John Biggs-Davison** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what further consideration has been given to the future disposition of the Royal Irish Rangers.

Mr. Lee: It is not our policy to comment on future operational deployments. Arrangements for the training of recruits to the Royal Irish Rangers were set out in my answer to the question from my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Sir A. Buck) on 14 March at column 204.

Airframe Manufacture

53. **Rev. Martin Smyth** asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he proposes to introduce greater competition to his Department's requirements for airframe manufacture.

Mr. Butler: Our policy is to procure our defence equipment by competitive means whenever practicable and reasonable.

European Fighter Aircraft

54. **Mr. Robert Atkins** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on current international negotiations over the European fighter aircraft project.

Mr. Butler: I have nothing to add to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Preston (Mr. Thorne).

Defence Equipment (Aish Company)

56. **Mr. Campbell-Savours** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list those items of defence equipment supplied to or on behalf of his Department by the Aish company in each of the last five years.

Mr. Lee: Over the last five years this company has supplied electrical and electronic equipment to the Ministry and to shipbuilders for installation in warships. The principal items have been:

Main switchboard and switch gear.
Versatile console systems (both consoles and units).

Information on equipment supplied is not readily available on a year by year basis.

Defence Procurement

57. **Mr. Beggs** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what progress he has made in introducing greater competition to defence procurement; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butler: Provisional figures indicate that during the 1984 calendar year, over 40 per cent. by value of new headquarters contracts were placed following effective competition between two or more firms. When the value of contract amendments, which comprise a considerable proportion by value of our procurement expenditure, is also taken into account, we would expect the annual figures for the financial year 1984-85 to show a welcome increase of 4 to 5 percentage points over the figures for 1983-84, when 22 per cent. by value of contracts and amendments were placed following effective competition.

Youth Training Scheme

58. **Mr. Colvin** asked the Secretary of State for Defence to what extent his Department is participating in the youth training scheme; and what is the annual cost.

Mr. Lee: There are over 650 young people currently participating in the civilian youth training scheme operating in my Department. Approximately half are in the "Special" YTS operating in Germany for the young dependents of the British forces and civilians serving there. Precise figures relating to the annual cost of running the scheme are not available; however, in a full year based on these numbers, and with "additionality", receipts from the MSC amount to £2 million out of which we pay the trainees' allowances and their college fees, and use the remainder to purchase training equipment and machinery for the use of both the trainees and apprentices in our establishments.

The armed services youth training scheme (ASYTS), although running parallel to the civil YTS scheme, is separate from it. The scheme has continued to provide worth while work and training opportunities for young unemployed people. There have so far been some 5,500 applications, of which 1,481 have been accepted, since the commencement of the scheme.

The estimated net cost to public funds of the ASYTS for FY 84/85 (April-January) is about £1.4 million.

Defence School of Music (Deal)

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received about the siting of a new joint defence school of music in Deal.

Mr. Lee: We have received six approaches about the siting of the defence school of music at Deal. We have also received a number of representations about the closure of Kneller hall.

Military and Defence Establishments

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the military and defence establishments situated in Cumbria, Lancashire, Merseyside, Greater Manchester and Cheshire and, in each case, the numbers of service and civilian personnel stationed or employed in them.

Mr. Stanley: I shall write to the right hon. Gentleman.

Service Personnel (Regulations)

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how the regulations of the British armed forces compare and differ from the armed forces of each of the other North Atlantic Treaty Organisation member states with regard to *(a)* the active participation of service personnel in public meetings, *(b)* the writing of letters to the press by service personnel, *(c)* equal pay for service women and men of the same rank, *(d)* maternity leave for service women and their right to return to their former jobs in the armed forces after childbirth, and *(e)* the opening up of all military occupations, including hi-tech and combat roles, to service women on an equal basis with men;

(2) how the regulations of the British armed forces compare and differ from the armed forces of each of the other North Atlantic Treaty Organisation member states

with regard to *(a)* the segregation of service women in all-female corps, *(b)* the legislation on homosexuality for service personnel, *(c)* the existence of an independent military ombudsman to investigate the individual complaints and grievances of service personnel, and *(d)* the right of service personnel facing disciplinary charges to have legal representation;

(3) how the regulations of the British armed forces compare and differ from the armed forces of each of the other North Atlantic Treaty Organisation member states with regard to *(a)* the active involvement of service personnel in political parties, *(b)* the active involvement of service personnel in political campaign and pressure groups, *(c)* the active participation of service personnel in trade unions and their right to take industrial action and *(d)* the active participation of service personnel in marches and demonstrations.

Mr. Lee: The information requested for other North Atlantic Treaty Organisation member states could be provided only at disproportionate time and effort.

My noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces will write in response to the various issues as they affect our own services.

Team Spirit 1985

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Defence if any of the British service men in South Korea will be involved in a Team Spirit 1985 manoeuvres.

Mr. Stanley: No British service men are participating in this exercise, although it will be observed by our defence attaché in Seoul.

Falkland Islands

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence if the opening of the airport at Mount Pleasant on the Falkland Islands will result in a decrease in the numbers of Harriers, Phantoms and Hercules aircraft, and in the numbers of radar operators, aircraft maintenance ground crew and Royal Air Force Regiment personnel based in the Falklands.

Mr. Stanley: As stated in paragraph 448 of the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1984 (Vol. 1), once the airfield is complete it should be possible to reduce the levels of permanently-stationed forces on the islands. It would not be in the public interest to detail our intentions as to the future make-up of the forces defending the islands.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence what plans Her Majesty's Government have to deploy, for short or long periods, Tornado GR1, Nimrod MR1/2, Buccaneer, Jaguar or Victor/Hercules tanker aircraft to the Falklands.

Mr. Stanley: All the aircraft to which the hon. Member refers could be deployed to the Falkland Islands at short notice, if necessary. It would not be in the public interest to detail our reinforcement plans.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence what the frequency of TriStar and/or VC10 flights will be to the Falklands when Mount Pleasant airport is completed.

Mr. Stanley: We currently expect two or three flights a week to Mount Pleasant airport, depending upon the type of wide-bodied aircraft used and the actual passenger and priority freight requirement.

Space Weapons

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with North Atlantic Treaty Organisation allies concerning space weapons.

Mr. Butler: My right hon. Friend meets his fellow Defence Ministers frequently for discussions on a range of subjects of common interest including the implications of new defence technologies.

Nuclear Testing Area (Wick)

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Defence why the files relating to the consideration given to an area near Wick as a possible testing area for an atomic device in 1954 have not yet been made available for public inspection; if Her Majesty's Government will now arrange this; and if he will also make arrangements to place a copy in the Library.

Mr. Butler: In accordance with the normal rules, the file from which was extracted the letter used in evidence at the Australian Royal Commission was not due for public release until 1998. However, the very considerable number of unclassified documents and records which has been released to the Commission is in the process of being made available to the Public Records Office, some of them, such as the letter relating to the consideration given to trials at a location near Wick, in advance of their normal release under the Public Records Act. Because of the number of documents involved, it may take a little time before all the records are publicly available, but I am placing a copy of the letter concerning the area near Wick and other related documents in the Library.

United States Military Hospitals

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether any United States National Guards units are earmarked to provide security at United States military hospitals in Britain in wartime

Mr. Stanley [*pursuant to his reply,* 18 March 1985, c. *411*]: Although detailed information about plans for the security of military establishments in war is classified, I can confirm that, at present, no United States National Guard units are earmarked to provide security at United States military hospitals in Britain in wartime.

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether British or United States services are responsible for security at United States Air Force and Navy hospitals in the United Kingdom in wartime

Mr. Stanley [*pursuant to his reply,* 18 March 1985, c. *411*]: The United States authorities will be responsible for the protection of their own hospitals in the United Kingdom in circumstances beyond the capability of the civil police who have primacy in such matters.

United States Marine Corps (Materials and Supplies)

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Defence what arrangements have been made for the prepositioning of military material and supplies for the United States Marine Corps in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Stanley [*pursuant to the reply*, 18 March 1985, c. *410*]: Arrangements exist but the details are classified.

Practice Bombing Runs

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish figures to show the number of practice bombing runs carried out in each year since 1981 at the air-to-ground weapons ranges at Rosehearty and Cape Wrath; and if he will provide a breakdown of these figures into Royal Air Force, United States air force, other North Atlantic Treaty Organisation air forces and non-North Atlantic Treaty Organisation air forces.

Mr. Lee [*pursuant to his reply*, 18 March 1985, c. *409*]: The figures are as follows:

	1981	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
Rosehearty				
Royal Air Force	1,190	1,476	1,474	2,346
United States air force	6,669	6,820	4,826	4,626
Other NATO air forces	24	35	4	52
Tain				
Royal Air Force	8,305	9,045	8,838	7,051
United States air force	3,486	4,920	3,487	2,246
Other NATO air forces	28	26	8	90
Cape Wrath				
Royal Air Force	n/a	*255	439	438
United States air force	n/a	*237	123	206
Other NATO air forces	n/a	*0	0	0

* From May.
n/a=Not available.

There has been no use of these ranges by non-NATO air forces.

SCOTLAND

Cormorants

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many applications for licences to kill cormorants were received in 1984; how many were issued; to whom the licences were issued; how many cormorants the licences allowed to be killed; how many cormorants were killed under licence in 1984; and if he will provide the same information for 1985 to date.

Mr. John MacKay: Twenty-five applications were received and 25 licences were issued to owners and occupiers of inland salmon and freshwater fisheries and district salmon fishery boards in 1984 for the protection of salmon and trout fisheries. No limits were placed on the number of birds to be killed. A total of 886 cormorants were killed under licence.

In the current year 17 applications have been received and 16 licences have been issued. One application is still under consideration. Returns received to date indicate that 45 birds have been killed.

Licence applications are treated in confidence, so it would not be appropriate to list the names of the licensees.

Cervical Screening

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the percentage of women aged over 35 and under 35 years, respectively, who have been tested for cervical cancer in each Scottish health board area in the latest year for which figures are available; and in what percentage of cases in each area the test proved positive.

Mr. Younger: The information is not available in the form requested. However, in 1983 a total of 315,044 smears for cervical cancer were examined by NHS laboratories in Scotland which represented approximately 16 per cent. of women aged 20 and over. An estimated 31 per cent. of women aged 20-34 and 10 per cent. of women aged 35 and over were tested. Of the smears examined, 1,694 or 0·54 per cent. proved positive.

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he is satisfied with the present arrangements for notifying women in Scotland of the results of smear tests for cervical cancer; and what advice he has given to health boards on this matter.

Mr. Younger: A report by a working group on cervical cytology services in Scotland, which the Scottish Home and Health Department drew to the attention of health boards on 1 December 1978, specifically advised on the action to be taken on positive, atypical and negative smear test results. The report emphasised that clearly defined procedures should be established to ensure that the appropriate follow up is initiated and co-ordinated. It is for health boards to determine how this advice is implemented in operating the cervical cytology service.

Cervical Cancer

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the number of women who died in Scotland of cervical cancer 10 years ago, five years ago and in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Younger: 210 in 1974, 224 in 1979 and 224 (provisional figure) in 1984.

Raptores

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his estimate of each of the protected raptores; and if their numbers are increasing or declining.

Mr. Ancram: The Scottish Home and Health Department does not keep wild bird population statistics but I am advised by the Nature Conservancy Council that the most recent available estimates for Great Britain are:

	Numbers	
Common Buzzard	12,000 pairs	Increasing
Honey Buzzard	4-10 pairs	Stable
Golden Eagle	4-500 pairs	Increasing
Goshawk	70 pairs	Increasing slowly
Marsh Harrier	25 pairs	Increasing
hen Harrier	600 pairs	Stable
Montagu's Harrier	2-9 pairs	Decreasing
Hobby	100-180 pairs	Stable
Kestrel	70,000 pairs	Stable
Merlin	3-400 pairs	Decreasing
Peregrine	8-900 pairs	Increasing
Red Kite	46 pairs	Stable
Sparrowhawk	20,000 pairs	Increasing
Osprey	25-30 pairs	Stable

Separate estimates for Scotland are not available.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the number of *(a)* prosecutions and *(b)* convictions of persons illegally taking eggs from the nests of protected raptores in 1984.

Mr. Ancram: This information is not available.

Housing Finance

Mr. Bruce asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* for each district and islands council in Scotland the net change in housing support grant to be paid in 1985-86 over that paid under the 1984-85 order.

Mr. Ancram: The information is set out in the following table and takes account of the increases in grant under The Housing Support Grant (Scotland) Variation Order 1985.

Net changes in housing support grant from 1984-85 to 1985-86

Authority	£
Berwickshire	−125,322
Ettrick and Lauderdale	−61,775
Roxburgh	−211,268
Tweeddale	—
Clackmannan	—
Falkirk	—
Stirling	—
Annandale and Eskdale	−137,470
Nithsdale	—
Stewartry	−102,328
Wigtown	−155,970
Dunfermline	—
Kirkcaldy	—
North East Fife	−16,878
Aberdeen	−1,857,181
Banff and Buchan	−765,809
Gordon	−403,758
Kincardine and Deeside	−65,948
Moray	−664,971

Authority	£
Badenoch and Strathspey	−47,946
Caithness	−203,813
Inverness	−68,153
Lochaber	+13,191
Nairn	−50,530
Ross and Cromarty	−111,906
Skye and Lochalsh	+22,605
Sutherland	−21,230
East Lothian	−257,795
Edinburgh	—
Midlothian	—
West Lothian	—
Argyll and Bute	−484,862
Bearsden and Milngavie	—
Clydebank	−305,279
Clydesdale	—
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	—
Cumnock and Doon Valley	—
Cunninghame	—
Dumbarton	—
East Kilbride	—
Eastwood	—
Glasgow	−5,436,947
Hamilton	—
Inverclyde	−985,080
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	—
Kyle and Carrick	—
Monklands	−1,710,546
Motherwell	—
Renfrew	—
Strathkelvin	—
Angus	—
Dundee	—
Perth and Kinross	—
Orkney	−59,568
Shetland	−215,054
Western Isles	+114,174

Housing Improvement Grants

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many applications for home improvement grants are currently waiting to be processed by district councils in Scotland;

(2) what information he has as to the total number of applicants waiting for housing improvement grants in Inverclyde at the latest date on which figures are available.

Mr. Ancram: The information requested is not held centrally.

Local Authorities (Expenditure)

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of the total expenditure and of revenue expenditure of local authorities in Scotland is met by domestic, commercial and industrial ratepayers, respectively, in the latest year for which figures are available; and what he estimates these figures will be in the year 1985-86.

Mr. Younger: Figures based on budget information for 1984-85 contained in the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy publication "Rating Review" are set out below. A provisional estimate for 1985-86 has also been provided.

Percentage of total local authority expenditure met by:

	1984-85 per cent.	*1985-86 per cent.*
Domestic ratepayers	15·9	17·8
Commercial ratepayers	12·7	13·6
Industrial ratepayers	4·9	4·8

Notes:

1. For the purpose of this question, total local authority expenditure is relevant expenditure for rate support grant purposes, including loan charges, total rate fund contributions to the Housing Revenue Account and total rate fund contributions to other non-relevant services.
2. The domestic rate income figure used in the calculations excludes the domestic element of rate support grant.

Broadleaved Woodland

Mr. Key asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make it his policy that decisions as to the species with which felled broadleaved trees should be replaced should take into account soil suitability and economic factors, including job opportunities, in rural areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: Policy proposals for broadleaved woodland are being developed by the Forestry Commission under the broadleaves in Britain review, and the considerations mentioned by my hon. Friend will be taken into account. I expect a statement arising from that review to be made to the House by the summer Recess.

Peterhead Prison

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what further progress has been made in the preparation of the architect's brief for the new Peterhead prison; when he anticipates that this brief will be issued; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: An outline architect's brief for the new Peterhead prison is nearing completion and should be issued within the next month. The brief will then be developed in consultation with the architects to arrive at sketch plans and a final design. Construction on site is programmed to begin in 1987.

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many incidents of unrest at Peterhead prison have been reported to him in the year 1984 and to the latest date in 1985, which involved injuries to prison officers serving in the prison; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: The number of incidents at Peterhead prison in 1984 and 1985 to date in which members of prison staff sustained injuries was 19 and 5 respectively.

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will arrange to visit Peterhead prison to discuss with the governor and representatives of the Prison Officers Association any further action which may be required for additional isolation units and an increase in the number of officers who are employed within the prison.

Mr. Ancram: I have no plans at present to visit Peterhead prison. A senior official from prisons group headquarters has already visited the prison since the recent incident and I have asked my officials to make a further visit to Peterhead to discuss what action may need to be taken.

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will investigate the circumstances in which seven prison officers at Peterhead prison recently sustained injuries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: Police investigations have resulted in four prisoners being charged on a number of counts. Until these charges have been disposed of I can make no further comment.

Forestry (Felling Licences)

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Scotland on how many occasions in 1982-83, 1983-84 and 1985-86 to date the Forestry Commission consulted the agriculture departments over applications for felling licences to clear woodland for agricultural purposes.

Mr. John MacKay [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 March 1985, c. *224*]: The information is as follows:

	Number of Consultations
Year to 31 March 1983	135
Year to 31 March 1984	185
9 months to 31 December 1984	144

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether there are any cases in the last three years when applications for felling licences for conversion of woodlands to agriculture were refused by the Forestry Commission, even though the agriculture department concerned had confirmed that the proposed conversion would make a significant contribution to the viability and economy of the remainder of the agricultural holding, and there were no other objections to the proposed felling from any other authorities consulted.

Mr. John MacKay [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 March 1985, c. *224*]: There have been no cases of outright refusal in these circumstances but some of the licences have required the replanting of part of the woodland or the planting of an alternative site on the same farm.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Scotland on how many occasions in 1982-83, 1983-84 and 1984-85 to date officials from his department confirmed to the Forestry Commission that a proposal to clearfell a broadleaved woodland and convert it to agriculture would make a significant contribution to the viability and economy of the agricultural holding concerned.

Mr. John MacKay [*pursuant to his reply*, 15 March 1985, c. *301*]: The information which covers all three Agriculture Departments is as follows:

	Number of Occasions
Year to 31 March 1983	36
Year to 31 March 1984	61
9 months to 31 December 1984	12

Forest Estates (Sales)

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the forest estates, together with their acreage, which have been sold by the Forestry Commission over the last 12 months.

Mr. John MacKay [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 March 1985, c. *446*]: The properties sold during the 12 months to 21 February 1985, the latest date for which information is available, were as follows:

Name of Property	*Area (Hectares)*	*County/Region*
Land at Oxhouse Batch	3·8	Avon
Odell Castle Estate	35·0	Bedfordshire
Bucklebury Manor Estate	84·0	Berkshire
Westrop Wood	22·0	Berkshire
Round Wood	11·0	Buckinghamshire
Lenborough Wood	37·0	Buckinghamshire
Penley Wood	49·0	Buckinghamshire
Land at Wood Park	0·9	Cornwall
Bodithiel Wood (part)	0·3	Cornwall
Low Park	90·0	Cumbria
Heggle Wood	29·0	Cumbria
Sawmill Wood and Franciamoor Wood	79·5	Cumbria
Sowerby: Lot 1 Sowerby Wood	110.0	Cumbria
Blacksnib	12·5	Cumbria
Murthwaite	11·7	Cumbria
Hopesike Wood (part) and Sandysike Bends	0·1	Cumbria
High Dale Park Exchange	74·0	Cumbria
Past Monk Wood, Haddon Estate	11·0	Derbyshire
Rowsdon	7·0	Devon
Widworthy Wood	37·5	Devon
Wynford Woods (West)	39·5	Dorset
Clifton Wood	80·0	Dorset
Gundrys Inclosure	1·5	Dorset
Crab Coppice	11·7	Dorset
Duncliffe Wood	87·0	Dorset
Bracket's Coppice and Birch Common	30·4	Dorset
Wynford Woods (East)	37·0	Dorset
Powerstock Common	95·0	Dorset
Hardwick Hall Estate:		
Hardwick cpt 56	4·7	Durham
Bath	3·5	Durham
Tile Shed and Pheasant	6·2	Durham

Name of Property	Area (Hectares)	County/Region
Mordon Wood	3·4	Durham
Cpts 53 and 54 and Brick Kiln	6·7	Durham
Sprucely, Knotty Hill and Dog Kennel	16·0	Durham
Weardale	1 052·5	Durham
Killhope Wheel	13·1	Durham
Weardale compartment 635	7·0	Durham
Newlands Wood and Long Shaw	6·0	East Sussex
Harlow Woods	64·5	Essex
Navestock Estate	53·8	Essex
Waverley Farm (part)	21·5	Gloucestershire
Stanway Estate	158·4	Gloucestershire
Siccaridge Wood	27·7	Gloucestershire
Cowley Woods	71·9	Gloucestershire
Windmill Estate	108·9	Hampshire
Land at Bradley Farm	3·0	Hampshire
Headley Wood	21·5	Hampshire
Headley Farm Woods	31·5	Hampshire
Ham and Bushy Leane Copses	14.0	Hampshire
Stubbs and Berrydown Copse	25·1	Hampshire
Little Leafy Grove	3·5	Hampshire
Wallop Hill Down	21·7	Hampshire
Andover Package	386.0	Hampshire
Ramridge Copse	29.0	Hampshire
Great Covert	82·0	Hampshire
Corehampton Woods	102·0	Hampshire
Weston Common (part)	27·5	Hampshire
Round Wood	2·6	Hampshire
Itchen Row	5·0	Hampshire
Land at Hut Hill Wood	0·1	Hampshire
Wood Norton	33·8	Hereford and Worcestershire
Tiddesley Woods	75·3	Hereford and Worcestershire
Kyre Park (part): The Rookery	7·1	Hereford and Worcestershire
Weethley, Williams and Cowley Woods	84·0	Hereford & Worcestershire and Warwickshire
Blackwater Wood	3·0	Hertfordshire
Deepdale Plantation	33·0	Humberside
Combley Quarr Hill (part):		
Elenors Grove	5·6	Isle of Wight
Puckers Copse	14·5	Isle of Wight
Staynes Copse	1·6	Isle of Wight
New Copse	7·6	Isle of Wight
Land at Covet Wood	0·1	Kent
Brook Wood	19·0	Kent
Sharsted Wood and Sharsted Plantation	83·0	Kent
Little Sharsted Wood	6·0	Kent
Longbeech Wood	40·0	Kent
The High Chart	75·0	Kent
Norland and Pierland Wood	35·0	Kent
Doe Wood	2·7	Lancashire
Metheringham Woods	39·4	Lincolnshire
Congham Heath (part)	18·0	Norfolk
Rougham	51·5	Norfolk
Gunton Park (part)	91·5	Norfolk
Foxley Wood	118·0	Norfolk
Spring Wood	19·0	Norfolk
Greenhills Wood	7·0	Norfolk
Bridgham Heath	3·7	Norfolk
Land at Weybourne	4·3	Norfolk
Wishaw	216·0	Northumberland
Lemmington Estate (part)	3·4	Northumberland
Wooley Plantation	8·0	Northumberland
Juniper and Potgate Woods	13·0	North Yorkshire
The Avenue	6·5	North Yorkshire
West Wood	8·5	North Yorkshire
Wragby Wood	21·0	North Yorkshire
Hawkshaw Gill and Clarks Carr Wood	65·4	North Yorkshire
Peep o Day Woods	4·9	North Yorkshire
Southwold	31·5	North Yorkshire
Swinton Estate and President's Wood	459·1	North Yorkshire
Knapton	53·0	North Yorkshire
Leppington Wood	8·6	North Yorkshire
Bishopwood Mainline Diversion	3·3	North Yorkshire
West Moor Plantations	2·9	North Yorkshire
Jackal Wood	6·2	North Yorkshire
Burnt Yates Woods	9·2	North Yorkshire
Sherburn and Butterwick Whins	17·0	North Yorkshire

Name of Property	Area (Hectares)	County/Region
Gotham Hill Wood (part)	32·0	Nottinghamshire
Middleton Stoney Park (part)	51·5	Oxfordshire
Flowercroft Wood (part)	22·0	Oxfordshire
Whitecross Green and Oriel Wood	63·0	Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire
Mogg Forest	19·0	Shropshire
Burnhill Green Waterworks	0·2	Shropshire
Boons and Bullers Copse	3·8	Somerset
Land at Silkstone	1·0	South Yorkshire
Swinston Hill Wood	20·0	South Yorkshire
Cuthbright Wood	11·0	South Yorkshire
Loscar Wood	16·0	South Yorkshire
Lowe Wood, Wentworth	17·8	South Yorkshire
Enville Estate (The Million)	230·2	Staffordshire
Northfield Wood	33·0	Suffolk
Bruisyard Wood	50·0	Suffolk
Land at Padley Water	4·6	Suffolk
Ledgers Park—Holt Wood	26·0	Surrey
Quornden Wood	13·0	Surrey
Barrow Green Court	36·5	Surrey
Ford Manor Estate: Middleroom Wood (part) and Coalheath (part)	18·5	Surrey and Kent
Burnpit Wood (part) and Pond	5·5	Surrey and Kent
Bowshott Wood (part)	7·5	Surrey and Kent
Bidbury Wood (part)	2·0	Surrey and Kent
Old Furzefield Wood (part)	6·0	Surrey and Kent
Hartshill Hayes	47·0	Warwickshire
Southwater	142·5	West Sussex
Brinsbury Estate (part)	18·0	West Sussex
Woodshill	38·0	West Sussex
Land at Wildham	1·2	West Sussex
Land at Tullecombe	0·8	West Sussex
Browsholme Estate	47·0	West Yorkshire
Land Girl and Thornhills	24·0	Wiltshire
Hanging Wood and Basin Covert	9·4	Wiltshire
Bentley Wood	735·0	Wiltshire
Sheephouse Wood	6·0	Borders
Whitslade (part)	1·2	Borders
Penmanshiel Road Diversion	1·5	Borders
Land at Eshiels	2·2	Borders
Cockburndean	13·0	Borders
Rachan West (part)	11·8	Borders
Spottiswoode (part)	4·9	Borders
Trabrownhill and Whitlaw Plantation	20·3	Borders
Pilmuir and Dipper Woods	30·9	Borders
Kinnel	115·0	Central
School Wood	5·0	Dumfries and Galloway
Bargaly (part)	2·6	Dumfries and Galloway
Strathmilligan	28·0	Dumfries and Galloway
Barend Wood	15·0	Dumfries and Galloway
Dalskairth (East)	8·0	Dumfries and Galloway
Crossford	16·0	Dumfries and Galloway
Caitloch	26·0	Dumfries and Galloway
Clonyard	12·0	Dumfries and Galloway
Lochnaw (part)	5·8	Dumfries and Galloway
Barrhill, Mainhill and Whitelhill	19·0	Dumfries and Galloway
Land at Ruttonside	11·3	Dumfries and Galloway
Auchengibbert	35·0	Dumfries and Galloway
Townhead of Glengaber	70·0	Dumfries and Galloway
Glenmaid	10·0	Dumfries and Galloway
Craigieland Wood (part)	1·3	Dumfries and Galloway
Kirkland (part)	1·3	Dumfries and Galloway
Land adjoining Sheep Park Lodge, Barnbarroch	0·3	Dumfries and Galloway
Shaw Rig	22·0	Dumfries and Galloway
Luscar Dean (part) and Quarry Wood	13·5	Fife
East Wemyss, North Wood	57·0	Fife
Rough Park	32·0	Fife
Goat Quarry II	13·3	Fife
Easter Clune	94·5	Grampian
Road Improvement at Tyrebagger	1·3	Grampian
Castlehill (part)	8·7	Grampian
Gordon Castle (part)	12·0	Grampian
Craighill	9·0	Grampian
C 25 Alves—Burghead Road Improvement	0·5	Grampian
Tollohill (part)	19·4	Grampian

Name of Property	Area (Hectares)	County/Region
Land at B9136	0·5	Grampian
Drumgoudrum	73·4	Grampian
Stonehaven By-pass	13·8	Grampian
Drumtochty Glen (part)	3·2	Grampian
Navidale	65·0	Highland
Laggan Locks	0·8	Highland
Roshven East	116·0	Highland
Roshven West	114·0	Highland
Dunnet Plantation	103·0	Highland
Craggie	48·0	Highland
South Strathy (part)	940·0	Highland
Tore and Glackmore (part)	22·3	Highland
Clunie Plantation (East)	17·0	Highland
Achandunie Wood (part)	5·5	Highland
Land at Shin Falls	0·6	Highland
Sandside Estate North	25·0	Highland
Boundary Adjustment at Ault-na-Goire	1·4	Highland
Langwell Plantation	117·0	Highland
Lawhead	5·8	Lothian
Archerfield/Muirfield (part)	114·0	Lothian
Drumshoreland South	18·0	Lothian
Muirfield (part) (Jamies Neuk)	22·0	Lothian
Wakenway	6·0	Lothian
Cousland	14·0	Lothian
Carfin	36·0	Strathclyde
Church Plantation	2·5	Strathclyde
Carmacoup and Penbreck	1,562·0	Strathclyde
Rosneath (North)	484·0	Strathclyde
Laggish and Dochroyal	167·1	Strathclyde
Howgate	188·0	Strathclyde
Dungavel Plantation	1,311·5	Strathclyde
Lesserlinn	8·0	Strathclyde
Achnacarron and Fanans	230·5	Strathclyde
Loch Sween Woodlands: Lots 1 and 3	23·5	Strathclyde
Sundale (part)	25·5	Strathclyde
Blarchaorain and Iag Na Luinge (part)	25·0	Strathclyde
Millbrae (part)	0·1	Strathclyde
Kilmichael Beg (part)	36·4	Strathclyde
A83 Castleton Road Improvement	1·0	Strathclyde
Sightline Clearance at Kilmichael Beg	0·5	Strathclyde
Rosneath South Package (part)	7·0	Strathclyde
Barr Fam (part)	4·0	Strathclyde
Fordie (part)	31·0	Tayside
Redgorton (Pitmuichly)	12·0	Tayside
Denmarkfield North and South	10·5	Tayside
Glassie Hill Exchange	28·0	Tayside
Tamano Wood	14·0	Tayside
Ardtrostan and Gleann Ghoinean	158·5	Tayside
West Shurrach	4·0	Tayside
Kippen Hill	13·2	Tayside
Muir of Holm	27·7	Tayside
Pont y Meibion	2·0	Clwyd
Ty Cerrig Wood	7·0	Clwyd
Gop Hill (part)	19·5	Clwyd
Blaen-y-Cwm Wood	1·4	Clwyd
Middle Blaen-y-Cwm	0·3	Clwyd
Lower Blaen-y-Cwm	3·0	Clwyd
Ochr-y-Fron	18·5	Clwyd
Coed-y-Moelfre	16·0	Clwyd
Coed yr Ynys	6·0	Clwyd
Coed Maes Robert	6·0	Clwyd
Church Wood	7·0	Clwyd
Bod Hamer	1·0	Clwyd
Tyn-y-ffynnon	1·0	Clwyd
Ty Gwyn (part)	9·4	Dyfed
Glanmarlais and Cwn Marlais (part)	10·0	Dyfed
Banc Fronllwyd (part)	0·1	Dyfed
Plantations near Lampeter (Caeo/Brechfa Package): Lot 7	26·5	Dyfed
Cilrhedyn Uchaf	4·5	Dyfed
Banc Grip (part)	5·2	Dyfed
Flynnon Ddu Wood	27·0	Dyfed
Tegfan	2·9	Dyfed
Allt Llwyd Plantation	8·9	Dyfed

Name of Property	Area (Hectares)	County/Region
Allt Goch South (part)	0·6	Dyfed
Tintern Package (part):		
Lot 3 Yew Tree Wood	6·0	Gwent
Lot 8 Highmeadow Wood	61·0	Gwent
Lot 11 Colebrook Wood	7·5	Gwent
Lot 5 Lower Pen-y-Clawdd	24·0	Gwent
Tal-y-Coed Court Woods (part)	0·4	Gwent
Pontypool Park Exchange	19·5	Gwent
Tal-y-Coed Court Woods (part)	0·2	Gwent
Barbadoes Wood	2·0	Gwent
Rogiett Brake	4·0	Gwent
Youngs Grove	1·3	Gwent
Bangor By-pass	1·9	Gwynedd
Bedw (part)	47·7	Gwynedd
Penbryn Piogod	1·8	Gwynedd
Coed Bryn Goleu	4·7	Gwynedd
Coed Cae Fali (part)	63·2	Gwynedd
Taldrwst	46·9	Gwynedd
Coed Fron Goch	6·5	Gwynedd
Coed Tyn-y-nant	4·4	Gwynedd
Cefn-Llech	2·9	Gwynedd
Coed Craflwyn	5·3	Gwynedd
Bwlch y Gwynt	8·5	Gwynedd
Coed-y-brain	10·4	Gwynedd
Coed Maenan and Coed Bryn-rhudd	21·6	Gwynedd
Cae Goch	1·0	Gwynedd
Cwn Mynach Isaf	190·2	Gwynedd
Coed Pen y Cefn	16·1	Gwynedd
Tyddyn mawr	2·6	Gwynedd
Land adj Fridd Bryn Coch	0·8	Gwynedd
Bryn Eisteddfod Woods	21·0	Gwynedd
Coed Bron Garth	5·4	Gwynedd
Aberglaslyn Wood	28·0	Gwynedd
Coed Pen y Bryn	2·9	Gwynedd
Coed Nant y Rhiw Felen	10·8	Gwynedd
Coed Fron Acre	5·7	Gwynedd
Coed y Garth	4·4	Gwynedd
Plas Bodafon (part)	4·0	Gwynedd
Caerhun (part)	1·3	Gwynedd
Hafod-y-morfa	0·1	Gwynedd
Ffridd-y-mynydd	31·5	Gwynedd
Coed-y-bedw	16·0	Mid Glamorgan
Gwarallt Wood	15·0	Powys
Robins Bank	3·9	Powys
Glangwesyn (part)	9·0	Powys
Lluast (part)	2·7	Powys
Banhadlog Hall	6·3	Powys
Penpontbren (part)	13·8	Powys
Pentrenant Dingle	9·5	Powys
Hay Package (part):		
Lot 7 Burnt House Wood	1·5	Powys
Lot 18 Lloyney Dingle	5·0	Powys
Lot 9 Wern Frank (part)	6·0	Powys
Lot 20 Cpt 146	3·0	Powys
Lot 10 Cpt 122	7·0	Powys
Lot 14 Coed Mawr (part)	6·5	Powys
Lot 15 Coed Mawr (part)	12·0	Powys
Lot 21 Bettws Dingle (part)	16·0	Powys
Penybanc Wood	7·8	Powys
Pen-y-garn goch	65·0	Powys
Esgair Gronwen Plantation	3·6	Powys
Tywch Wood	26·1	Powys
Coed Neuadd	3·7	Powys
Coed Erw Ddol	6·0	Powys
Coed Ty-canol	4·2	Powys
Pencae	6.0	Powys
Hendre Ladis	29·0	Powys
Llanfechan Wood	10·0	Powys
Brycheiniog Main Block	634·0	Powys
Allt Fawr	20·5	Powys
Sugar Loaf	87·5	Powys
Tair Onen Package (part):		
Lot 1 Coed Breigau	10.0	South Glamorgan
Lot 5 Hill Farm (part)	2·0	South Glamorgan
Coed Pen-y-ffordd Fawr	7·0	South Glamorgan

Public Expenditure

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will publish a table, otherwise identical to page 51 of "Public Expenditure in 1987-88: A Commentary on the Scottish Programme", but expressed in *(a)* cost terms and *(b)* volume terms and showing percentage changes over 1978-79;

(2) if he will publish a table, otherwise identical to page 51 of "Public Expenditure in 1987-88: A Commentary on the Scottish Programme", but expressed in *(a)* cost terms and *(b)* volume terms.

Mr. Ancram [*pursuant to the reply*, 21 March 1985, c. *608-9*]: There follows a table in cost terms, which includes percentage changes over 1978-79 for the programme as a whole and the main sub-totals within the programme. Since public expenditure is now planned in cash, the information needed to construct volume figures is no longer collected comprehensively.

Programme: 15.5: Housing

£ million: Constant Prices

	1978-79	*1979-80*	*% of 78-79*	*1980-81*	*% of 78-79*	*1981-82*	*% of 78-79*	*1982-83*	*% of 78-79*	*1983-84*	*% of 78-79*	*1984-85*	*% of 78-79*	*1985-86*	*% of 78-79*	*1986-87*	*% of 78-79*	*1987-88*	*% of 78-79*
Current Expenditure																			
General subsidies																			
Central government subsidies to LA housing	262	309		279		180		110		72		60							
Rate fund contributions to LA housing	93	106		100		119		129		123		103							
Subsidies to new towns	46	44		40		36		33		33		32							
Subsidies to Scottish Special housing Association	46	45		38		29		27		23		22							
Housing association revenue deficit grants	3	3		2		2		1		1		1							
Grant in aid to Housing Corporation	2	1		1		1		1		2		2							
Total General Subsidies	452	510	113	462	102	367	81	302	67	253	56	219	48	180	40				
Administration																			
Central government	—	—		0		0		0		0		0							
Local authorities	2	1		1		1		2		3		3							
Total Current Expenditure	453	511	113	463	102	369	81	304	67	255	56	221	49	183	40				
Capital Expenditure																			
Local authority gross expenditure																			
Land	10	4		4		4		4		5		6							
New dwellings	132	125		107		73		70		69		98							
Improvement Investment	190	202		178		185		188		215		143							
Other	14	19		16		19		23		21		19							
Improvement grants	15	22		24		36		67		178		136							
Gross lending to private persons for house purchase and improvements	30	39		32		23		27		10		11							
Loans and grants to housing associations	10	7		9		8		11		9		10							
Total local authority gross expenditure	411	420	102	367	89	351	85	379	92	506	123	422	103	371	90				
New towns gross investment																			
Land	2	0		0		1		0		1		1							
New dwellings	51	42		43		30		23		15		10							
Improvements	—	—		—		10		7		10		14							
Total new towns gross investment	53	42	79	43	81	40	75	31	58	26	49	24	45	19	36				
Scottish Special housing Association gross investment																			
Land	2	4		1		1		3		0		1							
New dwellings	34	32		38		24		17		10		15							
Acquisition	2	0		7		0		1		—		—							
Improvements	19	26		20		23		42		42		32							
Total SSHA gross investment	56	62	111	66	118	49	88	63	113	52	93	48	86	46	82				
Housing Corporation schemes loans and grants to housing associations																			
Gross	53	71		81		184		215		224		200							
Repayments	—	−1		−2		−90		−106		−130		−115							
Total housing corporation	53	70	132	77	145	94	177	109	206	94	177	86	162	83	157				
Other capital expenditure																			
Savings bonus and loans scheme for first time purchasers (loans net)																			
Grants to first time purchasers																			
Sales and repayments (Land and dwellings)																			
Local authorities	−8	−15		−36		−76		−112		−136		−118							
New towns	−10	−22		−15		−18		−17		−22		−14							
Scottish Special Housing Association	—	—		−20		−19		−20		−30		−17							
Associated lending (local authorities)	—	3		11		17		14		9		10							
Associated lending (new towns)	5	15		7		12		0		−2		2							
Associated lending (Scottish Special Housing Association)	—	—		9		8		3		0		4							
Repayments (local authorities)	−2	0		0		0		−2		−5		−3							
Repayments (new towns)	−2	−1		−1		−2		−3		−4		−2							
Repayments (SSHA)	—	—		0		0		−2		−9		−4							
Repayments of loans to private persons for house purchase and improvements	−20	−15		−15		−19		−22		−22		−19							
Repayments of loans to housing associations	−2	−1		−1		−2		−1		−1		−1							
Total sales and repayments	−39	−36	92	−60	154	−99	254	−162	415	−222	569	−163	418	−155	397				
Total capital expenditure (net)	533	555	104	495	93	434	81	420	79	457	86	417	78	364	68				
Total Programme	985	1,066	108	958	97	804	82	725	74	712	72	639	65	548	56	546	55	350	56

Note: GDP deflator applied (1983-84 base year). Figures in the table, owing to rounding, do not necessarily sum to their totals.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 27 March 1985

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY

European Community (Commission Programme)

Mr. Forth asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs with which parts of the programme of the Commission of the European Economic Community for 1985 Her Majesty's Government agree; and with which they disagree.

Mr. Rifkind: Copies of the Commission's programme, which is primarily designed to inform the European Parliament of the Commission's plans for its first year in office, have been placed in the Library of the House.

The programme contains much which coincides with our own priorities, for example:

the emphasis on price stability;
the recognition of the need to reform the CAP;
the priority accorded to completion of the international market;
the commitment to a more open transport system, including the phasing out of lorry quotas.

In some areas, such as social policy, some of the Commission priorities are different from our own and we regret it, for example, the absence of emphasis on the need to reduce the burden of regulation on European businesses. Not all the ideas set out in the paper will be turned into formal proposals. We shall make our views known on such proposals as they come forward.

European Commission (President)

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Government policy towards the proposed election of the President of the European Commission by all voters in European Community member states.

Mr. Rifkind: We are not aware of any proposal of this kind. The treaties provide that the members of the Commission (including the President) are appointed by common accord of the member states' Governments.

European Union

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Government policy towards greater political and economic co-operation between European Community member states and towards eventual European union.

Mr. Rifkind: We wish to see greater European unity brought about in practical ways, including concerted action in the political co-operation framework; completion of the common market for goods and services; and institutional development. Our detailed ideas were set out in "Europe—The Future", copies of which are available in the Library of the House.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Departmental Achievements

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list his Department's principal achievements since 1979; and if he will list separately the achievements with respect to overseas development.

Mr. Rifkind: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given by my right hon. and learned Friend to the hon. Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Murphy) on 18 May 1984. at columns 289-90. Since then the Foreign and Commonwealth Office has continued to make a significant and useful contribution towards the promotion of British and Western interests overseas. There have been several notable achievements during the past 10 months.

In NATO, we continued to work with our transatlantic and European allies to maintain peace and strengthen the Alliance. The Alliance's firmness of purpose in pursuin consistent defence and arms control policies has been instrumental in persuading the Russians to return to the negotiating table. Particular attention has been paid to strengthening the European contribution to NATO, and we have supported the reactivation of the Western European Union and greater European collaboration on arms procurement. We have also played a leading role in efforts to achieve a comprehensive ban on chemical weapons.

Together with our Western allies and partners, we have worked to promote a more constructive relationship between the West and the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Mr. Gorbachev's visit to the United Kingdom in December, and the discussions which my right hon. and learned Friend had with the Foreign Ministers of the Soviet Union, Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania, have contributed to that process.

We have played a significant role in strengthening the internal and external policies of the European Community. Notable achievements in 1984 were the settlement at Fontainebleau including an abatement in 1984 of £600 million of the United Kingdom contribution to the Community budget and an agreement under which future contributions will be reduced by about half; agreement on the control of Community expenditure, particularly agriculture expenditure; progress in negotiations to enable Spain and Portugal to join the Community on terms acceptable to the United Kingdom; and the priority now being given within the Community to bringing about a full common market in Europe.

Substantial progress has been made on some of the outstanding problems affecting Britain's remaining dependent territories. The successful negotiation with the Chinese Government of an agreement on the future of Hong Kong has provided an excellent framework for the future prosperity and stability of the territory. This has been welcomed by the international community as a major achievement for British diplomacy. Spain has lifted restrictions on Gibraltar in conformity with the Lisbon statement of 1980. In this connection we have made clear our commitment to honour the wishes of the people of Gibraltar. We have continued to honour our responsibilities to the other dependent territories, including in particular to the people of the Falkland Islands.

We have continued to take active steps to promote stability and democratic values in many developing

countries including the strengthening of political, economic and cultural links, and the provision of military training assistance. We have worked with like-minded Governments for peaceful solutions in areas of international tension, such as the middle east, Afghanistan, Southern Africa and Central America. We have continued to play a constructive role in the United Nations and to participate in United Nations peacekeeping forces in Cyprus and Sinai. We have participated actively with Commonwealth partners in discussion of the special needs of small states and have maintained contingents in Belize and Brunei. We have also worked closely with our allies on measures to thwart terrorism through effective international co-operation.

At the London economic summit, participants reached a large measure of agreement on basic economic objectives, including a 10-point programme for future action. This recognised the needs of developing countries, provided a framework for action on international indebtedness, and looked forward to further trade liberalisation.

Those achievements have been secured despite a continuing increase in the workload of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and reductions in its manpower of about 10 per cent. over the last five years. This reflects an increasingly efficient and cost-effective performance by the Diplomatic Service.

Overseas Development

In response to the appalling effects of the drought in many sub-Saharan African countries, notably Ethiopia and Sudan, we have played a major role in international relief operations and have provided over £100 million in drought related relief aid in the current financial year.

Successful negotiations between the European Community and 65 African, Caribbean and Pacific countries (35 of them in the Commonwealth) culminated in the signing of the third Lomé convention last December. This provides for a sixth European development fund totalling 7·5 billion ecu, the United Kingdom share of which is some £780 million at current exchange rates.

More generally, we have continued our programme of long-term development assistance mainly to the poorer countries, successfully completing many projects, including the Victoria dam in Sri Lanka to which we contributed £113 million of grant aid.

A significant part of Overseas Development Administration headquarter's operations has been shifted to the west of Scotland in accordance with our dispersal policy. ODA has also put through a major rationalisation of its scientific and special units and has continued to maintain the spread of the United Kingdom's bilateral aid programmes while reducing its overall work force by some 30 per cent.

Bophuthatswana

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has received regarding diplomatic recognition of Bophuthatswana by Her Majesty's Government; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: In the past 12 months we have answered two parliamentary questions and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office has answered three letters from members of the public. It remains our position that Bophuthatswana does not meet our criteria for recognition as an independent state.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Advanced Supplementary Level Examinations

Mr. Alan Howarth asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what are the Government's intentions with regard to advanced supplementary level examinations; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Keith Joseph: The White Paper "Better Schools" (Cmnd. 9469), published yesterday, announces the Government's decision that advanced supplementary (AS) level examinations should be introduced on broadly the lines proposed in the consultative paper of May 1984, with adjustments to take account of comments received on those proposals. The first courses will begin in September 1987, and the first examinations will be held in summer 1989.

I am writing to the chairman of the Secondary Examinations Council setting out the background to the Government's decision and giving more details of it; and to the convenor of the GCE boards inviting the boards to prepare syllabuses in consultation with those concerned. Copies of my letters will be placed in the Library.

Rate Support Grant (Education Costs)

Mr. Brandon-Bravo asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the cost per pupil for rate support grant purposes in Nottinghamshire for *(a)* primary, *(b)* secondary under 16 years and *(c)* secondary over 16 years, in the current and projected financial years; what are the highest, lowest and average costs in these three categories nationally; and what added percentage should be allowed for building maintenance and central establishment costs, to establish the total cost of education in the maintained sector.

Mr. Dunn: The unit grant-related expenditure associated with pupils in each age group is as follows:

	1984-85	*1985-86*
	5-10 (Primary)	*£ cash*
Nottinghamshire	845	943
Highest (Brent)	1,051	1,174
Lowest (Stockport)	804	897
Average	863	963
	11-15	
	(Secondary)	*£ cash*
Nottinghamshire	1,073	1,155
Highest (Brent)	1,344	1,448
Lowest (Stockport)	1,027	1,107
Average	1,094	1178
	16+	
	(Secondary)	*£ cash*
Nottinghamshire	1,778	1,872
Highest (Newham)	1,927	2,052
Lowest (Stockport)	1,732	1,818
Average	1,795	1,888

The grant-related expenditure assessed by the Government includes allowance for the costs of special schools; central administration; school transport; child guidance; pupil support; and for current expenditure on buildings maintenance. It does not include the cost of school meals and milk, or of the revenue consequences of

capital expenditure which are dealt with separately in GREs. An addition of some 13 per cent. to the figures above for these two items would give the total cost of education in the maintained sector as assessed by the Government.

Chiropodists

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary for Education and Science if he will give the entry qualifications to start a course as a state registered chiropodist; what is the length of time studied for such a course; if he will place in the *Official Report* the time given to theoretical and practical studies; and if he will make a statement on the possibility of giving graduate status for such students.

Mr. Brooke: The normal entrance requirements for courses leading to state registration as a chiropodist consist of five GCE passes, including one in English language, and one in a science subject, and of which two should be at advanced level. Courses are of three years duration. An average of about 40 per cent. of course time is devoted to practical clinical work and the remainder to theoretical work. Applications for degree courses within the maintained sector are considered by my right hon. Friend who would, in particular, need to be convinced that a new degree level course was essential to meet the operational needs of the profession.

Schoolchildren (Statistics)

Mr. Radice asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will state for each local authority in England and Wales the number of pupils under five years of age in infant classes in primary schools in January 1985; and what is this number as a proportion of the population of three and four-year-olds in each relevant local education authority area;

(2) if he will state, for each local authority in England and Wales, the number of full-time and part-time pupils in nursery schools and nursery classes in January 1985; and what is this number as a proportion of the population of three and four-year-olds in each relevant local education authority area.

Sir Keith Joseph: Information for January 1985 is not available. The information requested for nursery and primary schools in England in January 1984 is as follows:

	Infant classes in primary schools		*Nursery schools and classes*	
	Number of pupils	*Percentage of 3 and 4-year-old population*	*Number of pupils*	*Percentage of 3 and 4-year-old population*
Barking	1,291	34	1,339	35
Barnet	1,875	27	2,229	31
Bexley	805	15	592	11
Brent	1,950	30	2,277	35
Bromley	1,017	15	120	2
Croydon	2,477	31	608	8
Ealing	974	13	2,762	36
Enfield	1,977	31	1,372	21
Haringey	1,563	32	2,209	45
Harrow	657	13	809	16
Havering	1,822	31	236	4
Hillingdon	1,123	19	2,586	43
Hounslow	385	7	3,221	60
Kingston-upon-Thames	758	24	916	30
Merton	888	22	1,619	42
Newham	840	13	3,634	60
Redbridge	776	14	463	9
Richmond-upon-Thames	948	26	594	17
Sutton	48	1	624	15
Waltham Forest	1,024	18	2,287	39
Inner London	7,680	14	20,779	40
Birmingham	8,546	32	7,746	28
Coventry	2,519	31	1,901	23
Dudley	970	13	1,951	25
Sandwell	2,474	31	3,088	39
Solihull	1,558	33	1,206	25
Walsall	2,366	33	3,941	56
Wolverhampton	1,072	16	3,753	56
Knowsley	1,164	22	1,444	28
Liverpool	3,897	31	5,630	45
St. Helens	1,653	33	954	19
Sefton	2,230	31	2,019	28
Wirral	2,586	29	1,552	17
Bolton	2,209	29	2,415	33
Bury	1,391	30	832	18
Manchester	1,969	17	5,834	52
Oldham	1,997	32	1,779	28
Rochdale	1,907	30	1,749	28
Salford	1,851	31	2,894	49
Stockport	2,321	32	962	12
Tameside	1,784	32	2,240	39
Trafford	341	6	588	11
Wigan	2,726	32	1,925	23
Barnsley	1,009	18	2,722	49
Doncaster	2,387	31	2,964	38

	Infant classes in primary schools		Nursery schools and classes	
	Number of pupils	Percentage of 3 and 4-year-old population	Number of pupils	Percentage of 3 and 4-year-old population
Rotherham	1,089	15	2,706	39
Sheffield	2,438	20	4,434	37
Bradford	3,187	22	4,238	29
Calderdale	1,645	33	1,350	27
Kirklees	3,002	30	3,340	32
Leeds	4,126	24	4,898	28
Wakefield	1,662	21	3,434	42
Gateshead	1,663	32	1,670	32
Newcastle upon Tyne	2,105	32	2,690	40
North Tyneside	1,616	33	2,259	46
South Tyneside	1,303	33	1,986	51
Sunderland	2,777	33	2,892	34
Avon	6,703	30	2,834	13
Bedfordshire	604	4	4,561	29
Berkshire	353	2	4,161	21
Buckinghamshire	1,205	7	1,998	12
Cambridgeshire	4,598	27	1,864	11
Cheshire	3,878	16	4,918	20
Cleveland	3,411	21	7,653	47
Cornwall (including Isles of Scilly)	3,236	33	1,362	13
Cumbria	3,568	31	2,251	19
Derbyshire	4,211	18	4,349	19
Devon	2,875	13	1,829	8
Dorset	968	8	647	5
Durham	4,794	31	5,426	35
East Sussex	3,869	29	950	7
Essex	4,757	12	1,994	5
Gloucestershire	3,883	31	—	—
Hampshire	5,585	14	1,793	5
Hereford and Worcester	1,363	8	964	6
Hertfordshire	4,034	16	7,654	31
Humberside	4,082	19	6,105	28
Isle of Wight	814	32	141	6
Kent	3,340	8	1,827	5
Lancashire	10,763	30	5,130	15
Leicestershire	1,476	6	5,100	22
Lincolnshire	2,462	18	1,009	7
Norfolk	4,435	26	799	5
North Yorkshire	2,595	17	2,773	18
Northamptonshire	4,766	31	1,796	12
Northumberland	2,535	32	1,443	19
Nottinghamshire	2,472	10	10,298	41
Oxfordshire	602	5	1,733	12
Shropshire	1,874	19	1,093	11
Somerset	3,219	30	68	1
Staffordshire	5,300	19	5,971	22
Suffolk	2,570	16	1,671	10
Surrey	2,078	9	2,630	11
Warwickshire	2,986	25	1,891	16
West Sussex	889	6	516	3
Wiltshire	2,846	20	137	1
ENGLAND	236,417	20	258,601	22

Pupils who were under five years at 31 August 1983 but who became five on or before 31 December 1983 have been excluded from the answer.

Information for Wales is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Youth Service Unit

Mr. Lewis Stevens asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what will be the functions of, and the staffing resources available to, the new youth service unit; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Keith Joseph: The unit will be responsible for advising Ministers on youth service policy issues, including the allocation of the grants made direct by the Department in this field. Six and a half members of the Department's staff, in full-time equivalent terms, have direct responsibility for these youth service matters, and these will form the staff of the new unit. In addition, Her Majesty's Inspectorate is involved with youth service matters and other staff within the Department have separate responsibilities directly relevant to the youth service including, for example, arrangements for youth exchanges and vocational education for young people. The new unit will have access to the full range of the Department's supporting services. I believe that it will be helpful to those outside the Department in the youth service field to know that there is a specific unit dealing with their concerns.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Hotels (Classification)

17. **Mr. Gale** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he is satisfied with the present system of hotel classification; and if there are any plans to change that system.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The English Tourist Board has been asked to examine ways of strengthening its voluntary registration and classification scheme for hotels to make it a more effective weapon against inadequate standards. A new scheme providing for verification of standards and a simplified classification system has been agreed with the other statutory tourist boards and is currently under discussion with trade and consumer interests.

Trade Prospects

20. **Mr. Richard Page** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what are the prospects of trade with the United States of America.

Mr. Channon: There are excellent prospects for a further substantial increase in our exports to the United States in 1985.

"The Sisyphus Syndrome"

21. **Mr. Ashdown** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he has had any consultation on the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development report "The Sisyphus Syndrome"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon: No. The report was commissioned by the OECD secretariat to help it to assemble background information for work on trade in high technology and it has not been distributed to OECD member Governments.

Manufacturing Industry

22. **Mr. Pike** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what effects he forecasts for manufacturing industries for 1985-86 arising from the Budget.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Manufacturing industry has been fully participating in the recovery of the economy. I have no doubt that the Budget will benefit manufacturing industry as well as other sectors of business.

38. **Mr. Knox** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the most recent figure for output in manufacturing industry; and how this compares with the figure for the same month five years ago.

Mr. Norman Lamont: For the three months ended January 1985 the index of production for manufacturing industry was 101, based on 1980 equal to 100, 8 per cent. lower than its value in the three months ended January 1980.

Tourist Grants

23. **Mr. Dickens** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what proportion of grants and loans made through the English Tourist Board are granted to the north of England.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Approximately one third of all offers made by the English Tourist Board in 1984-85 under section 4 of the Development of Tourism Act 1969 have been to projects in the north of England. I shall write to my hon. Friend with more details.

Public Purchasing Policy

24. **Mr. Simon Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment he has made of the effect of public purchasing policy on the efficient operation of market forces.

Mr. Fletcher: The Government's policy is that contracts should be let as the result of competition wherever possible so that the opportunities presented by public sector business are open to a wide range of potential suppliers. The Treasury guidelines encourage an effective dialogue between purchasers and suppliers so that decision-taking on both sides is better informed; and the use of performance specifications rather than detailed designs so that suppliers can offer alternative solutions which take into account the potential for sales in other markets. Steps have been taken to improve small firms' access to Government contracts. In these ways public purchasing policy contributes to the efficient operation of market forces and obtains better value for money. The Cabinet Office (MPO) report on "Government Purchasing", published in December 1984, makes a number of recommendations to strengthen the application of policy in these respects.

Takeovers and Mergers

25. **Mr. Nelson** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what factors other than the need for competition he takes into account in deciding whether a proposed takeover or merger might act against the public interest or whether to refer any such case to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Mr. Fletcher: In making decisions on merger references to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission the Secretary of State takes into account the advice of the Director General of Fair Trading and all relevant information available to him. It is for the commission to determine once a reference has been made, whether a merger might be expected to operate against the public interest.

British National Space Centre

26. **Mr. Batiste** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement about the staffing, funding and responsibilities of the British National Space Centre.

Mr. Pattie: There is nothing I can add at present to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend on 4 February.

Inward Investment Policy

27. **Mr. Phillip Oppenheim** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many representations he has received about the effects of the Government's inward investment policy.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The number of representations received by my Department about the effects of the Government's inward investment policy is not recorded. However, I can assure my hon. Friend that the

Government receive widespread support for their policy of encouraging foreign companies to invest in the United Kingdom when their investment would be of net benefit to the United Kingdom economy.

House of Fraser

28. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he is yet in a position to announce his decision as to whether he will refer the offer by the Al Fayed family for the House of Fraser to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fletcher: My right hon. Friend announced on 14 March 1985 that he had decided, in accordance with the recommendation of the Director General of Fair Trading, not to refer the proposed acquisition of House of Fraser plc by Alfayed Investment Holdings plc to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

British Steel Corporation

29. **Sir William van Straubenzee** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he expects to announce a decision arising out of the range of options presented to him by the chairman of the British Steel Corporation and relating to the future conduct of the business.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The opportunity for the corporation to undertake the review of its strategic plan has been delayed until very recently by the uncertainty created by the miners' dispute. It is too early at this stage to say what the outcome of this process will be.

Brother Industries

30. **Mr. Penhaligon** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the 43·7 per cent. tariff imposed on products from Brother Industries by the European Economic Community (document No. 3643/84 of 20 December 1984).

Mr. Channon: On 20 Decemmber 1984, the Commission announced the imposition of provisional anti-dumping duties against electronic typewriters originating in Japan, falling within sub-heading ex 84.51A of the common customs tariff. The rate of duty varied according to the exporter: in the case of Brother Industries it was 43·7 per cent. This followed an investigation by the Commission under EC regulation 2176/84 which showed that these imports were being dumped and were causing injury on the Community market. The duties will last initially for up to four months. They are likely to be extended for a further two months, after which a decision must be made regarding a definitive remedy.

General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade

31. **Mr. Gerald Bowden** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what discussions he has had with his European Economic Community counterparts on a new general agreement on tariffs and trade round.

Mr. Channon: My right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary reported to the House on 25 March that the EC Foreign Affairs Council of 17-21 March had considered, inter alia, the Community position on a new GATT round. I attended the discussion of this topic between the Trade Ministers of the Ten. The Community declared its readiness to participate in the launching of a new round, subject to the establishment of an adequate prior international consensus on objectives, participation and timing.

Nationalised Industries

32. **Mr. Favell** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry by how much productivity has increased in each nationalised industry for which he is responsible within the manufacturing sector since the end of 1980.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The industries in question are the British Steel Corporation and British Shipbuilders. In the British Steel Corporation, productivity has improved from 14·5 man-hours per tonne of liquid steel in 1980-81 to the current level of 6·9 man-hours per tonne in the third quarter of 1984. In the case of British Shipbuilders, productivity is difficult to measure, but there are indications that, after a period of low work load and correspondingly low productivity, it is now improving.

Companies (Assistance)

33. **Mr. Bowen Wells** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what action his Department is taking to assist with the rehabilitation of companies in financial difficulties.

Mr. Fletcher: Generally, the market is the best judge of prospects for companies in financial difficulties. But I am anxious to see that satisfactory procedures exist to enable the affairs of a company facing a financial crisis to be placed in the hands of an independent expert who will be able to pursue a programme for the rescue or reorganisation of the company's business. This is why the Government have incorporated in the Insolvency Bill the company administration procedure which it was recommended should be established by the review committee on insolvency law and practice.

Design for Design Policy

34. **Mr. Hayes** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received following the publication of his design for design policy document.

Mr. Pattie: The publication of the policy document, "Design for Design: a Framework for Action", has attracted comments from representative bodies and individuals which my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary will take fully into account in his deliberations about future priorities and initiatives. The vast majority welcomed this policy statement, and requests for the document have been received from many parts of the world.

A design strategy group was established to consider the most effective ways of meeting the objectives described in the document. The group has produced a constructive report, which we have welcomed, and my hon. Friend is now considering its recommendations.

Eastern Europe (Balance of Trade)

35. **Mr. Hayward** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the balance of trade with eastern Europe.

Mr. Channon: Provisional statistics for 1984 show that the United Kingdom had a deficit of £333 million in its trade with eastern Europe, excluding the Soviet Union. The deficit in 1983 was £70 million. Exports increased from £501 million to £568 million while imports rose from £571 million to £902 million. Just over three quarters of the deficit was incurred on fuels, mainly petroleum and petroleum products.

Regional Assistance

36. **Mr. Meadowcroft** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps he has taken to satisfy himself that the criteria for regional assistance take sufficient account of unemployment black spots.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The current assisted areas map, like its predecessor, is based on travel-to-work areas. As the closest available approximations to self-contained labour markets covering the whole country, these are both the most sensible basis for a policy aimed at encouraging additional employment opportunities in areas where they are most needed and the fairest way of making nationwide comparisons of areas' relative needs for such additional jobs.

Brazil

37. **Rev. Martin Smyth** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he expects to see an increase in trade with Brazil in the next financial year.

Mr. Channon: There is considerable scope for improvement in our bilateral trade with Brazil.

Tourism

39 **Mr. Jessel** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment has been made as to the extent to which the arts and heritage act as a draw for tourism into the United Kingdom.

Mr. Norman Lamont: There is no doubt that Britain's arts and heritage are a major attraction for overseas visitors. While it is difficult to provide a definitive assessment, the British Tourist Authority's 1984 overseas visitors survey reveals, for example, that around two thirds of our overseas visitors had visited historic towns and churches during their stay and around one third had visited art galleries.

Last year the British Tourist Authority adopted Britain's heritage as its central theme for promoting tourism to Britain under the banner "Heritage 84." A record number of overseas visitors came to Britain last year—11 per cent more than the previous record in 1983. This successful theme is being continued during 1985 with special reference to the 500th anniversary of the Tudor dynasty. The BTA will be drawing attention to a wide variety of arts and heritge attractions throughout the country in its promotional campaigns overseas.

41 **Mr. Bevan** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what studies have been undertaken by his Department on the effects of the tourist industry on employment.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Economists in my Department have carried out a detailed study to produce estimates of total employment supported directly and indirectly by tourism spending. Provisional results from the study show that around 1 million jobs were supported by tourism spending in 1983. The final results of the study are expected to be available shortly.

45 **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he is satisfied with the arrangements for the signposting of tourist destinations.

Mr. Norman Lamont: My Department is in regular contact with the Department of Transport; which has responsibility for signposting matters, about ways in which the signposting of tourist attractions and facilities might be improved. I particularly welcome the tourism signposting experiments which are taking place in Kent and Nottinghamshire with the co-operation of the Secretary of state for Transport, and I very much hope that these will in due course lead to the introduction of more effective tourism signposting arrangements at national level.

46 **Mr. Butterfill** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what initiatives have been taken by his Department to improve the marketing abroad of areas of the United Kingdom outside London.

Mr. Norman Lamont: My Department encourages tourism to Britain through the work of the British Tourist Authority. One of the BTA's objectives is to give emphasis to Scotland, Wales and the regions of England in order to increase the extent of travel by overseas tourists throughout Britain. In its overseas promotional campaigns the BTA features a wide variety of tourist attractions throughout the country. It produces material covering particular regions in association with the English regional tourist boards and the national boards for Scotland and Wales. It co-operates with commercial interests in the regions through joint marketing schemes and representation at exhibitions and trade fairs abroad, and it is active in promoting conference centres in overseas markets around Britain, including Bournemouth.

Publishing Industry

40. **Mr. Bruce** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what proposals he has for the promotion of the publishing industry.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I have no specific plans for promoting the publishing industry.

EC (Harmonisation of Standards)

42. **Mr. Pawsey** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he is satisfied with progress within the European Economic Community on the harmonisation of standards in goods.

Mr. Channon: Techinical harmonisation within the Community has proved disappointingly slow. The Government therefore support fully current initiatives under which members states would

- co-operate under directive 189/83/EEC to avoid the introduction of national requirements likely to impair operation of the internal market;
- adopt a new approach to technical harmonisation and standardisation along the lines proposed in the Commission's communication of 31 January 1985 to the European Parliament and the Council (COM(85)19 final);
- seek to strengthen the capacity to standardise at European level.

The Government hope that together these initiatives will speed up technical harmonisation and make a major contribution to completion of the internal market.

Post Office (Closures)

43. **Mr. Wainwright** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will introduce legislation to require the Post Office to take account of social factors in relation to closure decisions involving sub-post offices.

Mr. Pattie: Such a requirement already exists by virtue of section 59(2) of the British Telecommunications Act 1981.

Securities Investments Board

44. **Mr. Dykes** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the progress made in establishing the Securities Investments Board and the related investor protection measures.

Mr. Fletcher: Sir Kenneth Berrill has agreed to undertake the task of establishing the Securities and Investments Board. The Government hope to announce appointments to the marketing of investments board organising committee very shortly. The Department is considering comments on the financial services White Paper and preparing legislation.

Insurance Corporation of Ireland

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what action he has taken to monitor the affairs of the Insurance Corporation of Ireland in the United Kingdom; if the investments by United Kingdom clients are still secure; and if he will make a statement on recent developments within that company.

Mr. Fletcher: The Insurance Corporation of Ireland Limited has its head office in the Republic of Ireland and carries on insurance business in the United Kingdom through a branch. Under the terms of an EEC directive, the Government of the Republic of Ireland must verify the state of solvency of the company with respect to its entire business, and the United Kingdom Government have to be satisfied that the United Kingdom branch has assets at least sufficient to meet the liabilities of the branch.

The Department of Trade and Industry receives, in the form and on the basis required by United Kingdom legislation, an annual return of the business of the company carried on in the United Kingdom. The branch's return for the year ended 31 December 1983 showed its assets to be substantially in excess of its liabilities. The return for 1984 is not yet due.

According to recent statements by the company and the Irish Government, there are now substantial losses expected on the United Kingdom business. The company has been acquired by a company controlled by the Irish Government and an administrator has been appointed by the Irish court to carry on the business of the company. The Irish Government have stated that any financial assistance required to enable the company to meet its liabilities will be provided by means of the insurance compensation fund. My Department is in contact with the Irish authorities and the administrator.

Motor Cars

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for each year since 1955 United Kingdom production, imports and exports of motor cars by volume.

Mr. Channon: The following is the information.

Annual totals in thousands of units

	United Kingdom motor car production	*Exports of new motor cars from the United Kingdom*	*Imports of new motor cars into the United Kingdom*
1955	898	389	11
1956	708	335	7
1957	861	424	9
1958	1,052	484	11
1959	1,190	569	27
1960	1,353	570	57
1961	1,004	371	23
1962	1,249	545	29
1963	1,608	616	48
1964	1,868	679	66
1965	1,722	628	56
1966	1,604	556	67
1967	1,552	503	93
1968	1,816	677	102
1969	1,717	772	102
1970	1,641	690	158
1971	1,742	721	281
1972	1,921	627	450
1973	1,747	599	505
1974	1,534	565	375
1975	1,268	516	449
1976	1,333	496	534
1977	1,328	475	699
1978	1,223	466	801
1979	1,070	410	1,061
1980	924	359	863
1981	955	349	805
1982	888	313	934
1983	1,045	274	1,076
1984	909	219	1,020

Note: Figures include, where appropriate, motor cars in knocked-down kit form.
Sources: DTI, SMMT/Customs and Excise.

Weighing Machines

Mr. Eldon Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, pursuant to the reply of 5 March to the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds *Official Report*, column *447*, by how much he expects the accommodation costs that are charged for type approval of weighing machines to be reduced by the transfer he has announced of the National Weights and Measures Laboratory from central London to Teddington.

Mr. Fletcher: On present assumptions, I would expect a substantial saving on accommodation costs to be achieved when the national weights and measures laboratory moves to Teddington. However, it is too early to provide specific cost data at this stage.

Liverpool

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on his recent visit to Liverpool.

Mr. Tebbit: I have not visited Liverpool recently.

British Overseas Trade Board

Mr. Hanley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he is satisfied that the re-allocation of the British Overseas Trade Board resources since 1979, reducing support for overseas trade fairs and increasing support for the overseas project fund and the market entry guarantee scheme, has led to an increase in United Kingdom manufactured exports as a proportion of total United Kingdom exports.

Mr. Grylls asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he is satisfied that the interests of small companies are adequately represented on the British Overseas Trade Board.

Mr. Richard Page asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he is satisfied that the re-allocation of British Overseas Trade Board resources since 1979, reducing support for overseas trade fairs and increasing support for the overseas projects fund and the market entry guarantee scheme, has assisted small United Kingdom manufacturing companies to increase their exports.

Mr. Channon: I shall reply to my hon. Friends as soon as possible.

Mr. Coombs asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what effect the rise in the value of the United States dollar against the pound sterling will have on the number of overseas trade fairs supported by the British Overseas Trade Board where the cost of stand space and cost of stand construction is quoted in United States dollars.

Mr. Channon: The rise in the value of the US dollar over the past year increases the sterling cost of running BOTB groups at overseas trade fairs in those areas where exhibition space and stand construction are paid for in dollars. With a cash limited sterling budget, if other factors remain constant this reduces proportionately the number of British groups that can be supported by the BOTB at overseas fairs in those areas.

Small Businesses

Mr. Patrick Thompson asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement about the help now available for small businesses.

Mr. Fletcher: My right hon. Friend has announced the relaunching of the support for innovation programme, with special provisions to help small firms, and the repackaging of our schemes to make them more easily understood. The Budget speech contained a number of measures for small firms, and a report proposing reductions in administrative and legislative burdens is about to be published.

Warren Spring Laboratory

Mr. Wood asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he has reached a decision about the future of Warren Spring laboratory.

Mr. Pattie: After careful consideration of the options, it has been decided to retain Warren Spring laboratory in the public sector. Privatisation could not be achieved on terms which would have been financially advantageous to the Government. It is nevertheless the intention to require Warren Spring laboratory to adopt a more commercial approach to its activities and to obtain a greater industrial return on its programmes.

EMPLOYMENT

Quarries (Blasting)

Mr. Harvey asked the Secretary of State for Employment what regulations govern blasting in quarries; and if he will amend them to seek to prevent a reoccurrence of the type of incident in which a school in Clwyd was recently showered with rocks.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and the Mines and Quarries Act 1954 apply to operations at quarries and the use of explosives is specifically regulated by the Quarries (Explosives) Regulations 1959. The provisions of the regulations, which are currently under review, are directed not only to the protection of quarry workers but also those members of the public who may be threatened by quarry activities.

Wages and Employment (Relationship)

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Employment what evidence he has as to a relationship between employment and *(a)* wages and *(b)* wages councils' awards.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: A recent publication by the Treasury "The relationship between employment and wages" surveys the available evidence on the general link between pay and jobs. A copy is available in the Library. I would also refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Newham, North East (Mr. Leighton) on 22 October 1984, at column 481.

The effect of wages councils on employment, including the effect of their awards, is considered in amongst others:

(i) "Pay and Employment in Four Retail Trades" by C. Craig and F. Wilkinson, DE Research paper (forthcoming).
(ii) "Low Pay or No Pay" Institute of Economic Affairs Hobart Paper No. 101.
(iii) "From the Dole Queue to the Sweatshop" by H. Neuburger. Low Pay unit Pamphlet No. 30.
(iv) "Wages Councils Part 2: Views on Reform": Industrial Relations Review and Report; Report No. 290.

Factory Inspectors

Miss Boothroyd asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many factories in the west midlands were visited by factory inspectors for each of the last five years for which records are available; what percentage this figure represents of the total number of factories in the area; and whether he is satisfied with the present number of factory inspectors in post in the west midlands.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: It is not possible, without disproportionate time and cost, to separate the number of factories from the total number of premises visited by factory inspectors in the last five years.

The number of premises visited by factory inspectors in the west midlands during each of the last five years and the percentage of total premises this figure represents are as follows:

	Number of visits	Percentage of visits in relation to total number of premises in the area Per cent.
1980	15,013	Figures not obtainable
1981	9,050	18
1982	12,958	31
1983	15,232	24
1984	14,030	17
1985*	2,392	6

* To date.

I am satisfied with the number of factory inspectors in post in the west midlands.

Noise Pollution

Mr. Flannery asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many prohibitions, improvement notices and prosecutions on noise problems have been taken since the start of the recent campaign.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The relevant figures sought in each case, from the start of the campaign on 1 October 1983 to the latest date readily available, are:

Two prohibition notices (up to 30.4.1984)
Sixty two improvement notices (up to 30.4.1984)
and one prosecution (up to 31.12.1984).

The answer covers the activities of Her Majesty's Factory Inspectorate, Her Majesty's Agricultural Inspectorate and Her Majesty's Mines and Quarries Inspectorate, although the notices concerned were in each case issued by Her Majesty's Factory Inspectorate.

Departmental Staff

Mr MacKenzie asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many people were employed in his Department's offices in Scotland in 1979; and what is the latest available figure.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: 5,084 staff were employed in the Department's offices in Scotland at the end of February 1979, compared with 6,050 at the end of February 1985.

Apprenticeships

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many young people were undertaking craft apprenticeships in the engineering industry on *(a)* 31 December 1979 and *(b)* 31 December 1984; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison [*pursuant to his reply*, 5 March 1984, c. *473*]: The information is not available in the precise form requested. However, the engineering industry training board estimates that the number of young people undertaking engineering craft apprenticeships was 61,000 for the training year from September 1979 to August 1980, and 37,500 for the last complete training year, to August 1984.

The numbers entering traditional apprenticeships will become increasingly irrelevant as a measure of the real level of skills training being undertaken by industry because of both the reform of existing arrangements and the substantial provision of initial skills training now taking place under the youth training scheme.

Youth Training

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Employment how he calculates his figure of £146 million to be incurred by the Department of Employment as a result of changes announced in the Budget; and if he will list the specific programmes which are to benefit.

Mr. Peter Morrison [*pursuant to his reply*, 26 March 1985]: No figure of £146 million has been quoted in connection with these changes.

However, £140 million is being provided based on the estimated cost in 1985-86 of the expansion by 100,000 places of the community programme.

ENERGY

Tidal Energy Projects

Mr. Nicholls asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the prospects for tidal energy projects.

Mr. David Hunt: The current study of a Severn barrage, jointly funded by Government and the Severn Tidal Power Group, is to establish the technical and financial viability of a private sector barrage from Brean Down to Lavernock Point.

I have recently received a proposal from the Severn Tidal Power Group, jointly with Wimpey Major Projects, to extend the group's current study to include a barrage at the English-Stones line which is just downstream of the existing Severn bridge.

The proposed extension to the study will cost an additional £220,000 and the expanded group have asked for a 50 per cent. contribution from the Government. I have decided that it would be worth while to carry out the proposed study, and subject to agreement on the terms and conditions of contract, matching funds will be provided from my Department's non-nuclear R and D budget, up to a total of £110,000.

Although the STPG has completed most of its work on the Brean Down to Lavernock Point barrage, the report will now include an examination of the technical and financial viability of a private sector barrage on the English-Stones line and a comparative analysis of both barrages. The final report should be available by the end of the year.

Financial support for this extended study will be given on the understanding that there is no Government commitment beyond the study.

The Severn Tidal Power Group, comprising Sir Robert McAlpine and Sons, GEC Power Engineering, Taylor Woodrow Construction, Northern Engineering, and Balfour Beatty will now include Wimpey Major Projects Ltd., representing Wimpey/Atkins, and W. S. Atkins will carry out part of the study on the English-Stones line. I am pleased that this development has made this latest initiative on the Severn barrage possible.

In addition to the extension to the Severn study, I announced to Parliament on 11 March that I had agreed in principle to make a contribution towards funding a £40,000 study of a Mersey barrage to refine cost and engineering estimates. I have decided that my Department will provide up to about 20 per cent. of the cost of the study.

In January 1984, Binnie and Partners were asked by my Department to undertake a preliminary study of small-scale tidal energy. Specific sites were examined as a means of reaching a view of the potential of this resource and to identify factors affecting the energy output and cost of energy from small tidal sites. Copies of the Binnie reports are being placed in the Libraries of the Houses of Parliament.

North Sea Gas

Mr. Rowlands asked the Secretary of State for Energy what estimate he has made of the number of jobs created by the development of the 45 gas fields which the British Gas Corporation assessed would be needed to exploit United Kingdom North sea reserves; and how many additional jobs there will be as a result of his decision to cancel the Sleipner contract.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: Many thousands of new jobs will flow from new projects at both the construction and servicing stages. I am confident that British industry is sufficiently competitive to attract a high proportion of the available orders. The Sleipner decision will accelerate the development of United Kingdom gasfields and associated job creation.

Mr. Rowlands asked the Secretary of State for Energy what new pipeline systems will be required to develop United Kingdom gas reserves, in the light of his decision to cancel the Sleipner contract.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: The development of UKCS gasfields following the Sleipner decision is expected to result in the need for new pipelines. Some new projects will rely on spare capacity as it develops in existing pipelines. The precise pattern of new pipeline systems will emerge as new gasfield developments come forward.

NATIONAL FINANCE

EC (Spain and Portugal)

Mr. Forth asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the effect upon the costs of all institutions of the European Economic Community of the possible entry of Spain and Portugal to the Community.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The Commission has estimated that the total net cost of enlargement might eventually amount to some 0·1 to 0·2 percentage points of the VAT own resources base. Her Majesty's Government see no reason to dissent from this.

European Capital Market

Mr. Skeet asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer to what extent it is Her Majesty's Government's policy to establish a European capital market; and what has been the response of France, Italy and the Federal Republic of Germany.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The United Kingdom is in favour of the free movement of capital throughout Europe. Since the abolition of exchange controls in 1979, capital flows both into and out of the United Kingdom have been unrestricted. Overseas companies are thus free to raise capital in the United Kingdom capital market on the same basis as British companies. By contrast both France and Italy retain substantial exchange controls. The Federal Republic of Germany does not maintain exchange controls and is a supporter of the free movement of capital.

Self-employed Persons (Pensions)

Mr. Wrigglesworth asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will take steps to permit the self-employed to make provision for pension arrangements within the capital account of their business.

Mr. Moore: No.

EC (Economic Co-operation)

Mr. Alton asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what action his Department has taken or plans to take to increase economic co-operation between the United Kingdom and other European Community member states.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Although the right of initiative strictly rests with the Commission, European Community member states are always exploring ways to improve economic co-operation, and Her Majesty's Government as a whole take a leading part in this. The United Kingdom is particularly anxious to see the development of a genuine internal market covering services as well as goods, and is supporting Commission proposals to bring this about. The Prime Minister at Dublin welcomed the Commission's annual economic report, which calls for member states to act together to increase growth and reduce unemployment. This question will be discussed at the European Council this week.

Manufactures

Mr. Gould asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for the United Kingdom and the principal industrial countries the increase between 1955 and 1983 in consumer prices and export prices for manufactures as a percentage of the increase in producer/wholesale prices together with the corresponding figures for the period 1978 to 1983.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Data for consumer prices, export prices for manufactures, and producer prices covering the period requested can be found in the IMF's "International Financial Statistics, 1984 Yearbook".

Income Tax

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer at what annual level of income a single person begins to pay less income tax than in 1979 following the Budget changes.

Mr. Moore: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Double Glazing Companies

Mr. Adley asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the level of total tax receipts from double glazing companies for the 12 months prior to implementation of value added tax on double glazing, and for the 12 months thereafter.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret that the information is not available, since figures of taxes paid by sectors of industry are not compiled at this level of detail.

Civil Servants (Pay)

Mr. Robert C. Brown asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the average salary for civil servants in the executive officer grade for each year since 1973 in current prices and constant 1983-84 prices.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 March 1985, c. *100*]: Average salaries for civil servants are not readily available over this period. The following table gives the maximum and minimum of the executive officer pay scale as at 1 July for each year since 1973 both in cash and in real terms. The figures take no account of changes in tax and employees' National Insurance contributions which, of course, affect take-home pay.

Year	Salary on 1st July		Salary in 1984 prices*	
	Minimum†	Maximum	Minimum†	Maximum
1973	951	2,288	3,575	8,601
1974	1,387	2,782	4,495	9,016
1975	1,885	3,670	4,918	9,575
1976	2,198	3,983	4,922	8,920
1977	2,329	4,182	4,501	8,082
1978	2,549	4,579	4,549	8,171
1979	2,831	5,043	4,455	7,936
1980	3,775	6,745	5,035	8,997
1981	4,069	7,247	4,850	8,637
1982	4,262	7,700	4,677	8,452
1983	4,546	8,078	4,771	8,478
1984	4,728	8,492	4,728	8,492

* In 1984 prices.
† Minimum of entry scale for period 1973-79 inclusive; minimum of main scale thereafter.

PRIME MINISTER

Public Expenditure

Mr. MacKenzie asked the Prime Minister (1) if she will cause to be published in the *Official Report* a table showing for the last year for which figures are available the sums of money spent on *(a)* roads and road improvement, *(b)* sewerage, *(c)* new housing, housing repairs and house modernisation, *(d)* hospital and health service building works, *(e)* education building, *(f)* new works on airstrips, *(g)* harbours and repairs and *(h)* modernisation of such facilities;

(2) if she will cause to be published in the *Official Report* a table showing for the last year for which figures are available the sums spent on *(a)* roads and road improvement, *(b)* sewerage, *(c)* new houses, housing repairs and house modernisation, *(d)* hospital and health service building work, *(e)* education building, *(f)* new work on airstrips, *(g)* harbours and repairs and *(h)* modernisation of such facilities in Scotland.

The Prime Minister: I shall reply to the right hon. Member shortly.

Falkland Islands

Mr. MacKenzie asked the Prime Minister if she will cause to be published in the *Official Report* a table showing for the last year for which figures are available the sums spent on *(a)* roads and road improvement, *(b)* sewerage, *(c)* new houses, housing repairs and house modernisation, *(d)* hospital and health service building work, *(e)* education building, *(f)* new work on airstrips, *(g)* harbours and repairs and *(h)* modernisation of such facilities in the Falkland Islands.

The Prime Minister: Relevant expenditure against the commitments of £15 million for rehabilitation and £31 million for development announced in 1982 was as follows in 1983-84, the last year for which firm figures are available:

	£1 million
Roads and road improvements	1·1
New houses, housing repairs and modernisation	1·9
Education building (school hostel)	0·2

Expenditure on harbour improvements in 1983-84 was confined to the first stage of a consultancy, at a cost of £14,299.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Church Commissioners (Questions)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Lord Privy Seal if he will take steps to restore oral questions to the Member answering for the Church Commissioners to a three-weekly rota rather than a six-weekly rota; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Biffen: No. With the appointment of the Paymaster General on 10 September 1984 it was necessary to provide time on the question roster for questions addressed to the Paymaster General. Following discussions through the usual channels it was decided that this could best be achieved by varying the times for questions to the Member answering on behalf of the Church Commissioners.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Housing (Modernisation)

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many housing estates or groups of houses have been modernised in the constituency of Newry and Armagh since 1976; and if he will list them.

Mr. Chris Patten: This is a matter for the chairman of the Housing Executive, who has advised me that records are not available in the form requested for the period prior to the regionalisation of the Housing Executive's operations in 1980. Since then general modernisation schemes have been carried out to 323 dwellings as follows:

Location	Number of dwellings
Rural cottages in County Armagh	65
Mournview Park, Tandragee	19
Camlough Park, Bessbrook	34
St. Brigids Park, Newry	14
Navan Terrace/Crescent, Armagh	51
Montague Villas, Tandragee	4
Doctors Hill Millvale, Bessbrook	12
Camlough/Meigh/Forkhill	28
Callanbridge, Armagh	13
Crannard Gardens, Newry	12
Lisanally/Lonsdale, Armagh	71

In addition, individual elements of modernisation such as rewiring, insulation, re-roofing or heating improvement have been carried out to a further 4,707 dwellings in the area.

Hypothermia

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many elderly people died as a result of hypothermia in Northern Ireland in the last three years for which figures are available; and how many of these deaths occurred during the six months winter period in each of these years;

(2) what percentage of those elderly people who have died as a result of hypothermia in each of the last three years for which figures are available were over the age of 65 years.

Mr. Chris Patten: The information is as follows:

	1981	*1982*	*1983*
Number of deaths (all over 65 years of age)	18	9	10
Number of deaths which occurred in the period January to March or October to December	14	9	9

Note:
Figures for 1983 are provisional.

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many deaths of elderly people in the last three years for which figures are available were indirectly attributable to hypothermia or involved elderly patients dying soon after recovery from hypothermia.

Mr. Chris Patten: The information is not available in the form requested.

Housing Executive

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the total cost of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive's activities in the current and the last financial year; and what figures in respect of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive are available to indicate *(a)* the dwelling stock, *(b)* the collectable rent which should have been received from tenants, *(c)* expenditure on repairs and maintenance of stock, *(d)* expenditure on new buildings, *(e)* expenditure on rehabilitation of stock, *(g)* expenditure on salaries and administration, *(h)* expenditure on grants to the private sector, *(i)* expenditure incurred on interest charges and *(j)* grant received from the Department of the Environment.

Mr. Chris Patten: The available information is as follows:

Total cost of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive's activities 1983/84 £446·6M, 1984/85 £522·3M (estimated).

	£ million (estimated)
(a) Effective dwelling stock	175014 (at December 1984)
(b) Gross collectable rent (dwellings and garages)	131·3
(c) Expenditure on housing and grounds maintenance	49·1
(d) Expenditure on new housebuilding	89·7
(e) Expenditure on improvement of the existing stock	67·8
(f) Expenditure on supervision and management	33·4
(g) Expenditure on House Renovation Grants	58·5
(h) Expenditure on Loan Charges	157·2
(i) Grant from the Department of the Environment	169·2

Remanded Persons

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the average period of remand without bail in each of the following cases involving accomplice witness's evidence: *(a)* persons convicted, *(b)* persons acquitted and *(c)* persons who were released as a result of such evidence being retracted; and how these figures compare with those for persons charged with terrorist-type offences on the basis of evidence other than accomplice evidence.

Mr. Scott: Information is not available in the form requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Alachlor

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if his Department has studied recent cancer investigations made by the Environmental Protection Agency in the United States of America, relating to the herbicide alachlor; if this pesticide is in use in the United Kingdom; and what plans he has to issue a warning to users.

Mrs. Fenner [*pursuant to her reply*, 22 February 1985, c. *638*]: The advisory committee on pesticides has now recommended a review of the data supporting the use of Alachlor. The recommendation was made in the light of a request to the manufacturer by the United States authorities for new studies, made on the grounds that the original data submitted in the 1960s had become out-of-date. The case is therefore separate from the issue of fraudulent data originating at IBT, which has also caused concern. The replacement data package has been received in the United Kingdom and is under study.

TRANSPORT

Sealink

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether the sale of Sealink was covered by the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 (SI 1794).

Mr. Ridley: BR sold Sealink UK Ltd. by selling the entire share capital of the company. I am advised that the regulations would not apply in those circumstances, since the change in ownership of the company did not disturb existing terms of employment with Sealink UK Ltd.

Road Transport (Deregulation)

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received from the Manchester Council for Voluntary Services about his proposals for deregulating current road transport systems; what reply he is sending; if there is any action he will be taking; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: I have received a letter from the Manchester Council for Voluntary Services expressing concern at the Government's proposals for the bus industry. My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State has replied explaining the benefits of our proposals.

I shall send the right hon. Gentleman a copy of the reply which says that our proposals will mean a new lease of life for the bus industry. We are going to give operators a chance to show what they can do in a free market. But responsible public controls and financial assistance will continue. There is to be no end to subsidy, no end to concessionary fares, no end to safety controls. There will be a system of registration to ensure reliable services. Above all, there will be better services for the passenger and better value for the tax and ratepayer.

Mr. Robert B. Jones asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he will announce detailed proposals for the allocation and adminstration of the transitional bus grant which was announced in the White Paper, "Buses", Cmnd. 9300.

Mr. David Mitchell: My Department has today written to various representative organisations explaining in detail our proposals for paying this grant. Following the answer given to my hon. Friend, the Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman) on 14 January, at column 5, we have considered further how to define rural areas for this purpose. Our letter proposes that grant should be payable from 1 April 1986 on all mileage run outside larger urban areas as measured by data provided by the Office of Population, Censuses and Surveys and the Registrar General, Scotland. In the light of work by the Transport and Road Research Laboratory, and representations by hon. Members, we have concluded that such mileage within metropolitan countries should be eligible for grant.

Grant will not be payable in any rural areas within London, because the Transport Bill's proposals for deregulation do not apply to London. We are inviting views on whether our proposed definition of larger urban areas as those with populations of 25,000 or more is the most appropriate.

Train Services (Timekeeping)

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 21 March, what information he has as to the breakdown *(a)* by regions and *(b)* by diesel or electric locomotives of the percentage of trains which ran late in 1984.

Mr. David Mitchell: I understand from British Railway's that the information is as follows:

	On time Per cent.	*On time or less than 5 minutes late* Per cent.	*Over 30 minutes late** Per cent.
Eastern Region	73·8	89·2	3·6
London Midland Region	79·9	90·4	3·4
Western Region	64·3	82·1	3·0
Southern Region	76·1	92·0	1·1
Scottish Region	84·7	91·2	4·5
WEIGHTED TOTAL	77·0	90·5	2·8

* Class 1 trains only (that is, all inter-city services, Scottish express services and some long distance provincial services).

Statistics on punctuality standards by traction types are not readily available.

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 21 March, what information he has as to the basis upon which British Rail calculates the figures relating to the punctuality of trains; an if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: I understand that British Rail compiles its punctuality statistics by analysing data on all passenger train arrivals at terminating stations. There are records for each terminating station held by the station supervisors. Statistics are then collated at area, regional and then headquarters level.

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 21 March, what information he has as to the principal causes of the late running of trains in 1984; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: I shall write to my hon. Friend shortly.

BR (Snow Hill Tunnel)

Mr. Shersby asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received from British Rail on the re-opening of the Snow Hill tunnel to link Blackfriars and Farringdon stations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: British Rail submitted its proposal for reopening the Snow Hill tunnel to my right hon. Friend on 8 January. Some aspects of the scheme are still being discussed with BR, but we hope to be able to reach a decision shortly.

WALES

Cancer and Leukaemia

Mr. Harvey asked the Secretary of State for Wales whether levels for cancer and leukaemia along the coast of north Wales are higher than elsewhere in the Principality.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: In the 1974-78 quinquennial report of the Wales cancer registry it was noted that both Clwyd and Gwynedd had elevated rates of registrations for all cancers combined when compared with other areas in Wales. This result remained when allowance was made for the differing age and sex structures of the areas concerned. Initial work on the quinquennial report covering the years 1979-1983 indicated that this differential persisted. However, in view of the registry's concern about the validity of the cancer registrations of residents of both Clwyd and Gwnedd a validation exercise has been initiated in recent months. This work requires the comparison of computer-listed entries against individual case notes, which necessitates the prior consent of the consultant involved in each case. Completion of this detailed analysis will take several more months. I shall write to my hon. Friend when the results are available.

Geriatric and Long-stay Trauma Beds

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales what changes there have been over the past *(a)* 12 months and *(b)* 24 months in the availability of (i) geriatric beds and (ii) long-stay trauma beds in each of the health authorities in Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information is given in the following table:

Average daily available beds at 30 September

Health Authority	Geriatrics			Traumatic and orthopaedic surgery*		
	1984	1983	1982	1984	1983	1982
Clwyd	564	567	563	161	173	162
East Dyfed	389	394	402	97	106	106
Gwent	648	638	611	171	167	186
Gwynedd	401	400	401	66	68	63
Mid Glamorgan	844	834	807	298	287	296
Powys	248	248	239	—	—	—
South Glamorgan	470	464	445	274	303	304
West Glamorgan	460	463	466	211	214	215
Pembrokeshire	135	140	140	40	37	40

* Figures are not separately available for long-stay trauma beds.

ENVIRONMENT

Pocock *v.* Steele (Appeal Decision)

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to complete his consideration of the implications of the Court of Appeal decision in the case of Pocock *v.* Steele; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: My right hon. Friend hopes to reach conclusions soon about what action might be taken in response to the Court of Appeal's decision in this case.

Falklands Airport

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment to what strength standard the runway at the new Falklands airport at Mount Pleasant is being constructed.

Sir George Young: The runway is designed to meet the international load classification group 3 standard which is capable of taking wide-bodied jets such as Tristar and Boeing 747.

Rates Rebates (Disabled Persons)

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will exerise his powers under section 1(5) of the Rating (Disabled Persons) Act 1978 to increase rebates available under section 1 of the Act in the way it has been exercised in Scotland.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland has exercised his powers to maintain the level of relief available to disabled people in Scotland following the recent revaluation there. But there is no need for such an adjustment in England and Wales where the rateable values on which relief for disabled people is calculated remain valid for the life of the current valuation list.

Green Belt Land (Hillingdon)

Mr. Shersby asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the approximate area of green belt land in the London borough of Hillingdon; and how much such land has been lost to development in the most recent five-year period for which figures are available.

Mr. Macfarlane: In its written evidence to the House of Commons Environment Committee in the spring of 1984, the London borough of Hillingdon indicated that the borough contained 4,872·5 hectares of the metropolitan green belt. Between 1965 and 1982, 127·5 hectares had been released for development, including areas for sand and gravel working which will eventually be restored to form green belt land again.

Housing (Management)

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has ever refused a local authority permission to transfer the management of part of its housing stock to tenant co-operatives.

Mr. Gow: No.

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will bring forward legislative proposals to give local authority tenants the right to manage all or part of their estates by tenant managment co-operatives.

Mr. Gow: Workable agreements between local authorities and tenant management co-operatives require goodwill on all sides. A statutory right would be counter-productive; but I hope that all local authorities will consider most sympathetically suggestions made by tenants to secure better and more responsive management through co-operatives.

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has to which local authorities have transferred part of the management of their housing stock to tenant co-operatives in the past 10 years.

Mr. Gow: According to my information, Birmingham city council, Rochdale borough council, the Greater London council, and the London boroughs of Haringey, Islington, Kensington and Chelsea, Lambeth, Lewisham, Southwark and Wandsworth have transferred housing management functions for part of their stock to tenant co-operatives in the past 10 years.

Waste Disposal

Mr. Shersby asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will initiate discussions with the manufacturers and distributors of beverages sold in metal cans and with the tobacco companies whose products are sold in packets about measures to seek to encourage the public to dispose of the empty containers properly through refuse collection facilities.

Mr. Waldegrave: I shall answer this question shortly.

Crown Suppliers

Mr Thornton asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has for the future of the Crown Suppliers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Patrick Jenkin: A review will start shortly with the following terms of reference:

"To consider the future of The Crown Suppliers and in particular whether it would be in the public interest to transfer to the private sector the activities, or part thereof, at present undertaken by that organisation; if so, how this might be achieved during the life of the present Parliament; if not, to recommend whether any change of status within the public sector would assist The Crown Suppliers in meeting their objectives."

The review team will be led by an official from the Cabinet Office with representatives from the Treasury and The Crown Suppliers. Advice from a merchant bank will be sought as and when necessary.

The decision about the future of the organisation will take account of the views of the staff and their union representatives who will be fully consulted during the course of the review.

Water Research Centre

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will list the studies commissioned from the Water Research Centre by his Department in: *(a)* 1979, *(b)* 1980, *(c)* 1981, *(d)* 1982 and *(e)* 1983, respectively; and if he will place copies of these reports in the Library;

(2) if he will list the titles of the projects commissioned by his Department from the Water Research Centre which are in the process of completion; and if he will undertake to place copies of the reports of these projects in the Library within a month of their completion.

Mr. Macfarlane [*pursuant to the reply*, 16 February 1984, 279-281]: I have today placed copies of the final contract research report on the infectivity of taenia eggs after sludge treatment, as at E2 on the reference list, in the Library.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Repatriation of Prisoners Act

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will be laying the order bringing into operation the Repatriation of Prisoners Act.

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. and learned Friend made an order on 25 March appointing 15 April 1985 as the day on which the Act will come into force. We plan to ratify the Council of Europe convention on the transfer of sentenced persons before the end of April.

Citizenship

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he takes to satisfy himself that the administrative arrangements in respect of those cases where a man's right to remain in the United Kingdom is dependent upon a successful application for citizenship by his wife do not result in delays in processing the woman's application, where both parties have the same reference number and file, which may be in use or required by different divisions of his Department simultaneously.

Mr. Waddington: I am satisfied that the arrangements for directing applicants' files to the point at which they are most urgently needed avoid unnecessary delay to those concerned.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will review the administration procedures for processing citizenship applications.

Mr. Waddington: Improvements in the last year have already reduced delays. Average waiting times for all naturalisation cases fell from 21 months, in March 1984, to 12 months by the end of December. Over the same period average waiting times for entitlement registrations fell from 14 months to 10 months. We are satisfied that procedures are kept under continuing review and modified as necessary.

Departmental Achievements

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list his Department's principal achievements since 1979.

Mr. Brittan: We have introduced and pursued a coherent and balanced strategy covering all the main areas of the Department's work.

We have implemented a series of legislative and administrative measures in pursuit of our framework of policies for dealing with the problem of crime, enhancing the effectiveness of the criminal justice system and strengthening public confidence in it.

We have greatly strengthened the police service. On 31 December 1984, there were 120,573 police officers and 38,898 civilian staff, so that the total manpower available to the police service had increased by 10,400 since December 1979. The Metropolitan police had 26,766 police officers and 13,645 civilian staff on 31 December 1984, an increase of 5,000 in the same period. The recruitment of civilians for administrative work has released more police officers for operational duties.

In November 1983 I invited chief officers of police and police authorities to review their objectives and priorities and to ensure that resources are allocated, and police and civilian manpower are deployed, in ways which will most effectively and efficiently secure those objectives and priorities. I have asked Her Majesty's Inspectors of Constabulary to monitor how the guidance in the circular is being implemented, and also to ensure that examples of good practice are widely disseminated. Substantial improvements in efficiency have been made in forces, including the redeployment of several hundred police officers to operational duties, the revision of shift systems to ensure maximum cover when it is most needed, greater involvement of uniformed officers in the investigation of crime, and more imaginative use of special constables, especially for crime prevention duties.

Public support for the police is essential. Section 106 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 came into effect on 1 January 1985; it requires arrangements to be made in each police area for obtaining the views of the public on policing and their co-operation in preventing crime. This reinforces the guidance issued by my predecessor in 1982 to improve consultation between the community and police, designed to encourage full discussion of issues of local concern and to strengthen community action in support of the police, especially in tackling crime.

We have strengthened preventive action against crime in a number of ways. In 1982 the Department convened an interdepartmental group to consider the reduction of crime. Subsequently provision was made within the urban programme for funding preventive initiatives; a major seminar was held to encourage local preventive action and, in January 1984, a joint departmental circular issued with police and local authority support. We have established a standing conference on crime prevention. A crime prevention unit was set up in 1983 and we are reviewing training for crime prevention. The first national conference of crime prevention panel representatives for 12 years was held in Cardiff last October.

In the light of the report by Sir Lawrence Byford, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary, into the Yorkshire Ripper case, my Department has assisted the police in developing new procedures and improved training for the investigation of a series of major crimes. We have developed for the police service a specification for a computerised major inquiry system (HOLMES) which will be used by all forces in the handling of major investigations.

We have continued to assist the police service in tackling serious disorder and in avoiding injuries to police officers by making available new protective equipment and supporting a thorough re-examination of training and tactics; and by the implementation of a comprehensive public order training programme. This programme of work proved its value in the 1984-85 miners' dispute, when the police service faced the most serious, sustained an widespread campaign of violence, intimidation and public disorder which has been witnessed for many years. The Government gave the police their full support in the action they took to maintain order, to protect miners an their families from intimidation, and to ensure that those who wished to exercise their right to go to work were able to do so.

I have recently completed the review of public order law and related legislation which was initiated by my predecessor in 1979. The Government intend to announce the conclusions of the review in a White Paper which will be published shortly.

Legislation has been enacted to enhance both the powers available to deal with terrorism and the safeguards for the citizen under the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

We have introduced legislation to provide a clear statutory framework for the authorisation and control of the interception of communications for limited but important purposes in the public interest, and to provide effective safeguards and remedies against abuse.

Revised and strengthened Home Office guidelines on the use of equipment in police surveillance operations have been issued and made public, and new Home Office guidelines on the work of special branches have been issued and, for the first time, made public.

In the light of Lord Scarman's report, my Department has taken forward, in conjunction with the police and local authorities, a thorough review of police training, including new programmes, to equip officers to deal with all section of the public in a sensitive and effective way; to prepare new entrants better for their responsibilities as police officers; and to enhance the training given to other ranks of the service. Two specific achievements in the area are the new and extended programme of police probationer training, which was brought into operation in January 1984 and, in the fields of community and race relations training for the police, the establishment of an independent training support centre at Brunel university.

The Police and Criminal Evidence Act, which received Royal Assent in October 1984, modernises and clarifies the powers available to the police for the investigation of crime and, at the same time, provides new safeguards for the citizen. It rationalises and modernises the law on evidence in criminal proceedings. It establishes new arrangements for dealing with complaints against the police, strengthening the independent element in the investigation of serious complaints and making possible the informal resolution of minor cases.

In the Criminal Justice Act 1982 we strengthened the powers of the courts do deal with offenders, particularly those under the age of 21. To maintain public confidence in the measures taken to deal with crimes of violence, we made it known that people sentenced to life imprisonment for certain particularly heinous kinds of murder will normally be detained for at least 20 years; and we have severely restricted the grant of parole to prisoners sentenced to more than five years' imprisonment for offences of violence or drug trafficking. At the same time we have put in train measures to divert from custody those guilty of less serious offences, and have reduced the minumum qualifying period for parole from 12 to six months.

We have given priority to the provision of adequate resources for the courts and other services dealing with offenders, while taking steps to increase the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of these services.

The number of probation officers in field posts has increased from 4,673 on 30 June 1979 to 5,463 on 31 December 1984; over the same period the number pf probation ancillaries increased from 788 to 1,310. We have issued a statement of national objectives and priorities for the probation service, as a basis on which local services can construct their own plans and ensure that their own resources are deployed to the best effect.

We have opended 48 new attendance centres, including 16 senior centres.

We have introduced legislation to establish a Crown prosecution service, to make further provision for the payment of costs in criminal cases and to provide for the introduction of time limits in criminal proceedings.

We publushed in February a Green Paper on extradition and have opened negotiations with Spain with a view to re-establishing extradition arrangements.

We have established, under Home Office chairmanship, the ministerial group on the misuse of drugs to review and develop the Government's overall strategy for tackling drug misuse. Barbiturates have been brought under the control of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 and consultations are taking place on the detailed changes necessary to enable us to ratify the United nations convention of psychotropic substances 1971. We are supporting private Members' Bills to increase to life imprisonment the maximum penalty for trafficking in drugs such as heroin and cocaine and to limit the blatant sales of solvents to young people for misuse. We have also made clear our determination to find more effective ways of depriving drug traffickers of the proceeds of their crimes and have announced our intention to introduce legislation in this Parliament to provide for the confiscation of the proceeds of crime.

We have enabled local authorities to control the spred of sex shops and sex cinemas. We have given assistance with measures designed to restrict indecent displays, extend licensing controls to commercial cinema clubs, and establish a system of classification for video recordings which will deal with the problem of "video naties."

We have strengthened and clarified the powers of the courts to make compensation orders. We have revised and extended the criminal injuries compensation scheme and announced our intention to introduce legislation in this Parliament to place it on a statutory footing. We have participated in the preparation of the Council of Europe convention on the compensation of victims of violent crimes. We have given financial support to the National Association of Victims Support Schemes, and we have provided funds for experimental projects in repatriation by offenders to victims of their crimes.

In the Repatriation of Prisoners Act 1984, we have provided powers for the transfer of prisoners to and from the United Kingdom to enable them to serve their sentences in their homes countries. We have participated in the prepatriation of the Council of Europe convention on the transfer of sentenced persons.

We have continued to improve management and efficiency in the prison department and in particular have taken steps to forge better lines of communications and accountability within the prison service.

Under the expansion programme for prison staffing announced last year, the number of serving prison officers has risen to 18,400.

We have continued the major programme of new prison building and refurbishment of the existing prison estate. An additional two new prisons have been added to the programme during the past year making a total of 16 new establishments currently under construction or design. Over the past four years, the programme has produced some 3,000 new inmate places.

We have restructured the young offender custodial system with the provisions of the Criminal Justice Act 1982.

We have applied many of the features of the experiment with tougher regimes in detention centres in a new consistent regime for the whole detention centre system which took effect on 6 March 1985.

We have maintained a firm and fair immigration control. In 1984, fewer people were accepted for settlement than in any year since control of Commonwealth immigration began in 1962. The British Nationality Act 1981 has brought nationality law up to date and created a new British citizenship for those who belong to this country. A White Paper (Cmnd. 9183) announced improvements in the handling of applications for British citizenship and reduced fees for the majority of applicants. We have continued our efforts to promote good community relations and to create a society in which there is equality of opportunity, rights and responsibilities.

In accordance with the provisions of the Broadcasting Act 1981, a fourth television channel has been established and new arrangements made for Welsh broadcasting. Legislation has been enacted to provide for the establishment of the Cable Authority and the development of cable systems providing both entertainment and other (including inter active) services. Legislation has also been enacted to provide for direct broadcasting by satellite. Local radio continues to expand and legislative provision has been made for the basis of an independent national radio service. Proposals for community radio are being developed.

The Data Protection Act has been passed and will enable the United Kingdom to ratify the Council of Europe convention on this matter.

We have reviewed our civil defence preparations, increased the resources available for them, brought into operation in December 1983 new regulations requiring local authorities to play their full part in civil defence planning, and in October 1984 appointed a civil defence adviser to monitor local authorities' progress and advise them.

We have introduced a major Representation of the People Bill which, amongst other things, extends absent voting rights to holidaymakers and to many British citizens abroad.

We issued, in May 1983, a White Paper on scientific procedures on living animals (Cmnd. 8883), which set out proposals for major new legislation in this field. These proposals would modernise and extend the law so as to provide more effective protection for animals used for the purpose of scientific research.

A committee of inquiry was set up to consider proposals to amend the Shops Acts. We are currently considering its report.

We have introduced a system of annual performance reviews which ensures that each part of the Home Office has an agreed programme of work and objectives to enable the Department's strategic aims to be achieved.

Heroin Addicts

Mr. Lawler asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many known heroin addicts there are in the Bradford area in each year of the period 1980 to 1984 and what were the amounts of illegal drugs seized in each year in Bradford.

Mr. Mellor: The available information relates to police force areas and is given for the West Yorkshire police force area in the following tables. Information for 1984 is not yet available.

Drug addicts notified to the Home Office during the year as addicted to heroin

West Yorkshire	*Number of persons*			
	1980	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*
Addicts not previously notified	10	9	20	23
Addicts first notified in an earlier year	3	3	7	5
Total	13	12	27	28

Seizures [1] of controlled drugs in the West Yorkshire police force area by drug type

West Yorkshire

Drug type	1980		1981		1982		1983	
	Number	Quantity [2] (grammes)	Number	Quantity [2] (grammes)	Number	Quantity [2] (grammes)	Number	Quantity [2] (grammes)
Class A drugs:								
Cocaine	4	5·7	2	0·6	—	—	5	1·0
Dextromoramide	5	2·7	—	—	2	[3]—	—	—
Dipipanone	6	0·3	2	0·2	11	[3]—	3	[3]—
Heroin	4	7·7	9	72·4	12	13·2	26	363·7
Methadone	4	0·9	3	0·6	—	—	1	0·1
Morphine	8	19·2	7	519·1	3	1·3	5	2·2
Opium	4	11·3	2	0·7	2	2·1	4	1·5
Pethidine	5	22·4	2	7·2	1	0·1	2	0·5
LSD	9	[3]—	5	[3]—	7	[3]—	6	[3]—
Other Class A drugs	4	0·5	3	0·1	2	0·3	3	19·0
Class B drugs:								
Cannabis	97	1,236·6	130	2,349·0	164	2,685·0	145	3,166·9
Cannabis plants	69	[4]1,036	82	[4]1,264	68	[4]480	66	[4]654
Cannabis resin	86	5,557·9	141	2,620·8	253	4,707·1	338	9,767·8
Cannabis liquid	5	227·8	4	[3]—	1	0·1	5	4,741·3
Amphetamine, Dexumphetamine, Levamphetamine	20	21·5	23	35·2	28	122·2	67	132·3
Methylamphetamine	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other Class B drugs	3	3·4	3	1·9	—	—	1	[3]—
Class C drugs:								
Methaqualone	6	77·3	4	12·3	2	4·8	2	8·8
Other Class C drugs	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

[1] As the same seizure can involve more than one drug type, rows cannot be added together to produce totals.
[2] Seizures of unspecified quantities are not included.
[3] Less than 1/20 gramme.
[4] Number of plants seized.

Immigration

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the latest figure for the number of men refused permission to Britain because it is considered that their primary purpose in getting married is mainly or partly to achieve entry to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Waddington: Eight hundred and ninety husbands and fiancés were refused entry clearance in the Indian sub-continent in 1984 solely on the grounds that the primary purpose of the marriage was to obtain admission to the United Kingdom, and 90 were refused partly for this reason. Corresponding information for countries outside the Indian sub-continent is not available.

Chief Constable of Merseyside

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what duties on behalf of his Department have sent the chief constable of the Merseyside county police force to Washington DC; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The chief constable of Merseyside was a member of a group, including representatives of Government Departments and the police service, who visited Washington last week. The purpose of the visit was to discuss with representatives of the United States Government matters of mutual interest related to our efforts to counter terrorism, as part of our regular contacts with the United States and other Governments on these matters.

Suicides

Mr. Corrie asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give details of all recorded suicide verdicts by coroners' courts involving deaths of girls under 16 years of age in England and Wales between 20 December 1984 and 11 January 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is not collected centrally by the Home Office. However, I understand that the information is collected by registrars of births, deaths and marriages, and published figures will be available by about June 1985 from the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys. Because of the time required to complete inquests, final figures will not be available until about spring 1986.

Children (Carers)

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress he has made with his review of the arrangements for the disclosure of information to prospective employers about any relevant criminal background of persons seeking to work with children in a paid or voluntary capacity; when he expects to conclude it; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brittan [*pursuant to the reply*, 28 February, c. *258*]: I have established a review, which is under way with the following terms of reference:

"To devise a system under which information about the unsuitability by reason of criminal background of people seeking positions where they will have substantial opportunities for access to children can be communicated to those bodies which

are responsible for engaging such people, whether in a paid or voluntary capacity, and to those who have responsibility for authorising or licensing such people to occupy such positions."

I have asked those conducting the review to canvass the views of those working in the education and child care field, to complete the report by the end of June and to submit the report in the form of a plan of action which can be implemented swiftly.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Overseas Aid

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proportion of United Kingdom overseas aid is administered by the United Kingdom Government; what proportion is administered through other agencies; and if he will list them.

Mr. Raison: Through the Overseas Development Administration the Government are responsible for the administration of all overseas aid programme funds. Currently just over 40 per cent. is being channelled through multilateral aid organisations, including the European Community; the exact proportion varies from one financial year to another. The multilateral organisations we support are listed in the Supply Estimates presented to Parliament each year. Parts of the bilateral aid programme and certain detailed administrative procedures are implemented by the Commonwealth Development Corporation, the British Council and the Crown Agents.

DEFENCE

National Parks

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Defence what new acquisitions have been made of land in each national park by his Department since the publication of the Nugent committee's report; and what is the percentage of such land in each park and in total which is currently owned or occupied by his Department.

Mr. Lee: The information is as follows:

National Park	*Acquisitions in acres*	*Acquisition as percentage of National Park*	*Ministry of Defence total land-holding as percentage of National Park*
Brecon Beacons	16	0·005	0·16
Lake District	353	0·06	0·29
Peak District	379	0·11	0·11
Snowdonia	14	0·003	0·14
Dartmoor	—	—	1·53
Northumberland	—	—	21·73
North Yorks Moors	—	—	0·73
Yorkshire Dales	—	—	0·24
Pembroke Coast	—	—	4·60
Exmoor	—	—	—

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Defence what percentage of land *(a)* in each national park and *(b)* in total has been released by his Department, since the publication of the Nugent committee's report.

Mr. Lee: The percentage of Ministry of Defence land released since the publication of the report of the Defence Lands Committee is as follows:

	Per cent.
Brecon Beacons	1·82
Lake District	0·25
Peak District	0·26
Snowdonia	6·68
Dartmoor	7·15
Northumberland	0·01
North Yorks Moors	0·04
Yorkshire Dales	0·47
Pembroke Coast	4·25
Exmoor	—

The release of this land amount to 0·84 per cent of defence land holdings in the national parks. Defence land holdings overall have been reduced by 7·6 per cent. since April 1973.

Victoria Barracks, Windsor

Dr. Glyn asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give some indication as to when the demolition of Victoria barracks, Windsor, will be completed; and if he will make a statement on the progress of this project.

Mr. Lee: The demolition of the existing barracks at Windsor should be completed by the end of July this year. My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces will provide a further progress report as soon as possible.

NATO

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the number and role of British armed forces' facilities in Northern Ireland currently dedicated wholly or in part to honouring Britain's obligations under the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation; and what are the developments of these and any new facilities which are planned within the foreseeable future.

Mr. Lee: One radar facility in Northern Ireland is dedicated wholly to a NATO role. There are no plans for the development of this facility or the setting up of any new facilities in the foreseeable future.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Death Statistics

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give, for the latest year for which figures are available, the number of deaths in Great Britain where the cause of death or a contributory factor was *(a)* alcohol consumption, *(b)* tobacco consumption, *(c)* heroin consumption, *(d)* cocaine consumption, *(e)* cannabis consumption and *(f)* solvent abuse.

Mr. John Patten: Information is not available in the form requested. However, the tables give the available information for deaths in Great Britain in 1983 specifically associated with alcohol, heroin, cocaine and cannabis consumption. Limited additional information is given for deaths associated with alcohol consumption. Deaths from road traffic accidents are not shown, but it is estimated that about one road death in five (ie about 1,200 a year for Great Britain) occurs in accidents where at least one person had consumed alcohol over the legal limit.

The Royal College of Physicians estimated in 1981 that at least 100,000 deaths per year in the United Kingdom were related to smoking.

Exact figures of deaths associated with solvent abuse are not collected centrally but 77 confirmed cases were identified in Great Britain in 1983 where solvent abuse was either the underlying or a contributory cause of death. The statistics for England and Wales incorporated in these two totals were obtained from research carried out by St. George's hospital medical school.

Table 1

Deaths associated with alcohol consumption
Great Britain 1983

ICD	Cause of death	Number of deaths
Deaths specifically associated with alcohol consumption		
291	Alcoholic psychoses	8
303	Alcoholic dependence syndrome	211
305·0	Non-dependent abuse of alcohol	139
425·5	Alcoholic cardiomyopathy	27
571·0 to 571·3	Chronic liver disease and cirrhosis, alcohol reported as cause	1,064
Other deaths		
571·4 to 571·9*	Chronic liver disease and cirrhosis, alcohol not specifically reported as cause	1,551
	Accidental deaths with any mention of alcohol (excluding road traffic accidents)	†387

* Some deaths in this category are thought to be associated with excessive alcohol consumption.

† England and Wales only. Data not available in this form from Scotland.

Table 2

Deaths from drug dependence or non-dependent abuse from heroin, cocaine and cannabis
Great Britain 1983

ICD	Cause of death		Number of deaths
304·0	Morphine type	dependent	68
304·7		with other drugs	14
305·5		non-dependent	1
304·2	Cocaine	dependent	1
305·6		non-dependent	—
304·3	Cannabis	dependent	—
305·2		non-dependent	—

Table 3

Deaths from poisoning from heroin, cocaine and cannabis
Great Britain 1983

Poisoning	Heroin	Cocaine	Cannabis
Accidental	10	3	—
Suicidal	3	—	—
Undetermined*	—	1	—
Homicidal	—	—	—

* Whether accidentally or purposely inflicted.

Manpower Information

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will describe the content, timing and frequency of reports of manpower information from health authorities to his Department.

Mr. John Patten: The principal manpower information relating to directly-employed staff in the National Health Service in England which this Department receives from health authorities is as follows:

1. *Non-medical manpower*
Information is collected quarterly about staff in post at 31 December, 31 March, 30 June and 30 September, in almost all cases as extracts from Regions' payroll computers. Included are contractual data (payscale, type of occupation, place of employment, hours worked etc.) and non-contractual information (sex, marital status, date of birth etc.) together with a record identifier (payroll number or National Insurance number) needed by health authorities to trace records rejected by validation checks. Much of the information is presented under standard codes. The same information is collected each quarter to simplify the collection arrangements but certain data items (eg occupation codes) are subjected to more detailed checking in the September returns, and as a result information for this quarter can be made available in greater detail than for other quarters.

2. *Medical and dental staff*
(a) Information is collected each year on medical and dental staff employed in the hospital and community services, the returns relate to staff in post at 30 September; included are contractual data (grade, specialty, type of contract, number of sessions or hours worked etc.) and other information (name, sex, General Medical Council number, date of birth etc.).
(b) Details of vacant consultant and senior registrar posts are collected in respect of 30 September.
(c) An aggregated return giving whole-time equivalents of staff in post is collected in respect of 31 March each year.

3. *Other returns and reports*
These include:
(a) Information on medical and non-medical staff working in mental illness and mental handicap hospitals and units is collected annually at 31 December as part of a general return on these facilities; the manpower data relate to staff in post at the previous 30 September and include details of numbers and whole-time equivalents by occupational category.
(b) Information on pathologists and technicians working in cervical cytology is collected annually at 31 December as part of a more general return on cervical cytology facilities. The manpower details include numbers, whole-time equivalents and type of contract.
(c) This Department receives information supplied by health authorities to the Department of Employment on time lost through industrial action.
(d) Health authorities include some manpower information in the planning documents they present to the Department in accordance with circular HC(84)2. This information generally relates only to staff in post by broad staff group for the periods relevant to the particular document.

Redundant Mineworkers

Mr. Maude asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will arrange for expedited appeal hearings for mineworkers who have taken voluntary redundancy under the redundant mineworkers payments scheme and who have been disqualified from receiving unemployment benefit.

Mr. Newton: We are aware of the considerable number of appeals by redundant miners disqualified for receiving unemployment benefit, which are awaiting hearing by social security appeal tribunals. In most of these cases the hearing has been adjourned to await the decisions of a Tribunal of Social Security Commissioners to whom a number of similar cases have been referred. We have no power to intervene in these matters but I understand that arrangements have been made to expedite the hearing of these cases by the Commissioners and that this is now due to take place on 16-17 April 1985. The Commissioners' decisions will provide authoritative case law for the guidance of the social security appeal tribunals who will then be in a position to arrange re-hearings of their outstanding appeals as soon as practicable.

Mr. Maude asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many mineworkers who took voluntary

redundancy under the redundant mineworkers payments scheme during the recent dispute have been disqualified from receiving unemployment benefit.

Mr. Newton: The information is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Residential Care Changes (Disregard)

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether, in view of the amplified guidance given in paragraph 6 of local authority circular (85)2 concerning the exercise of discretion in assessing charges for residential care where a person who has been caring for the resident continues to live in the resident's former dwelling, he will take steps to have the appropriate social security resource regulation altered to bring about an equivalent extension of disregard for social security purposes.

Mr. Whitney: We have no plans to amend the supplementary benefit regulations which currently provide that the value of a claimant's property shall be ignored where it is occupied either in whole or in part by an aged or incapacitated relative or by the spouse where the couple are no longer regarded as living together because of the permanent admission of one of them to hospital or residential accommodation. The treatment of capital will, however, be one of the matters to be considered in the light of the social security review.

Tobacco Industry (Voluntary Agreement)

Mr. Sims asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) whether his voluntary agreement with the tobacco industry on cigarette advertising includes an undertaking that the industry will not encourage smoking among children;

(2) what steps he takes monitor the effectiveness of his voluntary agreement with the tobacco industry on cigarette advertising; and what information he has about the incidence of breaches of the agreement.

Mr. John Patten: Within the voluntary agreement on cigarette advertising, which has the protection of young people as a specific aim, the cigarette companies undertake to observe the cigarette advertising code of practice. This includes a requirement that cigarette advertisements should not seek to encourage young people to smoke. The voluntary agreement as a whole is carefully monitored by this Department, and the cigarette code by the Advertising Standards Authority.

Mr. Sims asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what action he proposes to take in the light of a recent incident in Covent Garden in which a group purporting to represent the tobacco industry distributed to children material bearing slogans encouraging them to smoke.

Mr. John Patten: We have no direct knowledge of the incident to which my hon. Friend refers, but if he cares to write to me with details I will gladly look into it.

Housing Finance

Mr. Bruce asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* for each district and islands council in Scotland in respect of the years 1984-85 and 1985-86 the estimated amounts to be refunded to that authority by the Government in respect of expenditure on housing benefit (rent rebates) to tenants of local authority houses.

Mr. Whitney: On the basis of interim subsidy claims from each of the district and island councils in Scotland, we estimate that the amount of housing benefit subsidy for rent rebates payable for 1984-85 will be as follows:

Authority	*Rent rebate subsidy £ million*
Aberdeen	5·4
Angus	3·0
Annandale	1·1
Argyll-Bute	2·6
Badenoch	0·2
Banff and Buchan	2·8
Bearsden	0·3
Berwickshire	0·6
Caithness	0·8
Clackmannan	2·1
Clydebank	2·2
Clydesdale	1·9
Cumbernauld	0·7
Cumnock	2·2
Cunninghame	5·2
Dumbarton	2·4
Dundee	8·4
Dunfermline	4·6
East Kilbride	0·3
Midlothian	2·2
Monklands	5·4
Moray	2·1
Motherwell	7·4
Nairn	0·2
Nithsdale	1·6
North East Fife	2·1
Orkney	0·2
Perth and Kinross	3·2
Renfrew	7·3
Ross and Cromarty	1·5
Roxburgh	1·7
Shetland	0·3
Skye and Loch	0·1
Stewartry	0·7
Stirling	2·3
Strathkelvin	1·7
East Lothian	3·1
Eastwood	0·3
Edinburgh	16·8
Ennick and Lauder	1·0
Falkirk	6·2
Glasgow	40·6
Gordon	0·9
Hamilton	4·7
Inverclyde	3·8
Inverness	1·4
Kilmarnock	3·6
Kincardine	0·5
Kirkcaldy	6·2
Kyle and Carrick	4·4
Lochaber	0·8
Sutherland	0·4
Tweeddale	0·3
Western Isles	0·9
West Lothian	4·6
Wigtown	1·6

Comparable information for 1985-86 is not yet available.

NHS (Consultants)

Mr. White asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the length of the average working week for consultants in the National Health Service for each year since 1970.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: This information is not available. The majority of National Health Service consultants have full-time contracts which make them responsible for the care of their patients on a 24-hour continuing basis. This commitment is not readily quantifiable in terms of time, and records are not kept.

Nurses (Back Pain)

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish immediately the recent research report into back pain amongst nurses; when the research was commissioned; when the report was distributed; who is assessing the research; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The research was commissioned by our Department from Surrey university in March 1981. A report was received in August 1984 on which the views of independent assessors were sought. These are currently being assessed within the Department. The report is lengthy and makes several wide-ranging recommendations which need to be carefully considered before we can decide whether and, if so, what further useful guidance should be given to health authorities.

I share the right hon. Member's wish to reduce the incidence of back injury and pain amongst National Health Service staff. I shall let him have a fuller reply when we have completed our consideration of the report.

Babies (Drugs)

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the information he has as to the drug products recommended for babies which sell at or above a level of 10 million doses a year, indicating their use.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Although we know how many prescriptions are issued by general practitioners for individual products, we have no information on the proportion of those prescriptions which is for use in babies; nor do we know the numbers of such products which are sold off-prescription. We therefore cannot say what products sell 10 million doses or more a year for use in babies.

Mr Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will request the Committee on Safety of Medicines to require companies expecting to sell a drug at a level of or above one million doses annually for babies, to provide evidence of safety at a higher level than normal, and such that adverse reactions are no more frequent than one in a thousand babies given the product; and if he will estimate the number of babies that would need to be included in a research study to produce statistically sound evidence of safety at this level.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Safety data are assessed with reference to the proposed uses of individual drugs. It would not be appropriate to set rigid minimum standards for such data.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when, and in what context, the Committee on Safety of Medicines considered the safety of products containing dicyclomine apart from those in May 1983 and July 1983 referred to in the answer on 11 March, *Official Report*, columns *72-73*; what was the nature of the 36 adverse reactions reported to the Committee since 1969; and to what factors he attributes the large increase in the number of reports made in 1983 and 1984.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The safety of products containing dicyclomine was considered by the Committee on Safety of Medicines whenever an application for a relevant product licence was referred to them. In addition Debendox, which contained dicyclomine until 1982, was considered by the Committee on eight occasions between June 1978 and February 1983.

The adverse reactions involving babies under six months old reported to the committee as associated with dicyclomine products were: apnoeia; drowsiness; hyperventilation; rashes; oculogyric crisis; addiction; floppiness; convulsion; deafness; hyperactivity; syncope; stupor and dyskinetic movement. It is very important to note that a report does not necessarily demonstrate a causal relationship between the reaction and the drug concerned. We do not know why there was an increase in adverse reaction reports for these products in 1983 and 1984.

Chiropodists

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will place in the Library a copy of his Department's report on the question of status and use of the title chiropodist; when this report was made; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: No. We are currently considering advice from our officials following discussions, which were concluded last year, with the professional interests concerned on the question of protection of titles of all professions (including chiropody) covered by the Professions Supplementary to Medicine Act 1960. These discussions were concluded on the understanding that the advice would be confidential to Ministers and would not be published.

Departmental Staff

Mr. MacKenzie asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people were employed in his Department's offices in Scotland in 1979; and what is the latest available figure.

Mr. Whitney: On 1 March 1979 the Department employed 7,829 staff in Scotland. On 1 March 1985, 8,526 staff were employed.

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many persons were in receipt of supplementary benefit in each year since 1979 in Cumbernauld and Kilsyth.

Mr. Whitney: The Cumbernauld and Kilsyth constituency is covered by the Department's office at Cumbernauld. The number of persons receiving supplementary benefit from that office in December of each year since 1979 was:

	Number
1979	4,438
1980	5,235
1981	6,773
1982	8,296
1983	9,068
1984	*9,649

* The figures for December 1984 are only provisional at present.

Tranquillisers

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will list those bodies funded by his Department which are engaged in combating the side effects of tranquillisers, indicating the extent of such funding; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will establish training courses for general practitioners on the problems of the long-term use of tranquillisers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: I shall let the hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

NHS (Efficiency Prize)

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if any further progress has been made about the suggestion of an annual cash prize within the National Health Service for the best ideas brought forward by employees for increasing efficiency in all areas of the service.

Mr. John Patten: I am pleased to tell my hon. Friend that our Department, jointly with the *Health and Social Services Journal*, has arranged a national scheme under which prize money of £2,000 per annum will be offered for the best staff suggestions by NHS employees. Full details of the scheme is contained in this week's issue of the *HSSJ*. I will arrange for copies to be made available in the Library.

High Rent Area Authorisations

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the local authorities who have *(a)* requested and *(b)* received authorisation to operate a high rent area scheme (i) for public authority and private tenants, (ii) for public authority tenants, (iii) for private sector tenants and (iv) for class authorisations.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 5 March 1985, c. *515-6*]: When a local authority applies for a general high rent authorisation in either the private or public sector it is automatically treated as an application for authorisation in both sectors. The table lists at *(a)* those authorities which have requested high rent authorisations; and at *(b)* those authorities which have received authorisations in addition to the authorities listed in my hon. Friend's replies to the hon. Member for Derby, South of 30 October and 12 December 1984 at columns *957* and *535* respectively.

(a) Authorities which have requested authorisations

(i) *For council and private tenants generally:*

Barnet
Brighton
Bromley
Camden
Ealing
Eastbourne
Elmbridge
Epsom and Ewell
Guildford
Harrow
Kensington and Chelsea
Kingston Upon Thames
Rochester Upon Medway
Shepway
Spelthorne
Wealdon
Westminster
Windsor and Maidenhead
Woking

(ii) *For council tenants only:*

Arun
Basildon
Blaenau Gwent
Broxbourne
Cardiff
Central Lancashire
Enfield
Hammersmith and Fulham
Havant
Hillingdon
City of Liverpool
City of London
Medina
Middlesborough
Milton Keynes Development Corporation
Ogwr
Portsmouth
Radnor
Redbridge
Rhymney Valley
Northampton Development Corporation
Rushmoor
Southend
Sutton
Tamworth
Telford Development Corporation
Test Valley
Vale of Glamorgan
Wandsworth
Wimborne
Wokingham

(iii) *For private tenants only:*

Bath
Bristol
Canterbury
Gravesham
Hastings
Hove
Kingswood
Lewes
Reading
Reigate and Banstead
Rother
Sevenoaks
Surrey Heath

(iv) *For class authorisations:*

Argyll and Bute
Ashford
Berwickshire
Bolsover
Bristol
Clackmannan
Coventry
Dumbarton
Dundee
East Devon
East Lothian
Edinburgh
Etterick and Lauderdale
Gedling
Gordon
Hamilton
Kerrier
Leicester
Liverpool
Lochaber
Manchester
Merthyr Tydfil
Midlothian
Borough of Milton Keynes
Monklands
Moray
Newham
North East Fife

Nottingham
Penwith
Portsmouth
Renfrew
Richmond Upon Thames
Roxborough
Skye and Lochalsh
South Holland
Southwark
Stewarty
Stockton-On-Tees
Strathkelvin
Thamesdown
Trafford
Tweedale
Wandsworth
Wear Valley
West Oxfordshire
West Lothian
Western Isles
Wirral
Wrekin

(b) Authorities which have received authorisations

(i) *For council and private tenants:*
Epsom and Ewell
Ogwr
Rochester
Shepway

(ii) *For council tenants only:*
Arun
Broxbourne
City of Cardiff
Middlesborough
Northampton
Portsmouth
Redbridge
Rhymney Valley
Tamworth
Vale of Glamorgan
Wimbourne
Wokingham

(iii) *For private tenants only:*
Bristol
Canterbury
Gravesham
Hastings
Kingswood
Lewes
Reading
Reigate and Banstead
Rother
Surrey Heath
Sevenoaks

(iv) *For class authorisations:*
Ashford
Bolsover
Bristol
Clackmannan
Coventry City
Dumbarton
Dundee
East Devon
Edinburgh
Etterick and Lauderdale
Gedling
Leicester City
Liverpool
Lochaber
Milton Keynes Borough Council
Monklands
Newham
Nottingham
Penwith
Portsmouth
Renfrew
Richmond
South Holland
Stewarty
Southwark
Stockton-On-Tees
Thamesdown
Tweedale
Wear Valley
Wandsworth
West Oxfordshire
Wirral

Earnings-related pension

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what would be the total saving in each year until 2,000 from the abolition of the state earnings-related pension scheme.

Mr. Whitney: [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 March 1985, c. 92.]: The costs of the state earnings-related pension scheme depend crucially on the pattern of earnings levels and upratings, especially in the longer term future. The estimated costs of the earnings-related component payable with retirement pension, invalidity pension and widow's benefit, on the basis of the central assumptions described in "Population, Pension Costs and Pensioners' Incomes", expressed in constant prices at 1984-85 levels are as follows:

	£ billion
1985-86	¼
1990-91	1
1995-96	2¼
2000-01	4½

Figures for the intervening years are not readily available. These sums do not represent the savings which would arise from abolition of the state earnings-related pension scheme since they take no account of the decisions which would need to be taken about the treatment of additional component already in payment or the treatment of accrued rights.

Medicines Act (Infringements)

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services on how many occasions during 1984 his Department has *(a)* investigated infringements of the Medicines Act, *(b)* warned companies that the Act was being infringed and requested remedial action and *(c)* prosecuted companies for infringement of the Act; and why publicity is not given to such investigations.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke [*pursuant to his reply*, 26 March 1985]: During 1984 our Department investigated 234 alleged infringements of the Medicines Act. In154 cases we took the view that a breach of the Act had occurred. This view was conveyed to all the individuals or companies concerned and remedial action requested in each case. No prosecutions resulted from these investigations in 1984; there has been one, so far, in 1985.

Except where a court detemines otherwise these cases are allegations of breaches of the Act only notwithstanding that they may be supported by the opinion of our Department. We cannot publicise these cases but we do ensure that, in addition to any publicity in the press, the results of prosecutions are publicised to licence holders.

Benzodiazepines

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has to tighten the scheduling of benzodiazepines; and if he will make a statement on their scheduling under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971.

Mr. Mellor: I have been asked to reply and will do so as soon as possible.

SCOTLAND

School Closures

Mr. White asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many *(a)* primary schools and *(b)* secondary schools have closed in (i) Glasgow and (ii) Scotland since 1979.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The table following gives the numbers of schools operating in the public sector at the dates shown. This information is collected through the annual school census, which does not separately identify school closures or new openings.

		Primary	*Secondary*
1979	Scotland	2,530	445
	Glasgow	254	58
1984	Scotland	2,443	440
	Glasgow	239	56
Difference	Scotland	−87	−5
	Glasgow	−15	−2

The Scottish Education Department is making arrangements to collect and publish details of school closures and new openings separately in future.

Public Sector Dwellings

Mr. White asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the numbers of public sector dwellings which consist of *(a)* one or two apartments, *(b)* three apartments and *(c)* five or more apartments.

Mr. Ancram: The information requested is set out in the table:

Public Sector Dwellings (30 September 1984)

Number of Apartments	*Number of dwellings*
1-2	156,426
3	493,497
4	310,677
5 or more	38,068
All sizes	998,668

Free School Meals

Mr. White asked the Secretary of State of Scotland how many schoolchildren now receive free school meals in *(a)* Glasgow and *(b)* Scotland.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The latest information from the school meals census held in January 1984 is that 129,335 pupils in Scotland receive free school meals, of whom 33,791 pupils are in Glasgow.

Broadleaved Woodlands

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the number and area of broadleaved woodlands which was clearfelled by the Forestry Commission on its own estate in each of the years 1982-83, 1983-84 and in the current year to date; and what was the number and area of these woodlands which have been or will be replanted *(a)* purely with broadleaves, *(b)* with broadleaves and conifers containing a majority of broadleaves, *(c)* with broadleaves and conifers containing a majority of conifers and *(d)* not replanted with trees.

Mr. John MacKay: The information is as follows:

Year	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85 (to 31 December)*
Number of clearfellings	39	35	32
Total Area clearfelled (hectares)	133·1	122·9	77·3
(a) Replanted with broadleaves only			
Number of sites	31	22	18
Total Area (hectares)	93	54·7	33·6
(b) Replanted with broadleaves in the majority			
Number of sites	2	3	6
Total Area (hectares)	4·6	31	22·4
(c) Replanted with conifers in the majority			
Number of sites	5	9	7
Total Area (hectares)	27	31·2	20·3
(d) Not to be replanted			
Number of sites	1	0	1
Total Area (hectares)	8·5	0	1·0

The figures for replanting exclude one site of six hectares where low-grade broadleaves were felled and replaced by conifers in 1983-84.

In 19 of the 21 cases where broadleaves were felled and replaced by a mixture with conifers in the majority, the conifers were planted as a "nurse crop" to shelter the young broadleaved trees and will in due course be removed to leave broadleaved woods.

In the two cases where there was no replanting, the trees were felled to allow for public road schemes.

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will ask the Forestry Commission to meet the major voluntary conservation organisations to discuss the Broadleaves in Britain Review before 8 May 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: The conduct of the "Broadleaves in Britain" review is a matter for the Forestry Commission. My right hon. Friend is not prepared to require the commission to hold discussions with any particular bodies.

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many and which broadleaved woodlands which were clearfelled under licence and converted to agriculture between 1982 and the present day were the subject of consultation with *(a)* the Nature Conservancy Council, *(b)* the Countryside Commission, *(c)* a National Park Authority and *(d)* the relevant local planning authority in each year.

Mr. John MacKay: This information is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Departmental Staff

Mr. MacKenzie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people were employed by *(a)* the Scottish Office and *(b)* the Scottish Economic Planning Department in 1979; and how this compares with latest available figures.

Mr. Younger: The information requested is as follows:

	Number of staff (full-time equivalent)	
	1 January 1979	*1 March 1985*
Scottish Office	11,120	9,888
Scottish Economic Planning Department (renamed Industry Department for Scotland in 1983)	236	312*

* Includes 88 posts transferred from Department of Trade and Industry (Regional Development Grants Office, Glasgow) in November 1984.

Labour Statistics

Mr. MacKenzie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many people were employed in the textile industry in Scotland in 1979; and how this figure compares with the latest available figure;

(2) how many people in Scotland were employed in the production of Scotch whisky in 1979; and what is the latest up to date figure;

(3) how many people were employed in the electrical appliance industry in Scotland in 1979; and what is the current number;

(4) how many people in Scotland were employed in the shipbuilding and ship repairing industry in 1979; and how this figure compares with the latest available figures;

(5) how many people were employed in steelmaking in Scotland in 1979; and how this figure compares with latest available figures.

Mr. Younger: The estimated numbers of employees in employment in Scotland are set out in the table:

	1979	*1982*
Textile industry	50,100	32,500
Spirit distilling and compounding	23,400	18,800
Domestic type electricappliance industry	4,100	2,300
Shipbuilding and repairing	30,600	26,000
Iron and Steel manufacturing	22,700	13,800

The estimates are based on the census of production; those for 1982 are the latest available.

Mr. MacKenzie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people were employed in Scotland in 1979; and how this figure compares with the latest published figures.

Mr. Younger: The seasonally adjusted number of employees in employment in Scotland is estimated to have been 2,098,000 in June 1979 and 1,921,000 in September 1984. The latter estimate is provisional.

Mr. MacKenzie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many job vacancies were notified in 1979; and what is the latest available figure.

Mr. Younger: The number of vacancies notified to jobcentres in Scotland was 267,189 in 1979 and 259,777 in 1984., the latest year for which figures are available. The figures include vacancies notified under the community programme and the former special temporary employment programme.

Mr. MacKenzie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people were registered as unemployed at June 1979; and how many were registered at the latest available date.

Mr. Younger: I refer the right hon. Gentleman to my letter of 22 October 1984. The information requested is available in the House of Commons Library.

Mr. MacKenzie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people were employed in the coal mining industry in Scotland in 1979; and how this figure compares with the latest available figure.

Mr. Younger: The National Coal Board estimates its number of employees in deep-mined coal in March 1979 was 25,000 and in February 1985 was 14,900. Estimates for other employers in coal mining are not available for these dates.

Mr. MacKenzie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people in Scotland were employed in the microelectronics industry in 1979; and how this compares with latest available figures.

Mr. Younger: The latest available estimate of employment in the Scottish electronics industry is 42,500 in mid-1983. This compares with estimates from the census of employment of 37,300 in 1978 and 38,300 in 1981. This growth in employment reflects growth in new and expanding electronics plants, along with the reclassification of certain plants from the electro-mechanical and other industries to electronics.

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many jobs have been created; and how many have been lost in each year since May 1979 in each of the Scottish new towns.

Mr. Allan Stewart: This information is not available. However, estimates by development corporations of the numbers of jobs created and jobs lost in industry are set out in the table:

	1979-80	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*
Cumbernauld					
Jobs created	806	512	544	609	1,066
Jobs lost	611	1,662	1,816	559	600
East Kilbride					
Jobs created	599	587	874	820	1,110
Jobs lost	915	4,437	1,310	1,662	965

	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84
Glenrothes					
Jobs created	914	706	758	956	1,178
Jobs lost	624	1,933	915	1,100	753
Irvine					
Jobs created	1,208	224	439	882	900
Jobs lost	1,369	2,576	1,187	1,209	730
Livingston					
Jobs created	930	607	601	911	1,670
Jobs lost	965	1,133	1,108	802	740

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many jobs in the high technology industries have been created; and how many have been lost in each year since May 1979 in Cumbernauld new town;

(2) how many jobs in the food industry have been created; and how many have been lost in each year since May 1979 in Cumbernauld new town;

(3) how many jobs in the construction industry have been created; and how many have been lost in each year since May 1979 in Cumbernauld new town;

(4) how many jobs in the clothing industry have been created; and how many have been lost in each year since May 1979 in Cumbernauld new town;

(5) how many jobs in the distribution industry have been created; and how many have been lost in each year since May 1979 in Cumbernauld new town;

(6) how many jobs in the engineering industry have been created; and how many have been lost in each year since May 1979 in Cumbernauld new town;

(7) how many jobs in the paper and board industry have been created; and how many have been lost in each year since May 1979 in Cumbernauld new town.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. MacKenzie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many young people aged between 16 and 18 years of age were registered as unemployed at May 1979; and what is the latest available figure.

Mr. Younger: The analysis of unemployed persons by age and duration is undertaken quarterly in January, April, July and October. The information on the number of unemployed young persons aged 16 to 18 years at April 1979 and January 1985 is available in the House of Commons Library.

The figures are not directly comparable over the years, however, because of the change, in October 1982, from a registrant to a claimant based count.

Manpower Services Commission

Mr. MacKenzie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people were employed by the Manpower Services Commission in Scotland in 1979; and what is the latest available figure.

Mr. Younger: The number of staff employed by the Manpower Services Commission at 1 April 1979—the beginning of the operational year—and 1 March 1985, the latest date for which information is available, was 2,566 and 2,207, respectively.

Industrial Assistance

Mr. MacKenzie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how much money was distributed to Scottish companies in the form of selective financial assistance between May 1978 and May 1979; and what was the figure for 1983-84.

Mr. Younger: Payments of selective financial assistance totalled £12·2 million in the period May 1978 to April 1979, and £23·7 million in the period April 1983 to March 1984.

Regional Development Grant

Mr. MacKenzie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how much money was distributed by the Government to Scottish companies in the form of regional development grant between May 1978 and May 1979; and what was the figure for 1983-84.

Mr. Younger: Figures are not available for the period May 1978 to May 1979. Regional development grants totalling £107·3 million were paid in the period April 1978 to March 1979 and £142·9 million in the period April 1983 to March 1984.

Youth Unemployment

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the level of youth unemployment in each year since 1979 in Cumbernauld and Kilsyth.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Information on the number of unemployed young people aged under 18 in the Cumbernauld and Kilsyth jobcentre areas is available in the House of Commons Library for the period requested. However, the figures are not directly comparable due to the change to a claimant based count in October 1982.

New Towns (Housing)

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many houses were built in each of the new towns in Scotland in 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983 and 1984.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The information is as follows:

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
Cumbernauld	453	296	280	320	145	70
East Kilbride	148	261	263	125	374	288

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
Glenrothes	579	416	539	222	377	220
Irvine	574	193	571	115	174	120
Livingston	933	682	297	404	321	183

Suicides

Mr. Corrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of all recorded suicide verdicts by coroners' courts involving deaths of girls under 16 years of age in Scotland between 20 December 1984 and 11 January 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Younger: There are no coroners' courts in Scotland. Investigation into sudden, suspicious or unexplained death is a function of the procurator fiscal who may apply to the sheriff to hold a fatal accident inquiry to inquire into the circumstances of the death and make a determination as to the cause of death. The result of the fatal accident inquiry is notified to the Registrar General for Scotland.

No cases of the type specified had been notified to the Registrar General up to and including 26 March 1985.

Departmental Cash Limits

Mr. Corrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has any changes to announce in the cash limits for 1985-86 within his responsibility.

Mr. Younger: Yes. Further to my announcement of 7 March, at columns 1177-87, concerning the increase in domestic rate relief, the following table gives details of the revisions required to cash limits for 1985-86. The balance of provision has been raised by adjustment to the cash limit for Class XV, Vote 2 (by £0·5 million) and cash block SO/LA2 (by £10·5 million) prior to the amouncement of 1985-86 provision made on 19 March, at columns 446-67, and by extra savings arising from the operation of the grant penalty tariffs for local authorities in 1985-86. I expect the cash limit reductions to be offset by carry forward to 1985-86 of capital underspending in the current year, although this cannot be confirmed or announced until outturn figures are available later in the year.

Vote	*Original cash limit £000*	*Reduction £000*	*Revised cash limit £000*
XV, 3 Regional and general industrial support, Scotland	138,002	5,200	132,802
XV, 6 Roads, Transport and environmental services, Scotland	152,267	4,800	147,467
XV, 14 Prisons, hospitals and community health services, etc., Scotland	1,521,717	5,000	1,516,717

Electricity Boards

Mrs. McCurley asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has considered the progress made by the South of Scotland Electricity Board and the North of Scotland Electricity Board in implementing the recommendations made by Coopers and Lybrand Associates and Arthur Young McClelland Moores & Co., on their respective reviews of the boards' activities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Younger: Both boards reported to me on their progress at the end of 1984, in accordance with the terms of my statements of 29 July 1983, at columns 610-11, and 26 October 1983, at column 146. A copy of each board's final response to the consultants' recommendations has been placed in the Library.

Following my consideration of the South of Scotland Electricity Board's interim response to the Coopers and Lybrand audit, my Department has had further discussions with the board on a number of recommendations which the board felt unable to accept in their entirety. Amongst these were the extension of the role of the board's audit committee to embrace efficiency reviews and the best means of presenting alternatives strategies in corporate planning. The board has now established an efficiency review committee, involving non-executive board members, to undertake the role suggested for the audit committee in relation to efficiency and value for money reviews. I am at present considering the committee's first report which was submitted at the end of 1984. On presenting information on alternative strategies, the board has agreed to prepare papers each year reviewing the strategic options open to it. The SSEB has also made progress on its proposals for fuel purchases which were supported by Coopers and Lybrand in that it has reached a new trading agreement with the British Nuclear Fuels Limited on the supply of nuclear fuel and is negotiating new arrangements for coal purchasing from the National Coal Board.

The North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board has accepted and is implementing all the recommendations relating to computers and the operation and maintenance of hydro-electric plant. It has also accepted in principle almost all the recommendations relating to management accounting and, following detailed examination by working parties, is incorporating them in new systems and procedures. Following discussions with my Department, the NSHEB, too, has established an efficiency review committee.

I am satisfied with both boards' progress in implementing the consultants' recommendation and their efforts to achieve maximum benefits from the reports.

Aspects of each of the boards' operations are to be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission during 1985 and the terms of reference will take account of the efficiency audits.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 28 March 1985

HOME DEPARTMENT

Firearms

5. **Mr. Sedgemore** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he is satisfied that the rules on the use and issue of firearms provide adequate guidance to Metropolitan police officers.

Mr. Brittan: I am satisfied that the Metropolitan Police rules on the issue and use of firearms fully reflect the guidelines sent to all chief officers of police in March 1983. I am not at present aware of a need for any changes; but every incident in which police firearms are discharged in the Metropolitan Police District is investigated thoroughly and any inadequacy in the rules revealed by such an investigation would be remedied at once.

Concessionary Television Licences

12. **Mr. Phillip Oppenheim** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any plans to change the system of concessionary television licensing.

Mr. Giles Shaw: We have no current plans to do so.

Crime Statistics

13. **Mr. McKelvey** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the 1984 crime figures released by his Department.

30. **Mr. Bermingham** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has to deal with the increase in crime shown by the 1984 figures.

33. **Mr. Haynes** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has to combat the rising crime rate.

Mr. Brittan: Recorded crime in England and Wales increased by 8 per cent. in 1984, following a reduction of one per cent. in 1983. This is a disappointing figure, which makes it all the more important to continue pursuing our clear strategy of strengthening the police, extending the prison building programme, and having a penal policy designed to ensure and maintain public confidence in the criminal justice system.

32. **Mr. Fatchett** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will make a statement on the rise in crime and the fall in the clear up rate of crime shown by the figures released by his Department for 1984.

Mr. Mellor: On the first part of the question I refer the hon. Member to the reply given earlier today to a question from the hon. Member for Kilmarnock. On the second part, although it is disappointing that the proportion of offences cleared up has fallen in relation to the total recorded, the police cleared up more crimes in 1984 than in any previous year. Vigorous action is being taken to increase the effectiveness of the police in this and other aspects of their duties.

43. **Mr. Ashton** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the increased number of violent assaults recorded in England and Wales during 1984.

Mr. Mellor: Statistical bulletin 6/85 published by the Department on 12 March shows that the police recorded about 114,000 offences of violence against the person in 1984, 3 per cent. more than in 1983. This increase is less than the increase in recorded crime as a whole but any offence of this kind is a serious matter and my right hon. and learned Friend has made clear his determination to give all possible support to the police in preventing and detecting such offences and in ensuring confidence in the sentences which the courts impose on those who are convicted. Action in all these areas is being vigorously pursued.

Mr. John Mark Taylor asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about crime statistics for the West Midlands county.

Mr. Mellor: The number of notifiable offences recorded by the police force in each police area in 1984 was published on 12 March in Home Office Statistical Bulletin, 6/85. Between 1983 and 1984 the number of notifiable offences recorded by the West Midlands police increased by 8 per cent., the same percentage increase as for England and Wales as a whole.

Overseas Visitors

14. **Mr. Janner** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many passengers sought entry into the United Kingdom as visitors during the last six months of 1984; of these, how many and what percentage were *(a)* granted admission as visitors immediately, *(b)* given temporary admission and *(c)* refused; and how many and what percentage of these persons in each category were from (i) the United States of America, (ii) the Commonwealth, (iii) the Indian subcontinent and (iv) the New Commonwealth and Pakistan.

Mr. Waddington: As the answer contains a number of figures I will, with permission, circulate it in the *Official Report*. But only one in 1,000 passengers of all nationalities seeking to enter the United Kingdom is refused leave to enter.

The information is as follows:

The table below provides the readily available information on persons refused leave to enter and persons admitted as visitors.

During the whole of 1984 a total of 8,527 persons were given temporary admission under paragraph 21 of Schedule 2 to the Immigration Act 1971. Information on those refused leave to enter and those temporarily admitted does not specifically identify those who sought entry as visitors, and information is not available on the nationality of those temporarily admitted.

Table—Persons admitted as visitors to the United Kingdom or refused leave to enter, and percentages of all non-EC visitors admitted or of all non-EC persons refused leave to enter—July-December 1984

	U.S.A.		Commonwealth		Indian Subcontinent		New Commonwealth and Pakistan		All nationalities (excluding EC)	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Persons admitted as visitors	1,299,000	38	700,000	20	128,000	4	387,000	11	3,410,000	100
Persons refused leave to enter	429	4	4,699	47	2,252	23	5,412	55	9,845	100

MI5 (Director General)

21. **Mr. Bidwell** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will arrange for the newly appointed director general of MI5 to meet hon. Members annually.

Mr. Brittan: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to a question from the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) on 19 March at column *463*.

Coal Industry Dispute

22. **Dr. Godman** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the effect of the policing of the miners' dispute on the number of arrests made by police in London.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis tells me that the number of persons arrested in the Metropolitan Police district in 1984 was 4 per cent. lower than in 1983 but, within this total, the number arrested for notifiable offences was 5 per cent. higher. It is not possible to say to what extent these figures may have been affected by the redeployment of officers associated with the miners' dispute.

Immigration (Primary Purpose Rule)

23. **Ms. Clare Short** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many men with wives and children living in the United Kingdom have been refused entry to Britain under the primary purpose rule.

Mr. Waddington: Three hundred and ten husbands were refused entry clearance in the Indian sub-continent in the two years 1983 and 1984 solely because of the primary purpose rule, and 20 husbands were refused partly on this ground. Statistics are not kept of how many of these husbands had children living in the United Kingdom. Corresponding information for years earlier than 1983, and for countries outside the Indian sub-continent is not available.

Shops Acts

24. **Mr. Michael Brown** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many letters he has now received concerning the Auld report on shop hours.

54. **Mr. Watson** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the Government intend to reform the Shops Acts.

71. **Mr. Lyell** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received concerning the reform of the Shops Act 1950.

74. **Mr. Charles Morrison** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received concerning the reform of the Shops Act 1950.

Mr. Mellor: I refer my hon. Friends and my hon. and learned Friend to the reply given earlier today to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin).

Civil Defence

26. **Mr. Aspinwall** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his Department's estimated grant for civil defence for Mid-Glamorgan for 1985-86; and if he will provide a breakdown of the principal expenditure headings.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Department's estimate of grant for civil defence expenditure by Mid-Glamorgan is £37,185, and is based on the total estimated expenditure made by the council of £49,580. The expenditure relates solely to staff and administration costs.

37. **Mr. William Ross** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will try to encourage local authorities to take part in the warning and monitoring exercise Intex 85.

61. **Mr. Evennett** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he proposes to take to give further encouragement to local authorities to take part in the warning and monitoring exercise Intex 85.

63. **Sir Antony Buck** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how he proposes to ensure local authorities take part in the warning and monitoring exercise Intex 85.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I refer the hon. Members to the reply I gave to a question from the hon. Member for Bolton, West (Mr. Sackville) on 25 March at column *15*.

41. **Mr. Terlezki** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his Department's estimated grant for civil defence for South Glamorgan for 1985-86; and if he will provide a breakdown of the principal expenditure headings.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Department's estimate of grant for civil defence expenditure by South Glamorgan county council in 1985-86 is £89,067, and is based on the total estimated expenditure made by the council of £115,350. The estimate of grant is made up of £66,075 for staff and administration; £18,012 for emergency centres and communications; and £4,980 for training.

42. **Mr. Robert Banks** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to the number of full and part-time civil defence staff employed in South Glamorgan.

Mr. Giles Shaw: South Glamorgan county council employs three full-time emergency planning staff supported by an administrative assistant and a typist.

58. **Mr. Bevan** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how he monitors the way in which his Department's grant for civil defence for South Glamorgan has been spent in 1984-85; and if he will make a statement.

62. **Mr. Hubbard-Miles** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he takes to monitor the way in which his Department's grant for civil defence for Mid-Glamorgan has been spent in 1984-85.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Civil defence grant claims are scrutinised by the Audit Commission to ensure that they cover only expenditure on approved items and schemes. The Department is also monitoring the extent to which local authorities, including South Glamorgan and Mid-Glamorgan, have met their statutory civil defence obligations.

60. **Mr. Gerald Bowden** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what responsibility he holds for ensuring that the provisions of the Civil Defence Regulations 1983 are observed in South Glamorgan.

Mr. Giles Shaw: My right hon. and learned Friend is responsible for ensuring that all local authorities, including South Glamorgan county council, fulfil their statutory civil defence obligations.

35. **Mr. Bill Walker** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether there is a civil defence emergency centre in South Glamorgan.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Yes. The county council has an emergency centre co-located with that of the Cardiff district council.

Television Licence

28. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many letters he has received from the general public on the issue of the future cost of a television licence.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Some 1,150 members of the public have written during the current Session about an increase in television licence fees.

52. **Mr. Wainwright** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will maintain the licence fee for a monochrome television at its existing level.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The hon. Member will be aware from my right hon. and learned Friend's statement in the House yesterday about television licence fees that the monochrome fee has been increased from £15 to £18.

Drug Abuse

31. **Sir Edward Gardner** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what response the Government have had to their campaign to reduce drug abuse among young people.

Mr. Mellor: It is too early to judge the impact of the education and information campaign which the Government launched on 27 February. I understand from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services that there has been a heavy demand for the advice leaflets for parents, which we are issuing as the first stage of the campaign. The second stage of the campaign, which is expected to begin in mid-May, will be targeted at young people and will present the real consequences of taking heroin.

Mental Health Acts (Prisoners)

34. **Mr. Favell** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners whose sentences were due to end during 1984 were detained beyond the end of those sentences under the Mental Health Acts.

Mr. Mellor: Any restriction direction on persons transferred from Prison Department establishments to hospitals under the Mental Health Acts ceases to have effect on the expiration of their sentences and information about the subsequent discharge of such persons is not recorded centrally. Information regarding transfer of prisoners to hospitals on release from prison has been published annually in "Prison Statistics England and Wales" (Table 10.1 in the latest issue for 1983, Cmnd. 9363). Figures for 1984 are not yet available.

Drug Traffickers

36. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for reports from chief constables on the effectiveness of police action against drug traffickers.

Mr. Giles Shaw: My right hon. and learned Friend receives annual reports from each chief officer of police on the extent and nature of the drugs problem in his force area, sources of supply and force organisation to investigate drug misuse. Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary has recently emphasised to all chief constables in England and Wales the importance Her Majesty's Inspectors of Constabulary will be attaching to the effectiveness of drugs investigations in their annual inspections of polic forces and the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis has identified drug misuse as one of the two new operational priorities in his force strategy for 1985.

Heroin Abuse

38. **Mr. Portillo** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will make a statement about the level of heroin abuse.

Mr. Mellor: The Government are deeply concerned about the scale of heroin misuse, especially among young people.

There was an increase from 4,118 to 5,864 (approximately 42 per cent.) in the number of addicts notified to the Home Office in 1983, of whom some 80 per cent. were reported as being addicted to heroin, either alone or in combination with other drugs. Provisional figures suggest that the increase in notifications in 1984 was of the order of 20 to 25 per cent.

The Government are taking vigorous action, across a broad front, to combat the trafficking and misuse of all drugs, including heroin. The Government's overall strategy and its recent initiatives are described in a review ("Tackling Drug Misuse: A Summary of the Government's Strategy") which we are publishing today, copies of which are being sent to all hon. and right hon. Members.

Football Hooliganism

39. **Mr. Andrew MacKay** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to introduce legislation to deal with football hooliganism.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The urgent review which the Government are conducting of ways to deal with football hooliganism will include consideration of whether additional legislation is required.

66. **Mr. Yeo** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police officers have been injured while on duty at football matches since the current football season started.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Metropolitan police have readily available figures showing that so far this season 83 of their officers have sustained injuries while on duty at football matches. The "injuries" range from minor bruising to serious injuries requiring hospital treatment. Statistics for other police forces do not necessarily distinguish injuries sustained by police officers at football matches from injuries sustained elsewhere while on duty.

Air Weapons (Misuse)

40. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has assessed the value of the national media campaign at the end of 1983 warning against the misuse of air weapons.

Mr. Giles Shaw: We will assess the value of this campaign when the statistics on air weapons offences committed during 1984 become available later this year.

Prison Service

44. **Mr. Heddle** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to improve the efficiency of the prison service.

Mr. Mellor: As part of the Government's financial management initiative the prison service is committed to obtaining maximum value for money from all its resources of manpower, building, and plant. In particular prioritywill be given to ensuring that prison service staff are deployed to the best possible effect and with less reliance than at present on very high levels of overtime. Other measures designed to increase efficiency include the following:

(a) a system of annual performance reviews, which are being used to set management objectives and monitor performance across the service;

(b) better and more timely financial and management information from a computerised functional costing system (introduced in April 1983 and still being developed);

(c) a system of local budgets, targeted for implementation in regional offices and prison Department establishments from 1st April 1986 — to give greater responsibility to local management for the effective control of expenditure;

(d) establishment of a small Efficiency Branch which is currently conducting a review of personnel work in the prison service: the Branch will be responsible for identifying and taking forward other efficiency initiatives throughout the prison service;

(e) a strategy study of the information technology needs of the prison service over the next decade has been completed and studies are being undertaken in several specific areas in which computers can make significant improvements in operational efficiency and management effectiveness.

RAF Molesworth

46. **Dr. Mawhinney** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has had a request from the chief constable of Cambridgeshire to increase his establishment due to the extra demands of policing RAF Molesworth.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Cambridgeshire police authority has not applied for any permanent addition to its establishment but it has recently applied for five additional police posts on a supernumerary basis. My right hon. and learned Friend is considering the application in the light of advice from Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary, and the police authority will be informed of the outcome as soon as possible.

Life Sentence Prisoners

47. **Mr. Tom Cox** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number on 28 February of people serving life sentences in prisons in England and Wales.

Mr. Mellor: According to the records held centrally, which are approximate, on 28 February 1985 about 2,020 persons in Prison Department establishments in England and Wales were serving life sentences, including custody for life and detention during Her Majesty's pleasure or for life under section 53 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933.

51. **Sir John Farr** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average length of time a life prisoner now serves.

Mr. Mellor: The average time served under sentence in Prison Department establishments in England and Wales by those first released on licence from life sentences in 1984 was about 10½ years. There are wide variations in the periods served in custody from which this average is calculated and it does not take into account any time that may have been served in other custodial care before entering a Prison Department establishment. This average excludes those persons who have died in custody or been discharged for other reasons. Also it does not fully reflect the longest periods likely to be served by some of those given life sentences following the abolition of capital punishment in 1965, who have not yet been released.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many life sentence prisoners in the special categories created in October 1983 have been reviewed by the Home Office for parole eligibility under the new regulations.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if any life sentence prisoners in the special categories created in October 1983 have been referred either to the local review committee or the Parole Board for consideration for parole; and if he will state the results of any deliberations.

Mr. Mellor: The Parole Board has considered 14 such cases since 11 October 1983, all of which had previously been considered by the local review committee. In no case did the board recommend the prisoner's release on licence.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what preparation a life sentence prisoner receives in the last two years of a sentence prior to release.

Mr. Mellor: Life sentence prisoners with provisional release dates are prepared for release in a variety of ways, depending on the circumstances. Release is usually subject to the completion of a period in open conditions; and, in most cases, is also dependent on the satisfactory completion of a period on the pre-release employment scheme.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will now reconsider the cases of the four life sentence prisoners who were returned to closed conditions following his statement in October 1983 about parole policy.

Mr. Mellor: No.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many of the prisoners released in each of the years since 1960 after serving life sentences have since been convicted of further offences.

Mr. Mellor: Information on the reconvictions of those released on life licence in the years 1973 to 1983 is published in "Reconvictions and Recalls of Life Licensee:", Home Office statistical bulletin, issue No 3/85. Corresponding information for those released in previous years is not readily available.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the average length of custodial sentence by prisoners who were sentenced to life imprisonment and who were released in each of the years since 1960.

Mr. Mellor: The average time served under sentence in Prison Department establishments in England and Wales by those first released on licence from life sentences in 1980, 1982, 1983 and 1984 was about 10½ years and for those first released in 1981 was about 10 years. There are wide variations in the periods served in custody from which this average is calculated and it does not take into account any time which may have been served in other custodial care before entering a Prison Department establishment. This average excludes those persons who have died in custody or been discharged for other reasons.

Also it does not reflect the longest periods likely to be served by some of those given life sentences following the abolition of capital punishment in 1965, who have not yet been released. Corresponding percentages for earlier years could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Prison Officers (Overtime)

49. **Mr. Hayes** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about the amount of overtime worked by prison officers.

Mr. Mellor: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply which I gave to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Warwickshire, North (Mr. Maude) on 31 January at column 237.

Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis

50. **Mr. Maclennan** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last met the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis; what subjects were discussed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brittan: I last met the commissioner on 25 March, when we discussed a range of issues related to policing in the metropolis arising from my recent meetings with right hon. and hon. Members for constituencies in the Metropolitan Police district.

Prisoners (Psychiatric Treatment)

53. **Mr. Stephen Ross** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of the prison population have been diagnosed as being in need of psychiatric treatment; and of these how many are not receiving such treatment.

Mr. Mellor: The only available figures are the six-monthly returns from medical officers of prisoners whom they assess as suffering from a mental disorder as defined in part III of the Mental Health Act 1983. According to the census carried out on 31 December 1984, there were 282 such prisoners on that date. We are considering the need for research on the psychiatric characteristics of the prison population as a whole, including those who do not come within the terms of the Act. Substantial psychiatric resources are available for the treatment of prisoners who may be broadly described as mentally abnormal; it is for the medical officer concerned to decide what treatment is appropriate in a particular case.

Industrial Disputes (Police Operations)

55. **Mr. Hirst** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what operational lessons the police have learnt as a result of the miners' dispute; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given earlier today to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby).

Garage Forecourts (Alcohol Sales)

56. **Mr. Speller** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will seek powers to prohibit or discourage the granting of off licence sales for alcoholic beverages on premises situated on garage forecourts.

72. **Sir William van Straubenzee** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any proposals for the amendment of the licensing laws relating to the sale of alcohol at petrol-filling stations.

Mr. Mellor: The Government are very much concerned about the dangers of drinking and driving and are, therefore, reviewing the matter.

Public Order Review

59. **Mr. Tony Banks** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will publish his Department's review of public order.

Mr. Giles Shaw: My right hon. and learned Friend will announce the conclusions of the review of public order law as soon as possible.

Multi-occupied Houses (Fire Precautions)

64. **Mr. Loyden** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects the code of practice for means of escape in case of fire in muti-occupied houses to be made available to local authorities.

Mr. Giles Shaw: We hope to publish the final version of the code of practice later this year after a consultation process involving interested organisations, including the local authority associations.

Naturalisation

65. **Mr. Ron Davies** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many naturalisation applications have been refused in each of the last three years; and how many concern women whose husbands are living abroad with no right of entry to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Waddington: The total number of applications for naturalisation refused in each of the last three years is :

	Number of Applications
1982	1,121
1983	819
1984	1,247

The further information sought is not available.

Identity Cards

67. **Sir John Biggs-Davison** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent consideration has been given to the introduction of identity cards.

Mr. Giles Shaw: My right hon. and learned Friend receives suggestions from time to time that identity cards should be introduced but we do not consider that their introduction would be desirable.

Immigration Control (CRE Report)

68. **Mr. Madden** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what conclusions he has come to regarding the recommendations put forward by the Commission for Racial Equality in its report on immigration control procedures.

70. **Mr. Eastham** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will now make a statement on the recent report by the Commission for Racial Equality on immigration control procedures.

73. **Mr. Hoyle** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to complete his study of the recommendations in the Commission for Racial Equality report on immigration control procedures.

Mr. Waddington: I refer the hon. Members to the reply I gave to a question from the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Pavitt) on 28 February at column *248*.

Mr. Patchett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what guidance he proposes to issue to officials in his Department in the light of the Commission for Racial Equality report on immigration control procedures.

Mr. Waddington: The instructions to staff were being reviewed, and a new approach to training being developed, when this report was published. The views expressed by the Commission for Racial Equality will be taken into account in pursuing this work.

Visiting Forces Act (Drug Offences)

69. **Mr. Ashdown** asked the Secretary of State for the cHome Department whether he will take steps to gather and publish annually the number of occasions on which visiting forces in Britain involved in drug offences contravening British law have claimed primary jurisdiction for their nationals under the Visiting Forces Act in a way which has removed them from the jurisdiction of British courts.

Mr. Mellor: We are not satisfied that the collection of this information would be cost-effective or serve any practical purpose.

Licensing Laws

75. **Mr. Leigh** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if the Government have any plans to abolish the licensing laws.

Mr. Mellor: We have no such plans.

Crime Prevention

Mr. Rogers asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to increase financial support for crime prevention schemes following the increase in both violent and non-violent crime revealed by his Department's 1984 statistics.

Mr. Brittan: Financial support for crime prevention schemes is provided through the urban programme. It has been increased from £3·2 million in 1983-84 to approximately £6·3 million for 1984-85.

45. **Mr. Roger King** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what evidence he has to show that better crime prevention could lead to a reduction in burglaries and incidents of auto-theft.

57. **Mr. Sims** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent research has been undertaken by his Department into the contribution towards reducing crime levels which can be made by local crime prevention planning.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The crime prevention unit, which my right hon. and learned Friend established within the Home Office in November 1983, has undertaken a number of locally based research and development projects in conjunction with the police and other agencies into burglary, autocrime, and disorder associated with licensed premises. These projects have confirmed the value of locally planned initiatives against crime as recommended in the joint departmental circular on crime prevention of 30 January 1984. Reports on completed projects are available through the Home Office crime prevention unit.

48. **Mr. Corbett** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has to better assist victims of crime and encourage crime prevention.

Mr. Mellor: With regard to assistance for victims of crime, I refer the hon. Member to the recent Government reply (Cmnd. 9457) to the report of the Home Affairs Committee on compensation and support for victims of crime (HC 43). In addition, consideration is being given to possible improvements in the compensation powers of the criminal courts and in the arrangements for informing victims of the progress of prosecutions and for applying

for compensation orders; legislation is to be introduced during the life of this Parliament placing the criminal injuries compensation scheme on a statutory footing; and the United Kingdom is to ratify shortly the European convention on the compensation of victims of violent crimes.

With regard to crime prevention, I refer the hon. Member to the reply given earlier today to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Penrith and The Border (Mr. Maclean).

Drinking and Driving

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent consideration he has given to the deterrent aspects of current drinking and driving legislation; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Current drinking and driving legislation, which is contained in the Road Traffic Act 1972, as amended by the Transport Act 1981, is designed to deter possible offenders both by the severity of the maximum penalties and by the increased effectiveness of enforcement by the police. The maximum penalty for driving with excess alcohol contrary to section 6 of the 1972 Act, is six months imprisonment or a £2,000 fine (level 5 on the standard scale) or both. Disqualification is obligatory, for a minimum of 12 months, or of three years where the offender has been convicted of the offence within the previous 10 years.

One of the major objectives of the changes enacted in 1981, which were brought into force on 6 May 1983, was to increase the likelihood of drunken drivers being detected and successfully prosecuted. This was achieved by simplifying the procedures to be used by the police at the roadside and subsequently at the police station, including evidential breath testing. Following the introduction of the new provisions both the number of roadside screening breath tests carried out and the number of successful prosecutions rose.

We will continue to keep the deterrent aspects of the legislation under review and my right hon. and learned Friend expects to receive shortly the report on the monitoring of evidential breath testing.

Winson Green Prison

Sir Reginald Eyre asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what improved arrangements will be made at Winson Green prison, Birmingham, for solicitors to conduct private interviews with prisoners awaiting trial.

Mr. Mellor: We are urgently seeking a way of improving the arrangements. I shall reply in full as soon as possible.

Radio Broadcasting

Mr. Evennett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) whether he intends to undertake a review of future development proposals in radio broadcasting; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether he intends that community radio stations will be subject to the same degree of regulation as British Broadcasting Corporation and independent local radio;

(3) whether he has any plans to alter the existing regulatory arrangements for radio broadcasting.

Mr. Giles Shaw: As outlined in the reply given to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Kingswood (Mr. Hayward) on 23 January at columns *417-18*, the degree of regulation of community radio and its relationship with, and implications for, existing and prospective sound broadcasting services are among the matters which fall to be considered in the context of our study of how the development of community radio can best be taken forward. My right hon. and learned Friend hopes to make a further statement before long.

Terrorism

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will meet the Minister of the Interior of the other member states of the Council of Europe to discuss and co-ordinate counter-terrorist measures.

Mr. Brittan: The Government are working actively in a number of international groups to promote co-operation and co-ordination in counter terrorism.

Ministers of Justice of the Council of Europe passed a resolution on terrorism at their last meeting in Madrid in May 1984 which I attended. Since then a working group has been examining ways of building upon this; and we are playing a full and active role in the Group's deliberations. There are no immediate plans for a further meeting of Ministers of Justice of member states of the Council of Europe on this subject but I discuss it at my meetings with individual Ministers.

Identification Parades

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will now consider instructing the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis to establish counting procedures for the number of informal identification parades completed each year in underground stations and public places;

(2) how many formal identification parades were undertaken by Metropolitan police officers in each year since 1979; how many of the suspects identified in this form were subsequently prosecuted; of this number how many were convicted and acquitted; and how many of those parades produced a false identification at the time of the identification parade where the suspect selected was an ordinary member of the public invited to stand in the identification parade;

(3) how many suspects were identified by informal identification procedures for each year since 1979; how many of those suspects were subsequently acquitted or not charged; how many false identifications were made at the time of the informal parade; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the Commissioner of the Police of the Metropolis that each occasion on which a formal or an informal identification parade is held is recorded in the local police station occurrence book. This information is not collected centrally and I see no justification for asking the Commissioner to do so in the future. The position is similar in provincial forces. However, a special survey conducted in the Metropolitan Police in 1982 and 1983 showed the following approximate results:

	Formal Parades	Informal Parades
1982	428	74
1983	430	131

Information about the outcome of cases which have involved an identification parade is recorded only in the papers relating to the individual case.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will consider advising the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis to review the force general order on identification parades to tighten up procedures relating to informal identification parades to eliminate the opportunity for bias and error in identification.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis will be reviewing his force general orders on identification parades in order to meet the requirements of the code of practice on identification to be made under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984.

Departmental Expenses

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total cost to his Department of civil servants attending Standing Committee G considering the Local Government Bill.

Mr. Brittan: This information is not available.

Equal Opportunities Commission

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of the staff of the Equal Opportunities Commission is employed upon investigations and what proportion on purely administrative tasks.

Mr. Waddington: It is not possible to divide up the work of the Commission's staff in this way.

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much has been spent by the Equal Opportunities Commission in each of the last three years on the employment of public relations consultants.

Mr. Waddington: Nothing so far, but I understand that the Commission has recently authorised expenditure of up to £8,000 on fees to public relations consultants.

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the cost of the recruitment of the new chief executive of the Equal Opportunities Commission; and how much was paid to the recruitment consultants concerned.

Mr. Waddington: I understand from the Commission that the directly attributable costs of recruitment of the new Chief Executive are currently estimated at about £13,700, of which £7,728 represents fees to consultants.

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of the Equal Opportunities Commission's expenditure is spent upon salaries, rent, rates, telephone, travel and other similar expenditure and what proportion is devoted to specific projects within the commission's terms of reference.

Mr. Waddington: I refer the hon. Member to the account of the Equal Opportunities Commission for 1983-84 which was presented to Parliament and ordered by the House of Commons to be printed on 23 October 1984 as Paper 631.

Metropolitan Police

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to produce an information pack for schools on the Metropolitan police, and their duties to the public; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: No. The Metropolitan police has already produced a range of material providing information about the role and duties of the police, which is used in support of the wide ranging programme of activities with junior and secondary schools.

Nationality Fees

Mr. Wheeler asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if it is his intention not to increase nationality fees as from 1 April.

Mr. Brittan: I have today written to my hon. Friend confirming that the Government's policy of full cost recovery will be met for the next 12 months by maintaining all fees at the levels set in the British Nationality (Fees) Regulations (SI 1984 No. 230) in April last year. In real terms these fees are broadly the same as those charged in the mid-1970s. The Government believe that this decision will benefit all potential applicants. A copy of the budget for the nationality operation in 1985-86 has been placed in the Library of the House.

Local Radio

Mr. Richard Page asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about the extension of the independent local radio network.

Mr. Brittan: The third report of the Home Office local radio working party, published in 1980, put forward proposals for the further development of local radio. In the light of comments on the report, my noble Friend the Viscount Whitelaw approved in principle in 1981 the provision of independent local radio services at a number of additional locations, bringing the total of possible locations up to 70. My noble Friend noted, however, that full implementation of the proposals would take a number of years, and that there might need to be a degree of flexibility about the most suitable and practicable way of bringing a service to a particular area in the light of developments in the economy generally.

The payment of secondary rental by profitably independent local radio stations has enabled the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) to provide a service to 51 of the 70 locations, leaving 19 approved but unserved areas. Necessary modifications to the rental structure and financial pressures on the independent local radio system have, however, significantly constrained the funds available to the IBA for extension of the network. Moreover, in the light of broadcasting and other developments in recent years, the authority takes the view that few of the unserved areas would now attract an advertising income sufficient to sustain an independent local radio station. Against this background, and as a

means of bringing an independent local radio service to areas which would otherwise remain unserved, the IBA has proposed that:

(a) Services should in appropriate cases be provided by enlarging the catchment of neighbouring franchise areas. The extended area would be advertised as and when the contract for the relevant existing station is due to expire.

(a) The contractor for the new area should provide the means, by way of advance payment, to enable the IBA to install transmitting equipment and allied facilities for the extended area.

I accept the IBA view that unless some new approach is adopted, areas at present unserved are likely to remain so. I also agree that, provided that arrangements for forward funding can be developed between the IBA and the potential franchise holder, the extension of existing areas would help strengthen the viability of independent local radio as a whole. There is, of course, already some measure of association between radio stations in what were initially conceived as separate franchises. I also believe it necessary to canvas fully local opinion in the areas concerned. I have therefore approved in principle, subject to the results of this local consultation, the IBA's proposals to seek to extend over the next 12 months or so the Nottingham franchise to serve Derby; the Portsmouth franchise to serve Southampton; the Wolverhampton franchise to serve Shrewsbury-Telford; and the Reading franchise to serve Basingstoke-Andover. This will not preclude the setting up of separate ILR stations for the different localities in the future if circumstances permit.

So far as consultations are concerned, there is a statutory requirement on the IBA (section 19(3) of the Broadcasting Act 1981) to take such steps as appear to them appropriate to ascertain the opinions of the public in the relevant area about the service to be provided by the authority, and to take into account these opinions and any comments or suggestions about the service. The authority attaches particular importance to this process, and will take the opportunity to outline in more detail their intention to seek fresh investment and new directors from the new locality, and to require an appropriate measure of separate programming for different parts of the extended franchise area.

The revised arrangements however will not take effect if the consultation process shows them to be generally unacceptable locally. In such circumstances, the IBA would seek to re-let the existing franchise area only.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Namibia

Sir Dudley Smith asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs why Her Majesty's Government refuse to grant developmental aid to Namibia until the implementation of United Nationsa Security Council resolution 435.

Mr. Raison: Because to do so would imply recognition of South Africa's occupation of the territory which we regard as unlawful and would invite criticism that we were contributing towards the cost of this occupation by providing development assistance.

Sir Dudley Smith asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Her Majesty's Government will grant developmental aid to Namibia following the recommendations of two independent parliamentary delegations which have visited Namibia in the current year.

Mr. Raison: No. We shall be ready to consider providing development assistance once Namibia has achieved internationally recognised independence.

TRANSPORT

A419/A417 (Traffic Statistics)

Mr. Coombs asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on traffic volumes on the A419-A417 link between the M4 and the M5 in the last five years.

Mr. Spicer: The following information is available in respect of traffic flows on the A419-A417 link, on the basis of 16-hour daily average flows, in respect of the locations indicated:

Year	*Traffic volume*
WILTSHIRE	
Just north of junction 15 on M4	
1980	17,800
1981	*
1982	20,800
1983	23,700
1984	25,600
Cricklade bypass	
1980	11,800
1981	*
1982	12,400
1983	14,100
1984	16,000
GLOUCESTERSHIRE	
Nettleton (10 miles south of Gloucester)	
1980	*
1981	8,100
1982	8,300
1983	9,200
1984	10,000

* Comparable figures are not available.

Speed Control Humps

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the number of applications received from local authorities throughout England for the construction of speed control humps; how many of these have *(a)* met and *(b)* failed to meet the criteria laid down in the relevant legislation; and if he is satisfied that the criteria are adequate to encourage local authorities to construct speed humps.

Mrs. Chalker: Local authorities do not need to apply to me for permission to construct road humps on their own roads. I am aware that some authorities have found the present regulations for new humps too restrictive. I am therefore in the process of revising them to allow greater flexibility, without prejudicing road safety.

Saltash Bypass

Mr. Hicks asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is his decision following the public inquiry in May

1984 about the proposed Saltash bypass section of the A38 trunk road improvements; when it is hoped work will commence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: I am pleased to be able to announce the joint decision of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment and myself to make the line, side roads and compulsory purchase orders in respect of this scheme in the terms in which they were published. We now intend to press ahead with the outstanding preparatory works and plan to start construction as early as practicable next year.

Midland Link Motorways

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for Transport if any tests have been made on the fixing and integrity of the central reservation rails of the elevated sections of midland link motorways.

Mrs. Chalker: We have tested the central reservation rails on a number of sections of the midland link viaducts. We are continuing to replace any lengths of rail shown to be below strength.

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for Transport if any claims for work over the tender price have been received in respect of any contract for the repair of parapet walls and rails of elevated sections of midland link motorways.

Mrs. Chalker: The contractor for the Oldbury viaduct parapet rail repair has claimed on extension of time. This has not been agreed.

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for Transport if the specification for grout has been changed in any way for any contract for the repair of parapet walls and rails of midland link motorways since the tender period.

Mrs. Chalker: A marginal change to the specification for grout has been made during the course of the current contract.

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many contracts have been let for the repair of parapet walls and rails of the elevated sections of midland link motorways; and what are the values of these contracts and the companies awarded them.

Mrs. Chalker: One contract has been awarded to McTay Construction Ltd. in the sum of £155,228·00 for the repair of parapet rails on Oldbury viaduct.

Departmental Expenses

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport what was the total cost to his Department of civil servants attending Standing Committee G considering the Local Government Bill.

Mrs. Chalker: This information is not available.

EMPLOYMENT

Industrial Injuries (Inquiries)

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Employment what are the maximum and minimum periods between the report of a case of industrial injury to the Factories Inspectorate and the conclusion of the inspectorate's inquiry; and what recommendations he has made as to a reasonable period of time for such an inquiry.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Information on the period between the report of an industrial injury to the Factories Inspectorate and the conclusion of the inspectorate's inquiry is not readily available.

The length of the time taken to inquire into cases of industrial injury varies considerably for a number of reasons.

Factors which may lengthen an inquiry include complex technical investigation, tracing witnesses, and the possibility of prosecution.

I have made no recommendations as to a reasonable period of time for such an inquiry.

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give, from the survey of youth training scheme providers reported to the last meeting of the Manpower Services Commission's youth training board, the number and proportion of mode A trainees who *(a)* are one year trainees only, *(b)* are apprentices or other long-term trainees and *(c)* are employees.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The following table, which is based on the survey of youth training scheme providers, shows both the proportion, and an estimate of the number, of mode A trainees on the scheme in March 1984 who were one year trainees only, apprentices or other long-term trainees and employees.

	Percentage of Trainees	*Estimated Number of Trainees*
One year trainees only	78	141,000
Apprentices and other long-term trainees	18	33,000
Employees (other than apprentices and long-term trainees)	4	7,000
	100	181,000

Labour Statistics

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many persons were made redundant in Derbyshire in 1983 and 1984.

Mr. Alan Clark: The available information, relating to confirmed redundancies, is given in the following table:

Redundancies confirmed as due to occur in Derbyshire†*

	Redundancies
1983	6,494
1984	7,575

Notes:
* Confirmed by the Manpower Services Commission as due to occur and based on notifications of impending redundancies involving ten or more workers.
† Groupings of jobcentre areas approximating to the county of Derbyshire.

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for Employment what was the average number of redundancies in the east midlands between 1977 and 1979 and between 1980 and 1982.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information, relating to confirmed redundancies, is available from table 2.30 of the labour market data section of the *Employment Gazette*, a copy of which is in the Library.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list all the vacancies recorded at the jobcentres and professional and executive recruitment office in Leicester at the latest date for which the data are available.

Mr. Peter Morrison: On 8 February 1985, the latest date for which figures are available, there were 1,221 unfilled vacancies at the Leicester jobcentre and 127 at the professional and executive recruitment office. A full list of these vacancies could not be obtained without disproportionate cost.

However, information is collected on the number of unfilled vacancies held at the jobcentre according to the broad industrial and occupational category to which they belong. Details are as follows for the latest available dates. This information is not available for the vacancies held at the professional and executive recruitment office.

Vacancies Recorded by Industrial Group (8 February 1985)

Industrial Group	*Number of Vacancies*
Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing	1
Coal Extraction	0
Mineral Oil & Natural Gas Extraction	0
Mineral Oil Processing	0
Nuclear Fuel Production	0
Gas, Electricity & Water	6
Extraction of Other Minerals & Ores	0
Metal Manufacture	0
Mnfr. Of Non-metallic Products	2
Chemical Industry	8
Production of Man-Made Fibres	0
Mnfr. Of Metal Goods	9
Mechanical Engineering	48
Mnfr. Of Office Machinery	3
Electrical & Electronic Engineering	15
Mnfr. Of Motor Vehicles	1
Ship Building & Repairing	0
Mnfr. Of Aerospace & Other Transport	2
Instrument Engineering	9
Food, Drink & Tobacco	9
Textiles	285
Leather, Footwear & Clothing	77
Timber & Furniture	14
Paper, Printing & Publishing	18
Other Manufacturing	12
Construction	54
Wholesale Distribution	35
Retail Distribution	127
Hotel & Catering	67
Repair Consumer Goods & Vehicles	17
Transport	25
Telecommunication	1
Insurance Banking, Finance	68
Public Administration & Defence	135
Medical & Other Health Services	34
Other Services	29
Community Programme (Total)	110
Total	1,221

Vacancies Recorded by Occupational Group (30 November)

Occupational group	*Number of Vacancies*
Managerial, professional	34
Nursing	6
Typing, secretarial	42
Clerical	101
Selling-distribution	77
Selling-others	85
Security	7
Catering	82
Cleaning, personal services	92
Farming, Fishing	9
Materials processing—textiles	25
Materials processing—food	2
Metal processing	1
Material processing—others	0
Making, repairing—textiles	331
Making, repairing—others	39
Machine operating (Eng)—skilled	25
Machine operating (Eng)—unskilled	1
Tool Makers/fitters	3
Installation, Maintenance	33
Electricians	17
Electronic technicians	6
Welders/fabricators	12
Painters	5
Assemblers, packaging	38
Construction—skilled	6
Construction—unskilled	3
Mining, quarrying	0
Transport operating—HGV, PSV	2
Transport operating—others	22
Miscellaneous	29
Community Programme (Total)	72
Total	1,207

Programme vacancies are not analysed according to occupational and industrial categories.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give a breakdown by region of the number of people in employment, whole-time equivalent, in each of the years since 1977; and what percentage this figure represents of total work force in the region in each of those years.

Mr. Alan Clark [*pursuant to his reply*, 26 March 1985]: The following tables give the available information.

Table 1 gives, for the regions and dates specified, the civilian employed labour force (employees in employment plus the self-employed). Her Majesty's Forces, which are normally included in the employed labour force figures, are not analysed regionally.

Table 2 gives the figures in table 1 expressed as a percentage of the civilian working population (civilian employed labour force plus the unemployed).

Figures for part-time workers are included on a one-to-one basis and are not converted to whole-time equivalents as detailed information on the hours worked by part-time employees is not available.

Table 1—Civilian Employed Labour Force

Thousands

	June each year							
	1977	*1978*	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
South East	7,819	7,926	8,105	8,164	7,963	7,866	7,817	8,023
East Anglia	747	762	791	796	768	76	773	797

	June each year						
	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
South West	1,702	1,719	1,751	1,790	1,769	1,744	1,722	1,765
West Midlands	2,362	2,360	2,364	2,357	2,220	2,150	2,104	2,125
East Midlands	1,658	1,682	1,710	1,691	1,612	1,596	1,568	1,572
Yorkshire and Humberside	2,146	2,133	2,140	2,121	2,016	1,972	1,935	1,952
North West	2,836	2,852	2,890	2,845	2,683	2,614	2,576	2,612
North	1,337	1,311	1,306	1,279	1,207	1,172	1,129	1,128
Wales	1,128	1,131	1,131	1,111	1,054	1,028	1,019	1,044
Scotland	2,230	2,241	2,295	2,254	2,151	2,129	2,101	2,113

Table 2—Civilian Employed Labour Force as percentage of civilian Working Population

Per cent.

	June each year						
	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
South East	96·2	96·5	97·1	96·6	93·9	92·6	91·9	91·8
East Anglia	95·5	95·8	96·5	95·8	93·0	91·9	91·3	91·6
South West	94·4	94·7	95·5	95·0	92·6	91·4	90·8	90·8
West Midlands	95·3	95·4	95·5	94·2	88·8	86·9	85·8	86·4
East Midlands	95·6	95·7	96·1	94·9	91·5	90·5	89·7	89·4
Yorkshire and Humberside	95·1	94·9	95·2	93·8	89·9	88·4	87·5	87·5
North West	93·5	93·6	94·1	92·6	88·8	87·0	85·9	86·0
North	92·5	91·9	92·1	90·5	86·9	85·2	83·8	83·5
Wales	93·8	93·5	93·9	92·5	88·4	86·9	86·3	86·5
Scotland	92·8	92·8	93·2	91·8	88·9	87·6	86·6	86·5

Young Workers Exchange Programme

Mr. Nicholas Baker asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish the numbers of young British workers obtaining places on the European Community young workers exchange programme; and if he is satisfied at the number of British workers by comparison with their European counterparts obtaining places on this programme.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: During the years 1979-1983 young people from the United Kingdom obtained 779 of 3,977 places allocated under the second programme of exchanges. I am satisfied that the UK is getting a fair share of the places allocated on this schemes.

Unions (Membership)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish in the *Official Report* such information as he has for the past five years showing the number of people belonging to trade unions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The available information was published on pages 28-30 of the January 1985 issue of *Employment Gazette* which is available in the Library.

Wages Councils

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Employment what recent representations he has received concerning the possible abolition of the wages councils; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: My right hon. Friend and I have received a number of representations this year. The great majority advocate either abolition or major reform of the wages council system. A consultative paper was issued on 21 March setting out broad options for the future of the councils seeking views by the end of May. Decisions will be taken when responses to the paper have been considered.

Community Programme

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many community programme places were being supported in the Leicester travel-to-work area for each of the last 12 months for which statistics are available; of these places, how many were full-time; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I refer my hon. Friend to my right hon. Friend's statement on 21 March 1985 at columns 1024-5 about our plans to expand the community programme from 130,000 to 230,000 places by June next year. The numbers of filled places being funded under the community programme in particular travel to work areas is not readily available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost. Available information relates to Leicestershire and is as follows:

1984	Full-time	Part-time	Total
March	468	774	1,242
April	491	773	1,264
May	508	812	1,320
June	562	873	1,435
July	529	884	1,413
August	543	894	1,437
September	522	904	1,426
October	530	940	1,470
November	530	998	1,528
December	542	1,016	1,558
1985			
January	572	1,005	1,577
February	570	984	1,554

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of people on the community programme get jobs afterwards.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Sample survey evidence indicated that when interviewed eight months after leaving the programme a third of former participants had a job, and a further 5 per cent. were in training.

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many young people are on youth training schemes within the city of Leicester; how many companies are supporting the youth training scheme in Leicester; and if he will give the number of companies and young people involved in each month since the scheme began.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Government Policy

Mr. John Townend asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement about the Government's policy on employment.

Mr. Tom King: I have today laid before the House the White Paper "EMPLOYMENT The Challenge for the Nation" (Cmnd. 9474).

This sets out the Government's views on what we all must do to help create jobs and reduce unemployment. The key contribution of Government is to create an economic climate in which enterprise can flourish; it can help to improve the labour market by encouraging better training and more flexibility; and it also provides special help for those worst affected by unemployment. But as the White Paper makes clear, the Government cannot do what the nation will not. It cannot on its own create jobs. Everyone including trade unions and individuals must share the responsibility for responding to change, so that new jobs will be created.

PRIME MINISTER

President Belaunde Terry (Press Conference)

Q56. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Prime Minister from what sources, other than Her Majesty's ambassador in Lima, Her Majesty's Government received reports of the press conference held in Lima by President Belaunde Terry on 2 May 1982.

The Prime Minister: The authoritative report was the telegram from Her Majesty's ambassador in Lima. As my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs told the hon. Member on 1 March at column *300*, this was sent at 0144 GMT on 3 May 1982.

European Day of Music

Q62. **Sir David Price** asked the Prime Minister how she intends to participate in the European Day of Music, Saturday 22 June.

The Prime Minister: Saturday 22 June has been designated by the European Music Year (UK) Committee as a day to celebrate amateur music-making, and musicians and schools are being encouraged to participate in large numbers. I have no plans to attend any specific event on that day, but hope to attend several events during the year.

Engagements

Mr. Parry asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 28 March.

Mr. Marlow asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 28 March.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 28 March.

Mr. Pike asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 28 March.

Mr. John Mark Taylor asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 28 March.

Mr. Leigh asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 28 March.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today.

Phone Tapping

Mr. Cohen asked the Prime Minister if, pursuant to her answer of 5 March, *Official Report*, column 775, she will define what she means by the term accountable to Parliament in this context; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: It is an important part of my and my right hon. and learned Friend's duty to satisfy ourselves that the security service operates entirely within the letter and spirit of its directive. We are accountable to Parliament for that responsibility as for the discharge of our other duties, but in line with the policy which successive Governments have followed, it is not the practice to disclose detailed information about security matters.

Education Achievements

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Prime Minister to what Her Majesty's Government attribute the difference between the relative performance of pupils in Wales and in England in overall education achievements and in examination failure rates among pupils; and what Her Majesty's Government intend to do to remedy the situation.

The Prime Minister: The one significant difference between England and Wales is in the percentage of pupils leaving maintained schools with no GCE O-Level or CSE certificates. The difference has persisted for many years though the figure in both countries has fallen markedly since the raising of the school leaving age. One factor which seems likely to contribute to the higher Welsh figure is that the certificate of secondary education examinations take place in Wales after the Whitsun leaving date and so generally exclude pupils leaving at that time. It may also be that CSE is less valued in Wales and that Welsh schools have adopted a more restrictive policy of examination entry. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales has made plain his concern about the achievement of school pupils in Wales with the publication of a number of documents which have been discussed in detail with education authorities and others in recent years, and the Government has this week published the White Paper "Better Schools" (Cmnd 9469) which sets out its objective of improving standards generally and a programme for achieving that end.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Departmental Achievements

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list his Department's principal achievements since 1979.

Sir Keith Joseph: The over-riding objectives have been to raise standards at school of children of all abilities and to achieve better value for money throughout the education system. Since 1979 the proportion of children commencing education before the age of 5 has increased an the proportion staying on beyond 16 has also increased. Pupil-teacher ratios in primary and secondary schools have improved as have achievements in school at A level. Spending per pupil has increased in real terms an now stands at record levels.

The Government's principal achievements in respect to the schools are set out in the White Paper "Better Schools" (Cmnd. 9469) published on 26 March 1985.

In other parts of the education system the Government has prompted improvements in performance by:

In further education

Setting out and implementing important decisions for vocational education in the White Paper "Training for Jobs";

The formation of the Business and Technician Education Council with an important role in the preparation of skilled manpower;

Introducing the new Certificate of Pre-Vocational Education (CPVE) as an additional option in the range of courses preparing young people for the world of work, and available in both schools and colleges;

The establishment of a scheme of in-service training grants for further education lecturers;

The establishment of College-Employer Links Project (CELP) in eight LEAs, aimed at increasing colleges' responsiveness to employers needs and the awareness of the latter of college facilities;

Expanding the work of the further education unit, giving it new status and developing the presentation of its reports.

In adult and continuing education

Launching a programme (PICKUP) to promote provision of updating and broadening the skills of those in mid-career;

Establishing over 100 Local Collaborative Projects in which educational institutions and firms work in partnership to offer adult training and updating—a joint venture between PICKUP and the MSC within the Government's Adult Training Campaign;

Initiating a programme (REPLAN) for meeting more effectively the educational needs of unemployed adults;

Promoting the establishment of a national unit for the development of continuing education.

In higher education

Initiating a major debate, in consultation with others, on national higher education strategy into the 1990s;

The admission to higher education of record number of students;

Initiating a wide-ranging review of financial support for students in higher education;

Establishing the Educational Counselling and Credit Transfer Information Service (ECCTIS) in a pilot region; and (more recently) supporting the developments of a computer-aided careers guidance system for graduates;

Establishing the new National Advisory Body for Public Sector Higher Education and endorsing its plan for the continuation of the significant shift towards science and engineering and other vocational subjects, and for the more efficient use of constrained resources generally;

Providing resources for specific initiatives in engineering and technology, and particularly information technology; for "new blood" in the universities; and for the enhancement of equipment in selected centres of high quality research in the universities;

Appointing a Committee of Enquiry (under Sir Norman Lindop) to review academic validation procedures in the public sector of higher education;

Providing support for a programme of efficiency studies in the universities.

Generally in education

Publishing reports by Her Majesty's Inspectorate and introducing arrangements for more systematic follow-up action, and publishing the annual HMI Report on the effects of LEA expenditure policies;

The provision of grant of up to £30 million of expenditure in 1985-86 on selected activities of national education importance, as provided for under the Education (Grants and Awards) Act 1984;

Introducing new arrangements for decision-making and management within the Department, aimed at greater efficiency and value for money.

In science

Maintaining a level of funding for the Science Vote which has broadly kept up with general inflation;

Making available additional resources to help re-equip the best university research teams to the highest standards;

Making available additional funding to the Science Vote for the British Antarctic Survey; for top quality university research proposals; and for restructuring programmes designed to change the balance of the Research Councils' activities better to reflect current priorities and financial circumstances;

Initiating a substantial programme for research and training in information technology;

Initiating through the Advisory Board for the Research Councils and in consultation with the Science and Engineering Research Council a major review of United Kingdom involvement in high energy particle physics;

Encouraging the Research Councils to publish Corporate Plans which embody strategy reviews of their respective programmes.

Ethnic Minority Children

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will set out in the *Official Report*, in each of the last five years, public expenditure on the teaching of English to ethnic minority children; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: It is not possible separately to identify expenditure on the provision to ethnic minority children of English as a second language teaching since it is increasingly delivered in the context of normal lessons in the classroom.

As my right hon. Friend said in his statement on 14 March about the final report of the Swann committee, good practice in the teaching of English to children of Commonwealth origin, as endorsed by the committee, will continue to be supported by grants made by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, under section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966. Roughly half the local authority expenditure on education being supported by section 11 grants goes on the teaching of English as a second language. Figures for the last five years are as follows:

Financial year	*Local authority educational expenditure supported by grant under section 11* £
1979-80	40,076,045
1980-81	53,715,772

Financial year	Local authority educational expenditure supported by grant under section 11 £
1981-82	56,592,291
1982-83	68,456,613
1983-84	74,736,446

School Curricula

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what measures have been taken since 1979 to encourage a reappraisal of the curriculum used in schools and in teacher training institutions to reflect the multi-racial nature of British society.

Mr. Dunn: A great deal of work has been undertaken in recent years by local education authorities, teacher training institutions and individual schools to take account of the ethnic diversity of British society. For the Government's part, my right hon. Friend described in his statement to the House on 14 March at column 451 the measures being adopted in the curriculum and teacher training fields. Criteria for the approval of initial teacher training courses were issued in April 1984. They include requirements that students should be prepared to teach the full range of pupils whom they are likely to encounter in an ordinary school, with their diversity of ethnic and cultural origins, to respond flexibly to such diversity and to guard against preconceptions based on the race of pupils. Students should also be given a basic understanding of the society in which their pupils are growing up, with its cultural and racial mix. All courses of initial teacher training will be reviewed against the criteria over the next three to four years. My right hon. Friend will also be proposing to the local authority associations that from 1986-87 onwards the in-service training grants scheme should include training dealing with the need to respond to ethnic diversity. The Government has asked local education authorities to review their policies for the school curriculum, recognising among other factors the changing nature of our society, including its religious, ethnic and cultural diversity. This theme was explored in the booklet "The School Curriculum" issued in 1981 by my right hon. Friends the then Secretary of State and the Secretary of State for Wales.

Burnham Committee

Mr. Weetch asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what complaints and representations he has received about the current membership pattern of the Burnham committee; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Keith Joseph: The Department has received requests for a review of the teachers' panel of the Burnham primary and secondary committee from nine organisations and five individuals, and the matter has also been referred to by others writing on a variety of educational matters. Most argue that the changes in membership of the teacher unions since 1981 should be reflected in their representation on the Burnham committee. I believe that the time for a review of the committee's membership may come before long but I am not convinced that that time has yet arrived.

Mr. Weetch asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will initiate discussions with teachers' organisations concerning the conventions of negotiating procedures relating to the Burnham committee.

Sir Keith Joseph: No.

Open University

Mr. Kilfedder asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what are the overseas earnings of the Open University; and what information he has as to how they compare with similar earnings by other universities.

Sir Keith Joseph: The Open University's overseas earnings for the academic year 1984 were £0·418 million, almost all of which came from sales by the University's marketing company, Open University Educational Enterprises Ltd. This sum represented about 0·5 per cent. of the university's recurrent income for that year. The latest information available on overseas earnings for the other publicly funded United Kingdom universities is for the academic year 1982-83. The overseas earnings for that year were £96·4 million, most of which came from overseas student fees, the remainder from overseas research grants and contracts. This sum represented about 5 per cent. of the universities' total net recurrent income.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the percentage change in grant in real terms of *(a)* the Open University and *(b)* other universities between 1980-81 and 1986-87.

Sir Keith Joseph: The decrease in the Open University's recurrent grant in real terms (as defined in Cmnd. 9428) between the financial years 1980-81 and 1986-87 is estimated to be 11 per cent.

Comparing the Open University figure with levels of funding for other universities in Great Britain is complicated because of the changes in funding arrangements that have taken place. Adjusting for the increase made to recurrent grant to compensate the universities for alteration in the level of home tuition fees, the decrease in recurrent grant paid to universities in Great Britain through the University Grants Committee over the same period is estimated to be 10 per cent. No adjustment has been made to take account of other funding changes in this period.

Examination Results

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether his Department has reached its conclusions about possible methods of comparing examination results from different types of school system; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Keith Joseph: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Diocesan Education Committee, Cornwall

Mr. Hicks asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the outcome of the application by the

Cornwall local education authority on behalf of the diocesan education committee for a supplementary allocation of funds for the financial year 1984-85; and if he will list the projects together with the amount of grant aid that he has approved; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: The Department met in full Cornwall county council's request for an increase from £35,000 to £145,000 in their allocation for capital expenditure on voluntary aided and special agreement schools to enable additional grant at 85 per cent. of the expenditure involved to be paid in 1984-85. The projects which received grant-aid are:

Cornwall

School	*Project*	*Payment of 85 per cent. grant* £
St. Petroc's Church of England Junior	Final instatement to 160 places	1,146
Archbishop Benson Church of England Junior	New school	14,519
Bishop Bronescombe Church of England Primary	Phase I	1,712
Bishop Bronescombe Church of England Primary	Phase II	3,008
Bishop Cornish Church of England Primary	Completion to 280 places	5,443
Bishop Cornish Church of England Primary	New school	17,864
St. Catherine's Church of England Primary	Substituted school	17,081
Wendron Church of England Primary	Improvements	1,222
St. Martin's Church of England Primary	New school	13,943
St. Martin's Church of England Primary	Phase II	1,834
Camborne St. John's Roman Catholic Junior and Infants	New classroom	22,999
Camborne Church of England Junior	New school	22,599

Gipsies

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the estimated number of gipsy children of school age not receiving educational provision; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: It was estimated in 1983 that there were between 12,000 and 15,000 travellers' children of school age in England. Of these, the evidence gathered by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools and set out in the HMI discussion paper "The Education of Travellers' Children", published in 1983, suggested that between 40 and 50 per cent. of primary aged children may have been attending school whilst as few as 10 per cent. to 15 per cent. of secondary age children were thought to be registered at school. Since the publication of that document a number of LEAs have reviewed their provision for travellers' children in the light of it.

ENERGY

Departmental Achievements

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list his Department's principal achievements since 1979.

Mr. Peter Walker: My Department's objectives and principal achievements were described last year in my reply to the hon. Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Murphy) at columns *92-94*.

Since then we have continued to make encouraging progress. Our policies have helped to make 1984 a record year for oil and gas exploration and development in the North Sea, and the North Sea contribution to United Kingdom employment has been further expanded:

—our offshore supplies industry has had one of its most successful years ever, with United Kingdom-based industry taking a 74 per cent. share, worth £2·65 billion, of total UKCS orders. We are continuing with our major initiatives in the export field;

—a record number of exploration and appraisal wells were drilled;

—a record number of North Sea projects were approved;

—a record demand for offshore licences has been attracted by the ninth licensing round;

—net additions to our remaining proven and probable gas reserves have increased our confidence that indigenous resources can satisfy most of our needs for the remainder of this century.

The energy efficiency campaign is resulting in a upsurge of interest and activity in energy efficiency measures. There has for example been a 50 per cent. increase in the take-up of extended survey grants, a 33 per cent. increase in savings under our demonstration scheme and a 30 per cent. expansion of our voluntary homes insulation projects which have now treated some 100,000 homes.

The sale to the private sector of the British Gas interest in the Wytch Farm oilfield and the flotation of Enterprise Oil have been successfully carried through. We have announced our intention to abolish the British National Oil Corporation.

With Government support, the electricity and coal industries have enabled the electricity system to withstand a year-long coal strike without power cuts and with only limited damage to the rest of British industry.

We continue to encourage the energy nationalised industries in their efforts to greater efficiency and for the second year running, price increases will be less than the rate of inflation. A new financial target and performance aim has been agreed for the electricity supply industry for the years to 1987-88.

We have announced our intention of introducing legislation to enable the UKAEA to move onto a more commercial footing by operating as a trading fund from April 1986.

The management of energy research and development has been strengthened by the formation of a unified research and development budget and an expanded role for the advisory committee on research and development for fuel and power (ACORD).

NORTHERN IRELAND

Archbishop O'Connor

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he, or any Ministers, or personnel within the Northern Ireland Office, met Archbishop O'Connor of New York when he made a fact-finding visit to Northern Ireland in 1984 as the guest of Cardinal O'Fiaich.

Mr. Scott: Yes; my right hon. Friend met the archibishop with other American bishops on 22 October 1984. They were also given factual briefing by officials.

NHS Prescriptions

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what figures are available to indicate, by convenient district units, the number of National Health Service prescriptions issued in each of the past five years;

(2) what figures are available to indicate, by convenient district units, the number of National Health Service prescriptions issued in each of the past five years to patients who were exempted from prescription charges.

Mr. Chris Patten: The available information is as follows:

Prescriptions issued by prescribing doctors

Thousands

Year	*Eastern Board*		*Northern Board*		*Southern Board*		*Western Board*		*Northern Ireland*	
1979	5,447	(3,668)	2,563	(1,554)	2,490	(1,867)	2,089	(1,608)	12,589	(8,696)
1980	5,428	(3,951)	2,595	(1,698)	2,534	(2,014)	2,125	(1,756)	12,682	(9,420)
1981	5,412	(4,207)	2,605	(1,837)	2,537	(2,149)	2,136	(1,874)	12,691	(10,067)
1982	5,556	(4,496)	2,675	(2,044)	2,585	(2,321)	2,251	(2,121)	13,067	(10,981)
1983	5,768	(4,808)	2,798	(2,253)	2,676	(2,492)	2,351	(2,292)	13,593	(11,846)

Note:

Figures in brackets refer to the number of prescriptions included in the total that were exempt from statutory charges or were dispensed to holders of pre-payment certificates.

Prescriptions dispensed by dispensing doctors

Thousands

Year	*Eastern Board*	*Northern Board*	*Southern Board*	*Western Board*	*Northern Ireland*
1979	23	131	90	100	344
1980	21	137	95	103	356
1981	20	137	98	105	360
1982	22	133	106	108	368
1983	23	141	116	110	391

Voluntary Bodies (Grants)

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a list of those voluntary bodies which received grants under class C3 from the Northern Ireland Department of Health and Social Services; and if he will list the amounts received in each case for the last five years.

Mr. Chris Patten: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Ancillary Workers (Bursaries)

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he takes to ensure that bursaries available for the training of social workers, radiographers, occupational therapists, chiropodists and dental students, from funds provided by his Department, are taken up; and if he will take steps to ensure that there is no shortfall in the intake of students for these courses next year.

Mr. Chris Patten: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Radiation (Disease Patterns)

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will establish an expert committee to study patterns of disease which have a possible association with radiation.

Mr. Chris Patten: I have today announced the establishment of such a committee. It will be chaired by Professor Lowry, head of the Department of Oncology and Cancer Studies at Queen's university, Belfast and the remaining membership will comprise Professor Bridges of the Department of Haematology, Professor Nevin of the Department of Medical Genetics and Dr. Blaney of the Department of Community Medicine, all Queen's University. The terms of reference of the committee will be

"to assemble and analyse epidemiological data in Northern Ireland on the patterns of disease which have a possible association with radiation".

I have asked the committee to submit a progress report by the end of March 1986.

Local Elections

Mr. W. Benyon asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has anything to add to the statement made by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Chelsea (Mr. Scott), on 7 March,

Official Report, column 1233, regarding responsibility for the legislation governing local elections in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Scott: Paragraph 11 of schedule 2 to the Northern Ireland Constitutional Act 1973 provides that local government elections in Northern Ireland are an excepted matter. I regret that I gave a contrary impression during the debate on 7 March 1985 on the Local Elections (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 at column 1233.

Scheduled Offences

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish in the *Official Report* for the years 1984 and 1985 to the nearest convenient date the number of persons charged with scheduled offences whose cases were concluded and who were *(a)* charged with scheduled offences and pleaded guilty, *(b)* charged with scheduled offences and pleaded not guilty, *(c)* found guilty of scheduled offences and *(d)* found not guilty of scheduled offences having pleaded not guilty.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 March 1985, c. *34*]: The following information relates to those persons whose cases proceeded to trial for scheduled offences. For 1984 these figures are respectively (a) 433, (b) 81, (c) 471, (d) 43. The equivalent figures for January 1985 are (a) 45, (b) 7, (c) 49, (d) 3.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Constant Attendance Allowance

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) on 18 March, *Official Report*, columns *380-1*, how many fee-paid medical practitioners carry out the medical examinations for constant attendance allowance generally and in Wales; what is the average number of such examinations carried out by each weekly, generally and in Wales; and what extra training such medical practitioners receive, initially and on a continuing basis, to enable them to carry out such examinations and to complete the appropriate forms of application for this benefit.

Mr. Newton: The number of fee paid medical practitioners who carry out examinations for attendance allowance in Great Britain is 2,167. The average number of examinations carried out by each is 115 annually. In Wales there are 223 such medical practitioners who carry out 150 examinations each on an annual basis. Newly recruited medical practitioners are given a training session. The first reports are monitored and further advice given if needed. All are monitored regularly every six months. Additional advice and training are given as needed.

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what percentage of reports of medical examinations for constant attendance allowance carried out by his Department's appointed and trained general practitioners are considered either inadequate or inappropriate when monitored by his Department's regional medical officers and the Attendance Allowance Board during consideration of such applications for benefit.

Mr. Newton: I am unable to answer in the form requested as records of reports from the examining medical practitioners which are considered inadequate are not kept. However, the number of examining medical practitioners whose reports were considered to need improvement were 208.

In the six months to end of February 1985, letters of advice were sent to 122 and retraining given to 78 of these doctors. Eight are no longer used.

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many general medical practitioners specially trained by his Department to carry out medical examinations of applicants for the constant attendance allowance have had their contract terminated in each of the years since 1979 to date (i) generally and (ii) in Wales; and if he will detail the reasons for such practitioners no longer being asked to carry out such examinations.

Mr. Newton: Medical practitioners who examine for attendance allowance do not have a contract. The number no longer used in each year since 1979 is not known and could be produced only at disproportionate cost.

The number of examining medical practitioners no longer used in Wales in the past year is 10, two of them because of inadequate reports and eight reaching the age of 72 years or retiring because of ill-health.

Housing Benefit

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has recently received from elderly citizens, individually and through their reperesentative organisations, regarding the changes in housing benefits; and if he will make a statement as to how retirement pensioners have been affected by such changes in Government policy.

Mr. Whitney: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Murphy) on 18 March at column *378*. The changes introduced in November were carefully designed to ensure that the poorest were protected. Those receiving supplementary benefit or with incomes below the housing benefits needs allowance — for pensioners up to about £10 a week above basic retirement pension levels—were not, in most cases, affected by the changes. For the great majority of pensioner householders the average loss in November will have been 32p a week.

Social Security Reviews

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services why his Department has commissioned an opinion poll on the subject of the reviews into the social security system; and what questions are being asked.

Mr. Newton: The poll was commissioned in order to add to the wide-ranging evidence received by the review teams and to information available from past surveys about social security. Questions and results will be made available when the conclusions and proposals arising from the review are published.

Chiropodists

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will introduce legislation to establish

minimum standards of theoretical and practical training to be attained by persons wishing to practise under the title chiropodist; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The hon. Member's question touches on one aspect of the question of protection of title for all professions supplementary to medicine (including chiropody) and I refer him to my reply to him on 27 March.

Health Authorities (Strategic Plans)

Dr. Owen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what growth targets have been given by his Department to regional and district health authorities in preparing their strategic plans for 1985 to 1994; how many of these authorities have complied with these targets; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Regional health authorities are required to prepare their strategic plans using the long-term resource assumptions set out in Health Circular (83) 12 a copy of which is in the Library. We will be reviewing regional plans in the light of these and other requirements when they are all received later this year.

Kidney Donors (Campaign)

Sir John Farr asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what success has been achieved in his Department's campaign to promote the donation of kidneys; if he will introduce a national scheme akin to the computerised North-West Kidney Lifeline scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: In the 12 months following the launch in February 1984 of our campaign to increase public awareness of the benefits of organ transplantation and to promote the donor card scheme, over 12·5 million new donor cards have been issued and the number of kidney transplants performed have risen by 30 per cent. over the previous year. Further publicity to maintain the campaign's momemtum has been arranged.

We are reviewing the achievements and experiences of the North-West Kidney Lifeline scheme, but it is too early to say whether it might be suitable for application outside its present area of operation.

NHS Domestic Services (Bolton)

Mr. David Young asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether the proposed agreement between Bolton district health authority and Spinneys meets the criteria of competition he has laid down; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We have not yet been sent any proposed agreement between Bolton health authority and Spinneys. We expect to receive details of any proposal from the regional health authority when they have been finally drawn up.

Death Grant

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has had any recent discussions with interested organisations about the level of the death grant; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I met a deputation from the Dignity in Death Alliance to discuss the death grant on 28 February. The subject was also raised by representatives of the Pensioners' National Convention at their meeting with the Prime Minister on 7 March and by a delegation from Pensioners' Voice whom I met on 20 March. The grant is among the matters being considered in the current social security review.

Suicides

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many girls aged under 16 years committed suicide in England and Wales during the period 20 December 1984 to 11 January 1985; and in which county each of these suicides occurred.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested is not yet available. However the numbers of suicides occurring in the period specified, but registered in either December 1984, January or February 1985, will be available by about June 1985. Because of the time required to complete inquests, final figures will not be available until about Spring 1986.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many girls under the age of 16 years have committed suicide in each of the years since 1967 in England and Wales.

Mr. John Patten: Information in the exact form requested can be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However the numbers of deaths from suicide for females aged under 15 years of age are routinely available and are given in the table.

Deaths from suicide for females under 15, 1967 to 1983 in England and Wales

Year	Number
1967	—
1968	2
1969	2
1970	2
1971	2
1972	—
1973	4
1974	1
1975	2
1976	4
1977	5
1978	1
1979	3
1980	1
1981	1
1982	3
1983	6

Drug Trials

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will consider introducing legislation to govern the trial of new drugs on healthy volunteers.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We have no plans to do this at present. The Medicines Commission concluded last year that legislation was not required but recommended that professional bodies and the Association of British Pharmaceutical Industries revise and update their existing guidance to members. I understand this is being done.

In Vitro Fertilisations

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what persons or organisations were consulted by

his Department before they gave advice that a fourth month time limit on fertilisations in vitro would not inhibit continued use of this technique.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I am advised that no advice has been given by our Department in these terms. I am writing to the hon. Member.

Miners (Supplementary Benefit)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if, in cases where miners returning to work have suffered compulsory deductions from a week's wages in excess of 50 per cent., he will take steps to ensure payment of supplementary benefit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Persons in full-time work are excluded from receiving supplementary benefit, though this exclusion does not apply for the first 15 days in employment. Thereafter benefit can be paid only in certain situations, defined in the Supplementary Benefit (Urgent Cases) Regulations 1981, and will normally be recoverable. Net earnings are treated as a resource in the calculation of benefit when there is entitlement. Regulation 10(4) of the Supplementary Benefit (Resources) Regulations 1981 lays down what deductions are to be made from gross earnings in calculating net earnings for this purpose.

The application of these regulations to the circumstances of particular cases is a matter for the independent adjudicating authorities.

NHS Prescriptions (Season Ticket)

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will permit patients who currently obtain drugs prescribed under the National Health Service by holding a season ticket to continue to obtain the same drugs during the life of that season ticket, if specifically prescribed by their National Health Service general practitioner.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The season ticket is prepayment in lieu of NHS prescription charges it offers one "bargain" charge for a period of time to a patient who might otherwise pay more by way of numerous separate prescription charges for all his medical needs. It can never have been regarded as a purchase of entitlement to particular medicines. Friom 1 April it will cover the prescription charge for any medicine available on the NHS but not the private dispensing costs of medicines not so available.

Advisory Committee Report

Mr. Galley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he can now announce when the Social Security Advisory Committee will be publishing its third report.

Mr. Tony Newton: I understand that the third report of the Social Security Advisory Committee, covering its work in 1984, was published yesterday. Copies are available in the Vote Office.

Board and Lodging Payments

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the average weekly supplementary benefit payment, exclusive of personal allowances, paid to *(a)* single people, *(b)* couples without dependent children, *(c)* single parents with one dependent child, *(d)* single parents with two dependent children, *(e)* single parents with three or more dependent children, *(f)* couples with one dependent child, *(g)* couples with two dependent children and *(h)* couples with three or more dependent children who were assessed as boarders living in (i) private rented acommodation, (ii) bed and breakfast accommodation and hotels, (iii) hostels and (iv) common lodging houses in *(a)* December 1982 and *(b)* December 1983; and if he will give this information for Great Britain as a whole, and for each social security region.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 March 1985, c. *86-7*]: Information is not available in the form requested; and reliable information for couples and claimants with children cannot be given. The available information is set out in the table:

Average Payments of Supplementary Benefits to Single People† in Ordinary Board and Lodging, Hostels and Common Lodging Houses—1982, 1983 (Provisional) Great Britain*

	Age 16-17		*Age 18-25*		*Age 26 to Pension Age*		*Pensioners*	
	1982 £	*1983* £	*1982* £	*1983* £	*1982* £	*1983* £	*1982* £	*1983* £
Ordinary board and lodging (eg guest houses, hotels, private landladies)	34.96	40.28	36.14	46.42	36.35	44.68	26.33	41.59
Hostels and Common Lodging Houses	42.05	46.29	40.67	45.76	39.53	46.34	27.82	31.58

* Includes allowance for personal expenses.
† Without dependants.
Source: Annual Statistical Enquiry.

Mortality Statistics

Mrs. Ann Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has concerning the numbers of women aged *(a)* under 16, *(b)* under 20, *(c)* under 25 and *(d)* in total who have died in each of the years since 1965 through conditions attributed to the use of the contraceptive pill.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke [*pursuant to his reply*, 11 March 1985, c. *75*]: A lot of information has been published on investigations into the mortality of users of the contraceptive pill. We also have available information from death certificates and adverse drug reactions reports submitted to the Committee on Safety of Medicines.

However a check of all this information confirms that none is sufficient to allow firm conclusions to be drawn about the numbers of deaths which were caused by the pill.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

RAF Basic Trainer

Mr. Robert Atkins asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what advance warning was given to the Stock Exchange of the announcement concerning the Royal Air Force trainer aircraft.

Mr. Pattie: None.

British Overseas Trade Board

Mr. Hanley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he is satisfied with the change in the number of small companies as opposed to large companies that have received support under the overseas projects fund and the market entry guarantee scheme since 1979.

Mr. Channon: Information is not readily available to show how many small firms have been supported by the overseas projects fund since 1979. But many small firms have certainly benefitted from the OPF as suppliers to successful larger contractors.

An analysis of the market entry guarantee scheme based on turnover figures and adjusted for inflation, suggests that in 1979 some 36 per cent. of companies receiving support under MEGS could be classified as small companies; in 1984 the figure was some 54 per cent. In February 1984, the Department reduced the minimum funding level under MEGS to improve the scheme's attractiveness for small companies.

Mr. Hanley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether the reallocation of British Overseas Trade Board resources since 1979, reducing support for overseas trade fairs and increasing support for the overseas projects fund and the market entry guarantee scheme, has resulted in an increase in the number of small manufacturing companies exporting their products.

Mr. Channon: I expect the changes to BOTB services since 1979 to have helped many small manufacturing companies to export their products. The market entry guarantee scheme is aimed very specifically at helping smaller firms; the support for trade fairs, gross expenditure on which from 1979 to date has been broadly maintained in real terms, also helps many small firms seeking major contracts, benefits a large number of smaller firms associated with the work as subcontractors and in other ways. This scheme's share of the overall budget this year is less than that in 1979-80.

Mr. Coombs asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations his Department has received from the Building Materials Export Group in response to the British Overseas Trade Board consultation document issued in December 1984 about proposed changes to the British Overseas Trade Board budget.

Mr. Channon: A number of representations have been received from the building materials export group. The British Overseas Trade Board has taken full account of the views expressed by the group in deciding how best to use the funds available. The results will be announced shortly.

Mr. Richard Page asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations his Department has received in response to the British Overseas Trade Board consultation document issued in December 1984 about proposed changes to the British Overseas Trade Board budget.

Mr Channon There has been a wide ranging response to the British Overseas Trade Board's consultation document both from representative bodies and from individual firms. The BOTB has taken full account of views expressed in deciding how best to use the funds available. The results will be announced shortly.

Mr. Hanley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he is satisfied that the reallocation of the British Overseas Trade Board resources since 1979, reducing support for overseas trade fairs and increasing support for the overseas project fund and the market entry guarantee scheme, has led to an increase in United Kingdom manufactured exports as a proportion of total United Kingdom exports.

Mr. Channon [*pursuant to the reply*, 27 March 1985]: I would expect that the changes to BOTB services since 1979 have benefited both manufactured and invisible exports equally, particularly those from smaller firms. But it is not possible to quantify precisely the effects of the changes. All three schemes mentioned are open to all firms, whether manufacturing or services sector.

Mr. Grylls asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he is satisfied that the interests of small companies are adequately represented on the British Overseas Trade Board.

Mr Channon [*pursuant to the reply*, 27 March 1985]: Yes. Of the 17 businessmen on the British Overseas Trade Board, three are chairmen or managing directors of small firms. A fourth pays special attention to the views of the chamber of commerce movement which represents many small firms. These four members make up the business representation on the finance and general purposes committee which advises the board on the allocation of resources and the export services.

Weighing Machines

Mr. Eldon Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has made a comparison of the accommodation and overhead costs he charges for type approval of weighing machines with the accommodation and comparable overheads of a private industrial company doing business in central London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fletcher: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Multi-Fibre Arrangement

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give a breakdown for each of the multi-fibre arrangement categories 1-123 of *(a)* the number of items and *(b)* the total value of items in each category which have been imported in each of the last five years for which figures are available from (i) European Economic Community countries and (ii) low-cost countries.

Mr. Channon: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Textile Imports

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what has been the percentage annual increase in the total value of textile imports from *(a)* low-cost and *(b)* other developed countries in each of the last 10 years for which figures are available;

(2) what has been the total value of textile imports from *(a)* low-cost and *(b)* other developed countries in each of the last 10 years for which figures are available; and what percentage of the total annual value of such imports these totals represent in each of those years.

Mr. Channon: The information which can be provided without excessive cost is set out in the following table. The definition of textiles is narrower than that normally used.

United Kingdom Imports of Textiles

	*Low-cost countries**			*Other countries*					
				Total			*Other developed†*		
	Value £ million	*Per cent. of total*	*Per cent. change on previous year*	*Value £ million*	*Per cent. of total*	*Per cent. change on previous year*	*Value £ million*	*Per cent. of total*	*Per cent. change on previous year*
1975	198	29	− 9	485	71	+ 3	13	2	−16
1976	272	30	+38	639	70	+32	19	2	+44
1977	320	28	+17	810	72	+27	27	2	+46
1978	371	26	+16	1,082	74	+34	42	3	+52
1979	438	26	+18	1,253	74	+16	51	3	+23
1980	362	23	−17	1,182	77	− 6	53	3	+ 5
1981	375	21	+ 4	1,386	79	+17	72	4	+36
1982	428	22	+14	1,499	78	+ 8	89	5	+23
1983	520	22	+21	1,800	78	+20	120	5	+35
1984 (provisional)	625	23	+20	2,082	77	+16	128	5	+ 7

Source: SITC/R2 Division 65 (and near equivalent under SITC/R1) in Table 2 of the United Kingdom Overseas Trade Statistics.

Notes:

* Low Cost Countries are defined as all countries *less* E.C., E.F.T.A. (excluding Portugal), United States of America, Canada, Isreal, Japan, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa.

† Other Developed are as defined in the United Kingdom Overseas Trade Statistics (Australia, New Zealand, Japan and South Africa).

‡ United Kingdom imports are valued c.i.f.

‖ The E.C. is defined throughout in terms of current membership.

Ships (Credit Scheme)

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will place in the Library the documentation made by Her Majesty's Government on the talks on a European Economic Community home credit scheme for ships built in European Economic Community yards.

Mr. Butcher: No formal proposal has been put forward by the European Commission about this. The Commission is currently considering with member states the possibility of increasing the incentives for EC shipowners to place orders in Community shipyards.

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will place in the Library a copy of the document submitted to him by the General Council of British Shipping on changes in the credit arrangements for ships built in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Butcher: Replies were given jointly by the GCBS and BS to a discussion paper put to them by my Department in 1983 concerning possible changes that might be made to these credit arrangements. However, it is not Departmental policy to publish private documents.

Privatisation and Government Procurement

Mr. Robert Atkins asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what procedures are followed when major Government announcements on procurements are made during the middle of an offer for sale of Government-owned shares in companies which are affected thereby.

Mr. Butcher: Steps are taken to ensure that any prospectus for an offer of Government-owned shares in a company reflects any Government decisions material to the company.

British Aerospace

Mr. Robert Atkins asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is calculated to be the loss in the value of the Government's shareholding in British Aerospace plc as a result of changes in the market value between 21 and 22 March.

Mr. Butcher: The British Aerospace share price stood at £3.90 at the close on 21 March and at £3·80 at the closure on 22 March. On the basis of these prices, the Government's shareholding had a stock market value of approximately £377·7 million and £386 million on the respective dates, a different of £9·7 million. On 26 March the share price closed at £3·98, giving a value for the Government shareholding on that date of approximately £385·5 million, a rise of £7·8 million above the value on 21 March.

EC (Industrial Council)

Mr. Hickmet asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the European Community Industrial Council held on 26 March.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The Council, at which I represented the United Kingdom, confirmed its firm adherence to the deadline of 31 December 1985, beyond which no further payments of aid to the steel industry will be allowed. It agreed a proposal for amendments to the

steel aids code, which will extend the deadline for the payment of operating aid from 31 December 1984 to 31 December 1985, and will permit member states to increase the total sums of aid beyond the levels previously fixed in June 1983. All aids will continue to be subject to authorisation by the Commission under the conditions set out in the aids code, extra aids will be available either for financial restructuring or for costs incurred because of capacity reductions.

The Council also discussed the ferrous scrap market. Most member states accepted that, although prices had risen over the last few months, there was no underlying shortage of supply and controls would therefore be inappropriate. However, ministers agreed that a study group should be set up. The Commission will prepare a paper on Spain and the Community scrap market.

The Council indicated acceptance of the Commission's proposals for small increases in the minimum prices for certain steel products. Some member states argued for higher increases, but I supported the Commission's proposal, taking account of the interests of steel users as well as steel producers.

In a discussion on EC/US steel relations, the Council agreed a firm declaration on recent United States protectionist moves on steel imports.

I welcomed a further Commission report on advanced manufacturing technology, stressing the urgency of work in this field, particularly on standards.

South Africa (Code of Conduct)

Mr. Bendall asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will report on how British companies have complied with the European Community's code of conduct for companies with interests in South Africa during the 12-month period to 30 June 1984.

Mr. Channon: By 20 March 1985, 171 companies had submitted reports to the Department under the code of conduct. Copies of the reports, and of the Department's analysis and summary, have been placed in the Library of each House. These documents may also be inspected at the Department's library, at the British embassy in Pretoria, at the British consulate-general in Johannesburg, and at the British consulates in Cape Town and Durban.

Reports were received from the great majority of British companies with interests in South Africa, and the Government are grateful to companies for their continued efforts in reporting. The majority of companies have continued to make progress in meeting most of the code's requirements, and the returns again showed evidence of British companies' increased dealings with the emerging trade unions in South Africa, and a greater commitment to training, education and community projects. The Government will continue to urge companies to comply fully with the code.

Kearney and Trecker Marwin Ltd.

Mr. Bowen Wells asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement about the Government's interests in Kearney and Trecker Marwin Ltd.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The Government have disposed of their interest in Kearney and Trecker Marwin Ltd. to Vickers plc who are now the sole shareholder. Those interests consisted of 900,000 non-voting preference shares and an unsecured loan to KTM of £1 million, both arising from a refinancing agreement made in 1976 under S8 of the Industry Act 1972. The shares were transferred for a nominal sum and the loan for £250,000 in each case representing a considered view of the commercial value.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

El Salvador

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what criteria he proposes to judge the fairness of the forthcoming elections in El Salvador.

Mr. Renton: We shall judge the fairness of the elections not only by the degree of genuine choice we assess the voters have been given, but also in the light of the particular circumstances of El Salvador, among them the campaign by insurgents to disrupt polling.

Latin America

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps have been taken by the European Economic Community to revise trade agreements with Latin America as a result of the expected accession of Spain to the Community.

Mr. Rifkind: The Community has only a trade agreement with Uruguay and economic and commercial co-operation agreements with Mexico and Brazil. An economic and commercial co-operation agreement with the Andean pact signed in 1983 has still to be ratified by some Andean pact members. There are no plans at present for the Community to revise these agreements to take account of Spanish accession.

Peru

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on current relations between her Majesty's Government and Peru.

Mr. Renton: We enjoy friendly relations with Peru and maintain frequent contacts on a wide range of subjects.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made to Peru regarding violations of human rights.

Mr. Renton: The Peruvian Government participate in the work of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights and is well aware of our views on human rights issues. We understand that the Peruvian Government have responded to allegations of human rights abuses by inviting the UNCHR working group on involuntary and enforced disappearances to investigate the situation for themselves.

Assistance (Refusal)

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will now list those countries to which the United Kingdom refuses to supply *(a)* military aid or assistance and *(b)* financial or other such aid.

Mr. Luce: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Chile

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action the Government have taken regarding individual cases of human rights violation in Chile; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: The Chilean Government are very well aware of our concern about reports of human rights violations in Chile.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the recent visit by officials from his Department to Chile, stating in particular *(a)* the reason for the visit, *(b)* the persons met on the visit, *(c)* whether human rights issues were discussed and with whom, *(d)* whether military aid or co-operation was discussed and with whom, *(e)* whether any invitations to Chilean persons were extended and *(f)* whether any invitations to Ministers were extended by the Chilean authorities.

Mr. Renton: A senior Foreign and Commonwealth Office official visited Chile from 26-28 February during a tour of four South American countries. His purpose was to obtain first hand impressions about the current situation in Chile and the prospects for an early return to democracy. He met a wide range of Chilean opinion including members of the Government, democratic opposition parties, trade union leaders and human rights groups. The theme of human rights was a point of special concern in all his conversations. No invitations for visits, in either direction, were extended.

Council of Ministers

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish in the *Official Report* a statement of forthcoming business in the European Community Council of Ministers.

Mr. Rifkind: The usual written forecast was deposited in the House earlier today. At present three meetings of the Council of Ministers are planned for April.

The Agriculture Council is due to meet on 1-4 April and on 22-23 April to continue discussion on the Commission's price proposals for 1985.

The Foreign Affairs Council is expected to meet on 29-30 April to consider any follow-up action required in the light of the 29-30 March European Council. It will also discuss any outstanding issues in the enlargement negotiations; the Commission's proposals on integrated Mediterranean programmes and guidelines for negotiations with the Community's Mediterranean partners to take account of the effects of enlargement. Ministers may also consider the draft negotiating mandates for the second European Community-Yugoslavia financial protocol and for a European Community-Central America co-operation agreement.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Private Members' Bills

Mr. White asked the Lord Privy Seal if he will list the sponsors of those private Members' Bills which received the Royal Assent in each year since 1955.

Mr. Biffen: The information requested is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

WALES

Nuclear Waste Contamination

Mr. Harvey asked the Secretary of State for Wales if there is any evidence of contamination along the north Wales coast from nuclear waste emitted by the Sellafield nuclear plant.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Routine monitoring of coastal waters has been carried out for many years to ensure that discharges of radioactive waste, from whatever source, do not pose a threat to the public. Results, published annually by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in its aquatic environment monitoring report on radioactivity in surface and coastal waters of the British Isles, show that any exposure of members of the public would be small in relation to the international safety limit and there is therefore no evidence to suggest that people using the beaches, for example, are at risk.

Welsh Language

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales whether negotiations with the appropriate and interested bodies over the setting up of a Welsh language development organisation have been concluded; and if he will make a statement of his future plans as to Welsh language co-ordination in education.

Mr. John Stradling Thomas: I am now considering the responses to my recent consultations on this subject and am not yet in a position to make an announcement.

Agriculture (Structure Plan)

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he is now in a position to publish details of the new structure plan for the agriculture industry from the European Economic Community.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The new structures regulation was approved by the EC Council of Agriculture Ministers on 12 March 1985. We shall shortly be issuing a consultative document setting out our proposals for implementing the regulation.

Death Grant

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Wales what recent representations he has received from the Welsh Consumer Council regarding the level of the death grant; what response he is making; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: In August last year, I received from the Welsh Consumer Council a copy of a report published by the National Consumer Council on the future of the death grant. My response made it clear that substantive comments on the issues raised was a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services who is responsible for the administration of this grant.

Cancer Screening

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he is satisfied with cancer screening facilities in Wales; and how many computer-based call and recall schemes exist in Wales, by area health authority.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Population based schemes of screening for cancer have been developed for only a small number of types of this disease. The best example of such a scheme is the cervical cytology service which is the only one to have been introduced nationally to cover an age/sex based section of the population. As I have already said in the reply on cervical cancer screening, given to the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) on 22 March at column *627*, a working group is being set up to examine urgently the adequacy of the present provision of the service and necessary future developments. Some health authorities in Wales screen women for breast cancer, but because the relative effectiveness of different screening procedures is still under study there is no nationally agreed scheme. Health departments are currently funding trials and it is expected that the first results will be available in 1988. The small number of workers in high risk groups who have been, or are, exposed to certain carcinogens through their occupations are also screened under arrangements supervised by the Health and Safety Executive.

At present there are no computer based call and recall schemes in Wales, but I refer again to my answer to the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside.

Cervical Cancer

Mr. Williams asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many cases of, and deaths from, cervical cancer were reported in West Glamorgan, Wales, and the United Kingdom in each year since 1979; and what percentage of women received cervical cancer screening in each of these areas in each of these years.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information is given in the following table.

	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*
West Glamorgan					
Number of registrations of cervical cancer*	55	47	55	34	N/A
Number of deaths from cervical cancer*	23	20	23	19	9
Percentage of women receiving cervical cancer screening†	16·5	16·3	17·2	15·8	17·6
Wales					
Number of registrations of cervical cancer*	320	333	343	246	NA
Number of deaths from cervical cancer*	136	125	133	119	136
Percentage of women receiving cervical cancer screening†	14·2	15·6	16·7	15·8	17·0

* Malignant neoplasm of the cervix uteri.

† Calculated as the total number of cases examined as a percentage of all women aged 15-64. This total includes some multiple tests.

Information on the other countries of the United Kingdom is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretaries of State for Social Services, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

DEFENCE

Overseas Personnel (Training)

Mr. Faulds asked the Secretary of State for Defence what checks are made on the past conduct of personnel chosen for military training in Britain from countries such as El Salvador; and if their personal record is a bad one, if the application is then rejected.

Mr. Lee: Candidates for places on military training courses in the United Kingdom are checked to ensure that they meet pre-course professional standards and conditions. Although assessment of their personal suitability is the responsibility of their own authorities, and it is obviously difficult to trace the whole background of the people concerned, we would naturally refuse to accept any candidate who did not meet the generally accepted standards on human rights.

RAF Upper Heyford

Mr. Baldry asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he is yet in a position to make a statement about the outcome of noise level testings in the proximity of RAF Upper Heyford.

Mr. Lee: The RAF Institute of Community Medicine has produced computer predicted contours and has taken validating measurements in the vicinity of RAF Upper Heyford. The results obtained are being carefully evaluated and a standard noise insulation grant scheme will be introduced if noise levels are shown to be above the qualifying level. It is to soon to say what the outcome of the evaluation will be.

USAAF (Green Flag Exercise)

Mr. Eldon Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Defence which Royal Air Force aircraft recently participated in the United States air force's Green Flag exercise; and with what results.

Mr. Lee: Eight Tornado aircraft drawn from 9 and 27 squadrons are participating in Exercise Green Flag. In their deployment they have been supported by Hercules, Victor and VC 10 aircraft from the Air Transport Force. Exercise Green Flag continues until 30 March and it is therefore too early to comment on the results.

Greenham Common (Member's Correspondence)

Mr. Clay asked the Secretary of State for Defence when the hon. Member for Sunderland, North can expect to receive a reply to his letter dated 20 February, concerning an alleged shooting incident at Greenham Common on 12 February.

Mr. Heseltine: I have written to the hon. Member today.

British Aerospace (PC9)

Mr. Robert Atkins asked the Secretary of State for Defence when British Aerospace plc was informed that its final submission for the PC9 on 19 March was too late or otherwise unacceptable.

Mr. Butler: The British Aerospace submission of 19 March was received well after the closure date for final bids. There was no subsequent communication with British Aerospace until my right hon. Friend announced in the House on Thursday 21 March that we proposed to place the order for the new basic trainer with Shorts.

Stornoway Air Base

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Defence what method will be used to supply the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation air base at Stornoway with aviation fuel.

Mr. Lee: Our original plans for the use of a single point mooring in Broad Bay are under review and other options are being considered. It is too early to indicate the outcome, but the local authorities will be fully consulted when our review is complete. We shall of course take into account representations already received.

Schools

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many private schools and how many state schools receive grants from his Department for the purchase of military equipment; if he will itemise the equipment and name the schools; and whether his Department also pays travelling allowances to pupils at these schools taking part in training exercises and camps both in the United Kingdom and overseas.

Mr. Lee [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 March 1985, c. *204*]: The Ministry of Defence does not provide grants to schools for the purchase of military equipment which is supplied according to laid down scales through the normal services systems. Grants are, however, made to cover minor administrative costs and training aids which are not available through the military supply chain. The number of schools involved is 57 state schools, 194 private, four voluntary aided and four maintained service schools (three in Germany and one in Cyprus). To itemise the equipment concerned could only be done at disproportionate cost.

Travel at public expense within the United Kingdom is limited to attendance on courses and for authorised training. Expenditure on travel outside the United Kingdom is made from non-public funds.

CIVIL SERVICE

Job Dispersal

Mr. Parry asked the Minister for the Civil Service (1) if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's current policy with regard to the dispersal of Civil Service jobs to *(a)* Merseyside and *(b)* Liverpool;

(2) what is his estimate of the number of Civil Service jobs which will be dispersed to *(a)* Merseyside and *(b)* Liverpool in 1985-86; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: The Government are committed to carrying out the dispersal programme announced on 26 July 1979. That means 1,250 posts will be transferred to Merseyside. No provision was made for the transfer of posts to Liverpool.

To date, 1,064 of the posts designated for Merseyside have gone with the Home Office move having been completed in June 1983. Questions of detail concerning the timing of the remaining moves are matters for the Secretaries of State concerned.

Regional needs will continue to be taken fully into account should there be a need to locate new work or relocate existing work in the future.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Cash Limits

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give revised cash limits for 1984-85 which take account of the decision by some Departments not to seek supplementary provision to cover the carry-forward allowed under the end-year flexibility schemes.

Mr. Peter Rees: Under the end-year flexibility schemes announced in 1983, some 23 1984-85 cash limits were increased to allow for the carry-forward of underspend in 1983-84 — [31 July 1984, columns *189-92*.] In the case of six voted cash limits, the relevant Departments have not sought parliamentary approval of the extra provision in a Supplementary Estimate. To keep the control figures in line, the cash limits are accordingly being reduced. A list is shown in the following table.

Revisions to 1984-85 cash limits resulting from the carry forward of capital underspend in 1983-84 not being required
Voted cash limits

Class	*Vote*	*Accounting department*	*Description of expenditure*	*Current cash limit £000*	*Decrease £000*	*Revised cash limit £000*
IV	9	Export Credits Guarantee Department	International trade: export credit services and insurance of investment overseas	26,335	66	26,269
XIII	13	Treasury	Central management of the civil service: computers and telecommunications	16,747	87	16,660
XIV	1	Property Services Agency	Civil accommodation services	533,667	1,686	531,981
XV	15	Scottish Education Department	Education, arts, libraries and social work, Scotland	118,921	100	118,821
XV	24	Scottish Office	Scottish Office administration	97,344	72	97,272
XVII	1	Northern Ireland Office	Law, order, protective and miscellaneous services	404,215	1,164	403,051

EC (Payment Appropriations and Commitments)

Mr. Deakins asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if unused European Economic Community payment appropriations and commitments can be carried forward automatically from year to year.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Unused payment appropriations may be carried forward to the next financial year only, in accordance with article 202 of the treaty and article 6 of the financial regulation of 21 December 1977. Commitment appropriations may also be carried forward for a single financial year. Once a commitment has been entered into it remains in existence until liquidated. Appropriations relating to pay of staff members may not be carried over.

Special provisions apply to research and investment appropriations, as set out in Article 88 of the financial regulation.

Exchange Rate

Mr. White asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the real value of the pound sterling, compared with its present value, on 28 February 1974, 1975, 1976, 1977, 1978, 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983 and 1984.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The information requested is as follows:

Real Sterling Exchange Rate Index
(Average 1975=100)

	February averages
1974	89·5
1975	98·5
1976	101·1
1977	94·8
1978	109·5
1979	107·0
1980	122·4
1981	136·6
1982	124·7
1983	112·5
1984	115·5
1984 September	110·5

Data Processing Staff

Mr. Warren asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement as to the reasons for proposing no salary increases in 1985-86 for data processing staff in the Civil Service and then withdrawing the proposals summarily.

Mr. Hayhoe: My hon. Friend is referring to the allowances paid to certain staff in the computing field. The proposal is that these allowances should increase by 4 per cent. But since in some respects the present arrangements for these allowances do not reflect current priorities in an area of fast moving technological change, we also proposed some changes in the context of the 1985 pay negotiations. Following representations from the union concerned, we agreed to withdraw certain aspects of the proposals and carry forward consideration of these matters outside of the pay negotiations. The union representing the staff concerned will be fully consulted about the future pattern of these allowances.

Company Cars

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what was the revenue raised by the taxation as a benefit of company cars in each of the past 10 years; and if he will estimate the likely yield for 1985-86;

(2) if he will consider raising the threshold to £10,000 for the taxation of company cars; and if he will estimate the ensuing change in annual revenue.

Mr. Moore: I shall let my hon. Friend have replies as soon as possible.

European Monetary System

Mr. Soames asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer for what reasons the United Kingdom does not participate in the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave on 26 March 1985 to my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North (Mr. Skeet).

Inland Revenue (Vacancies)

Mr. Wrigglesworth asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many vacancies exist in the Inland Revenue by region and by grade at present and for each month over the past two years.

Mr. Moore: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Development Land Tax

Mr. Wrigglesworth asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what are the grades of the 80 staff in the Middlesborough development land tax office whose jobs will be lost as a result of the tax being abolished;

(2) at which valuation offices fewer staff will be needed as a result of the abolition of development land tax; and by how many at each;

(3) if he will give an undertaking that there will be no Civil Service redundancies arising from the abolition of development land tax.

Mr. Moore: I shall let the hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

Income Tax

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will update, to take account of the 1985 Budget, the information on income tax reductions provided in his reply of 4 April 1984 to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), *Official Report*, columns 542-544.

Mr. Moore: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer at what annual level of income a single person begins to pay less income tax than in 1979 following the Budget changes.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 March 1985]: A single man whose pay has increased in line with the national average will pay a smaller proportion of his earnings in income tax in 1985-86 than in 1978-79 unless his earnings in 1985-86 lie between £2,800 and £5,125 —that is, between about 27 per cent. and 50 per cent. of the average.

All those whose pay has risen in line with the national average have seen a real increase in their take-home pay since 1978-79.

Personal Allowances

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) how many people have been lifted out of tax by the personal allowances above that required increase by indexation; and how many of them *(a)* have children and *(b)* are estimated to be caught in the poverty trap;

(2) what is the cost to the Exchequer in 1985-86 of the married man's tax allowance in excess of the single person's allowance; how much of this cost it attributable to taxpayers aged below 65 years; and what is the weekly value of this extra relief to a married man paying income tax at the standard rate.

Mr. Moore: I shall let the hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Cormorants

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will define the term, "serious ecohomic loss", as used in determining whether or not licences to kill cormorants should be granted.

Mrs. Fenner: I have nothing to add to the second paragraph of my reply to the hon. Member of 14 March.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will explain the basis on which the anonymity of applicants for licences to kill cormorants for commercial reasons is preserved.

Mrs. Fenner: Applications for licences under part I of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 are in principle treated as in confidence in order to encourage applicants to make use of available procedures. However, the Ministry and NCC always consult local interests in order to establish the facts of the case and the alternatives available.

Nutrition Labelling

Mr. Deakins asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if his draft guidelines on nutrition labelling will cover salt and sugar content of foods.

Mrs. Fenner: Yes, the draft guidelines will enable salt and sugar content of foods to be declared.

Fishing Industry

Mr. Forth asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what estimate he has made of the effects on employment in the United Kingdom's fishing industry of the possible entry of Spain and Portugal to the European Economic Community.

Mr. MacGregor: The Government's firm objective in the current negotiations on the entry of Spain and Portugal into the European Community is to ensure that the effective fishing opportunities of the United Kingdom fishing industry, and hence employment in the industry, are fully safeguarded.

Food Standards

Mr. Coombs asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to reduce the number of foods which are required to meet compositional standards.

Mrs. Fenner: It is the Government's intention to continue to move towards more informative food labelling so as to allow for a wide consumer choice of foods. This does not mean however that all food compositional standards are likely to disappear.

Mr. Coombs asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects to update his Department's manual of nutrition, so as to reflect the recommendations of the Committee on Medical Aspects of Food Policy report.

Mrs. Fenner: My Department plans to publish the new ninth edition of the "Manual of Nutrition", which is aimed at teachers and students of nutrition, in time for the academic year starting in September 1985. The ninth edition will include advice based on the recommendations of the recent COMA report on diet and cardiovascular disease along with other updated information.

Mr. Coombs asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his national food policy.

Mrs. Fenner: Our policy is to ensure the provision of adequate supplies of wholesome food, and to this end to foster in the United Kingdom efficient and competitive agriculture, fisheries and food processing and distribution industries. I am particularly concerned to encourage improvements in the quality, presentation and marketing of British food both at home and abroad. It was to achieve this that the Government set up Food From Britain.

Butter Fat

Mr. Coombs asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what research is being undertaken by his Department into alternative uses for excess butter fat.

Mrs. Fenner: None at present. It is, however, one of the items in the future programme of food research currently being considered by the priorities board for R and D in agriculture and food.

Horses and Ponies

Sir Kenneth Lewis asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will bring forward proposals to provide statutory protection against ill-treatment for horses and ponies by bringing them within the classification of agricultural animals.

Mrs. Fenner: I have no plans to bring forward such proposals as I believe that horses and ponies are adequately protected by existing legislation. Horses and ponies on agricultural land, are protected by the Agriculture (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1968, which makes it an offence to cause agricultural livestock unnecessary pain or unnecessary distress. More generally, all horses and ponies are covered by the Protection of Animals Act 1911 which is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Home Affairs.

African Swine Fever (Meat Imports)

Mr. Nicholas Baker asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he is taking to check the import of meat products from Spain and Belgium in the light of the nine confirmed outbreaks of African swine fever in Belgium close to the Dutch border.

Mrs. Fenner: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Badgers

Mr. Soames asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) how many badgers were killed in each of the last three years under the anti bovine tuberculosis campaign;

(2) what evidence he has that badgers are carriers of bovine tuberculosis.

Mrs. Fenner: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Council of Agriculture Ministers

Sir John Wells asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the outcome of the Council of Agriculture Ministers' meeting in Brussels on 25 to 27 March; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: With my hon. Friend the Minister of State, I represented the United Kingdom at the Council of Agriculture Ministers in Brussels on 25 to 27 March.

The main subject of the Council was the Commission's price proposals. In addition to detailed discussion of the individual commodity proposals a series of bilateral meetings was held with the Commission and Presidency to identify points of difficulty for individual Member States.

In the light of the outcome of these discussions the Council decided that decisions could not be reached this week and that discussions should resume in Luxembourg on 1 April.

The Council also decided that the marketing years for milk products, beef, sheepmeat and dried fodder would be extended until 14 April as the marketing years for these regimes would otherwise terminate at the end of the month.

A conciliation meeting was held with the European Parliament delegation on the wine reform package and a declaration was agreed with it on aspects of implementation.

Milk Quotas

Mr. Neil Hamilton asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when it is anticipated that the work of the milk tribunals in dealing with appeals for extra quota will be completed.

Mr. Jopling [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 February 1985, c. 255]: I have today laid before Parliament the Dairy Produce Quotas (Amendment) Regulations 1985 which will make the changes necessary to implement the package of changes to the Community rules which were recently agreed by the Agriculture Council. Principal among these are the facility for producers with mixed businesses to interchange unused direct and wholesale quotas and the provision to allow (in respect of the first year of quotas) unused quota to be re-allocated between producers within a region and between regions. I am pleased that this package of changes has wiped out the liability for levy in the United Kingdom for this year, except just possibly for a few direct sellers.

The amendment regulations also enable Ministers to allocate additional quota to small producers and remote areas, these allocations being drawn from outgoers' quota.

The Dairy Produce Quotas Tribunal for England and Wales has now virtually completed its work. Letters will be going shortly after Easter to producers who have received secondary quota or exceptional hardship awards, notifying them of their final quotas for 1984-85. For this year, final quotas will consist of primary quota already allocated plus the following elements where appropriate:

(a) Base year revision awards met in full;

(b) Development awards to the extent of about 65 per cent. of the award;

(c) Exceptional hardship awards to the extent of about 75 per cent. of the award (based on an allocation for this purpose of 60 million litres from outgoers' quota).

Because no wholesale producers will have to pay levy this year, the restriction of the development and exceptional hardship awards has no practical effect.

Direct sellers will receive their full base year revision awards, development awards and exceptional hardship awards.

Within the next few weeks producers in England and Wales will also be informed of their 1985-86 quotas. We shall at this stage aim to provide for the restoration to base year levels of quotas totalling less than 200,000 litres, as well as for an increased allocation of development and exceptional hardship awards, but this will depend upon the sufficiency of outgoers' quota. Letters will go out as soon as possible.

We have made every endeavour to inform producers of their final quotas as rapidly as possible. But the tribunal and the local panels have had to deal with an enormous volume of work—22,250 cases before local panels, with 5,700 appeals to the Tribunal and 5,100 exceptional hardship cases. We are continuing to press ahead to complete the outgoers' scheme.

In Northern Ireland producers have offered only about 12 million litres under the outgoers' scheme, whereas provision was made last May of some 66 million litres to be purchased there. To alleviate the situation in the Province we are considering using the resources previously allocated there to purchase quota from outgoers in Great Britain who would otherwise be disappointed by being unable to enter the scheme; this will, however, depend upon the total volume of acceptances.

Farmers (Diversification)

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what finance has been allocated to farmers from European Economic Community resources to promote diversification from farming to tourism and other industries; and when these funds will be available for payment.

Mr. Jopling [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 March 1985, c. 3]: The recently agreed EC regulation for improving the efficiency of agricultural structures includes provisions which permit member states to provide aid for investments under approved improvement plans on farms in designated less favoured areas for the development of tourism or craft

industries. Such aid would be reimbursed partially from the European agricultural guidance and guarantee fund but no estimates are available of the cost of these specific measures in the Community.

As I have previously announced, it is my intention to implement these provisions when I introduce new grant arrangements later this year.

ENVIRONMENT

Rent Arrears

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the rent arrears for each year since 1979 for *(a)* Lichfield district council, *(b)* Cannock Chase district council and *(c)* Stafford borough council.

Sir George Young: Gross rent arrears on 31 March in each of the years since 1979 were as follows:

£'000

	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
Lichfield District Council	n/a	63	46	49	111	138
Cannock Chase District Council	52	77	98	147	166	195
Stafford Borough Council	44	31	49	122	98	104

Housing Starts

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the number of housing starts in the east midlands in 1978-79 and 1983-84.

Sir George Young: Total dwellings starts in the east midlands region were 18,559 in 1978-79 and 16,520 in 1983-84.

Local Government Act 1972

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to repeal section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have no present plans to do so. The committee of inquiry into the conduct of local authority business, the establishment of which my right hon. Friend announced on 6 February, has been asked to consider amongst other matters the need to clarify the limits and conditions governing discretionary spending by local authorities. We shall consider the need for legislative change in the light of the committee's recommendations.

Rating Revaluation

Mr. Michie asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to announce whether there will be a domestic revaluation.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave) to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) on 22 October 1984 at column 191.

Council Housing

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has about when contracts were last entered into by the Walsall metropolitan borough council for council house building; and if he will give the number of public sector dwellings in the borough needing improvement, modernisation and substantial repair work.

Sir George Young: Figures provided to my Department by Walsall MBC in its annual housing investment programme submissions show that no new council dwellings have been started since 1979-80, for which the number was 35.

Information on the condition of public sector dwellings in the borough is not available in the form requested. However, the council has provided an estimate of the number of unfit dwellings, dwellings fit but lacking basic amenities and non-standard dwellings in need of renovation in the 1985-86 housing investment programme return, which is available in the Library.

Planning Appeals

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg asked the Secretary of State for the Environment in respect of how many planning appeals which were the subject of a public inquiry or written representation, where the reports of inspectors were delivered to him prior to 1 January 1984, he has not yet made a decision; and if he will give similar information about reports delivered to him prior to 1 September 1984.

Mr. Macfarlane: Fifty appeals made under section 36 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971, for which an inspector's report had been received prior to 1 September 1984, were awaiting decision by my right hon. Friend on 28 February 1985. Of these, 23 were appeals on which the inspector's report had been received prior to 1 January 1984.

Mr. Shersby asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to determine the outcome of the appeal by Costain Homes Ltd. and Milton Hutchings Ltd. against the decision of the London borough of Hillingdon in respect of Pield Health Nurseries; why it has not yet been determined; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Macfarlane: My right hon. Friend wrote to the parties on 2 January saying that he was minded to allow the appeal but sought further information before reaching a decision. This information has now been received and a decision will be issued as soon as possible.

Housing (Economies of Scale)

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any evidence about the economies of scale in housing management.

Mr. Gow: The success of locally-based housing management teams in improving run-down local authority estates has been demonstated by the Department's priority estates project (PEP).

The Department's report "Local Housing Management" (1984), based on a PEP survey of 20 estates

projects, suggest that local management is a cost-effective answer to the drain on resources resulting from void properties, vandalism, rent arrears and inefficient repair services which often characterise run-down estates.

In its new phase, PEP is developing local management and maintenance budgets which will provide detailed information on comparative costs. The expenditure of the Cloverhall tenants' management co-operative in Rochdale will also be monitored.

Sheltered Housing

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the local authorities which make service charges for sheltered housing; and how much of the service charge is met by housing benefit.

Mr. Gow: I regret that the information requested is not available.

"Tower Blocks"

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he can yet make a statement in response to the report by the polytechnic of the South Bank entitled "Tower Blocks".

Mr. Gow: The report details imaginative ways in which local authorities and other agencies have put tower blocks to good use in the light of local conditions. It does not call for a response from my right hon. Friend.

Departmental Expenses

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many visits abroad have been made by Ministers in his Department in the years 1983-84 and 1984-85 to date.

Sir George Young: DOE Ministers carried out 13 official engagements overseas during 1983-84 and 17 during 1984-85.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the total cost of ministerial hospitality in his Department in the years 1983-84 and 1984-85 to date.

Sir George Young: I shall answer this question shortly.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the total cost of furnishing Ministers' offices in his Department in each year since 1979-80.

Mr. Waldegrave: The information is as follows:

Year	*Cost (excluding VAT)* £
1979-80	2,576
1980-81	518
1981-82	2,022
1982-83	5,794
1983-84	14,044
1984-85	8,975

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the total cost of providing Ministers' cars in his Department in each year since 1979-80; how many cars are provided; and how many trips have been made outside London.

Sir George Young: The numbers and costs of the cars in the years concerned are as follows:

	Number	£
1979-80	6	92,040
1980-81	7	131,040
1981-82	7	138,580
1982-83	6	143,520
1983-84	6	164,450
1984-85	6	155,150

Separate records of the trips made outside London are not maintained.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment which grades of civil servants in his Department are allowed to have official supplies of alcohol in their offices; how much has been spent by his Department in each year since 1979-80 on such items.

Mr. Macfarlane: The permanent Secretaries of the Department each have authorised drinks cabinets. They may authorise such expenditure on the part of other senior officers: one such authorisation has currently been given.

Records of expenditure of this kind prior to 1982-83 are incomplete; expenditure from 1982-83 has been as follows:

	£
1982-83	110
1983-84	235
1984-85	435

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how much has been spent on official supplies of alcohol to Ministers' offices in this Department in each year since 1979-80.

Sir George Young: Expenditure on Departmental Ministers' drinks cabinets, which include non-alcoholic drinks, has been as follows:

	£
1979-80	1,511
1980-81	1,728
1981-82	2,184
1982-83	2,188
1983-84	1,905
1984-85	2,003

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the total cost of staffing and maintenance of Ministers' offices in his Department for each year since 1979-80.

Sir George Young: I shall answer this question shortly.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment which Civil Service grades in his Department are allowed to make charges for official hospitality; and how much was spent on official hospitality by civil servants in each year since 1979-80.

Mr. Macfarlane: Expenditure on official hospitality other than tea and coffee at official meetings is subject to the approval of at least an assistant secretary and normally a higher grade. The total spent on official hospitality by the Department (including the PSA and costs incurred by Ministers) since 1979-80 has been:

	£ thousands
1979-80	83
1980-81	88
1981-82	94·4
1982-83	108·8
1983-84	98·5
1984-85	*108·6

*Estimated outturn.

These figures are in cash terms.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many official cars are maintained by his Department; what is the total annual cost; and who uses them.

Sir George Young: Six ministerial cars and one permanent secretary car costing £175,430 per annum. In addition the Building Research Establishment operates four official cars but the costs are not separately identified in its budget. The cars are used by:

The Secretary of State
Ministers of State (3)
Parliamentary Under-Secretaries of State (2)
Permanent Secretary (1)
Authorised staff of the Building Research Establishment (4)

This is exclusive of the 1,450 cars operated by The Crown Suppliers for the use of other Government Departments and other public sector bodies.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the total cost to his Department in each year since 1979-80 of toilet rolls, disposable cups, stationery, teabags, office furniture, newspapers and periodicals.

Sir George Young: The information for DOE Central is as follows:

	Stationery * £	*Office Furniture* £	*Newspapers and Periodicals* £
1979-80	†	‡	99,700
1980-81	607,284	‡	110,400
1981-82	461,471	‡	91,500
1982-83	503,796	‡	105,600
1983-84	507,163	736,526	91,200
1984-85	273,565 ‖	•824,400	105,600

Notes:
* Includes the cost of toilet rolls for which no separate figures are available.
† stationery was provided by HMSO on Allied Service terms under which costs were not passed onto Departments.
‡ cannot be obtained without disproportionate cost.
‖ a contributory factor to the reduction this year is the establishment of the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission.
¶ separate information for the cost of disposable cups and tea bags in not available.
• Estimated.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how much has been spent by his Department on telephone calls in each year since 1979-80.

Mr. Waldegrave: The cost of British Telecom calls in the Department (including the PSA) since 1979-80 has been:

Year	*£ thousands*
1979-80	2,759
1980-81	3,784
1981-82	3,813
1982-83	3,787
1983-84	3,626
*1984-85	3,474

* estimated outturn

These figures are in cash terms.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how much has been spent on postage by his Department in each year since 1979-80.

Mr. Waldegrave: The cost of postage in the Department (including the PSA) since 1979-80 has been:

Year	*£ thousands*
1979-80	1,316
1980-81	2,265
1981-82	2,168
1982-83	1,739
1983-84	1,314
*1984-85	1,335

* estimated outturn

These figures are in cash terms.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the total cost to his Department of official travel in each year since 1979-80.

Mr. Waldegrave: The cost of official travel and subsistence in the Department (including PSA) since 1979-80 has been:

	£ thousands
1979-80	9,698
1980-81	10,535
1981-82	10,087
1982-83	11,064
1983-84	11,088
1984-85*	9,461

* Estimated outturn.

These figures are in cash terms.

Local Government Bill

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the average daily number of civil servants from his Department attending Standing Committee G considering the Local Government Bill; and what was the total cost.

Sir George Young: This information is not available.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when the Greater London council, the Inner London education authority and the metropolitan county councils were informed of the Government's amendment to the Local Government Bill seeking further controls over certain activities of those local authorities; what is the nature of the proposed controls; from what date they become effective; and what method was used to advise the local authorities.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The nature of the proposed new control over the GLC and metropolitan county councils, since approved by the House, covering enforceable agreements and arrangements, and the amendments to those contained in the 1984 Act, was set out in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) on Thursday 21 March at columns 543-45.

Letters giving details of the proposals were delivered by hand to the chief executive of the Greater London council and the chief officer of the Inner London education authority by 4.15 pm on the same day, and by 3.30 pm at the latest to the chief executives of each of the metropolitan county councils.

The chief officer at ILEA has confirmed receipt of the letter that afternoon. In the case of the GLC, this courtesy was clearly unnecessary since I understand that a press conference was held to outline the council's reactions at 2.30 pm, before my announcement to the House. My officials briefed the press at 3.30 pm.

Crown Suppliers

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total value of business between local authorities and the Crown Suppliers in each of the accounting years since 1979.

Sir George Young: The total value of direct sales of business between local authorities and the Crown Suppliers in each of the accounting years since 1979 were as follows:

	£
1979-80	233,096
1980-81	145,887
1981-82	69,820
1982-83	245,922
1983-84	147,952
1984-85*	538,621

* February.

The figures do not include the value of orders placed through the direct call-off contracts. In these cases the bills are paid by the authorities themselves.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what warehouse facilities in the London area are maintained by the Crown Suppliers.

Sir George Young: The Crown Suppliers occupy 9,708 sq m of storage accommodation at the India pavilion, Exhibition ground, Wembley. These facilities are used primarily for the disposal by public auction of furniture and equipment that is beyond economic repair, and for the storage of furniture and equipment used on ceremonial occasions. Storage and distribution of furniture and equipment for the use of the public sector organisations supplied by the Crown Suppliers in the London area is undertaken from its store at Milton, near Abingdon, Oxon.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if the Crown Suppliers are currently able to offer supplies of paper, educational stationery, art and craft materials, science equipment and chemicals, audio-visual equipment and food for school meals to the London boroughs.

Sir George Young: The Crown Suppliers do not currently offer supplies of paper, educational stationery, art and craft materials, audio visual equipment or food for school meals. All except the latter might be available under Government contracts arranged by HMSO. The Crown Suppliers do, however, supply some laboratory equipment, mainly benching and fume cupboards, and some chemicals which are mainly procured for cleaning purposes.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment which London boroughs avail themselves of the services offered by the Crown Suppliers.

Sir George Young: The following London boroughs have availed themselves of the services offered by the Crown Suppliers:

Southwark
Bromley
Lewisham
Enfield
Croydon
Harrow
Ealing
Hillingdon
Waltham Forest
Islington
Hammersmith/Fulham
Havering
Westminster City Council
Corporation of London
Walthamstow
Hounslow

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the value of business between the London boroughs and the Crown Suppliers in each of the accounting years since 1979-80.

Sir George Young: The value of business between the London boroughs and the Crown Suppliers in each of the accounting years since 1979-80 was as follows:

	£
1979-80	91,200
1980-81	32,552
1981-82	17,337
1982-83	206,857
1983-84	111,689
1984-85*	460,014

* (February).

The figures do not include the value of orders placed through the direct call-off contracts. In these cases the bills are paid by the authorities themselves.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information his Department has of comparable product prices offered by the Crown Suppliers and the Greater London council supplies department.

Sir George Young: No direct comparison has been made between the prices offered by the Crown Suppliers and the GLC supplies department.

The Crown Suppliers prices are however continuously monitored and the results are published in its annual report and accounts which is available in the Library of the House.

Gipsies

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to the current number of illegally encamped gipsy caravans in England and Wales.

Mr. Macfarlane: The number of gipsy caravans on unauthorised sites in England in July 1984 reported by district and London borough councils was 3,930.

The figures for Wales can be obtained from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Rates

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what public statements he has made about the relative levels of increase in the rate poundage in *(a)* the Isle of Wight and *(b)* the 19 Conservative-controlled county councils in England: and if, in the light of the information given to the hon. Member for the Isle of Wight on 22 March, *Official Report*, column 638-9, he has any further statement to make on this matter.

Mr. Waldegrave: In his speech to the Conservative local government conference on 9 March my right hon. Friend contrasted the average increase of 31 per cent. in the precepts of Conservative controlled non-metropolitan County Councils in the last four years with the comparable average increase of 62 per cent. in the precepts of Labour controlled non-metropolitan councils. He then observed that though the alliance controls few counties, the increase in the precept of the Isle of Wight over the same period was nearly 40 per cent.; and that this was far higher than the equivalent 28 per cent. increase in neighbouring Hampshire. My right hon. Friend had already made this latter comparison in a speech to Hampshire Conservative councillors and prospective councillors on 16 February.

Local Government Reform

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment why one of his Department's officials made reference at a press conference on 21 March to a counter-obstruction unit set up within his Department in connection with the abolition of the Greater London council and the metropolitan county councils; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: The House has been informed on several previous occasions of the responsibilities of the small division set up to administer those measures in the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act and the Local Government Bill which require the GLC and the metropolitan county councils to obtain my right hon. Friend's consent before proceeding with certain decisions. This has allowed over 4,000 specific applications for consent, to date, to be dealt with quickly. That division also advises my right hon. Friend on what further measures may be needed to counter possible activities of those authorities likely to be prejudicial to the interests of successor authorities and their ratepayers.

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of the voluntary bodies for which he has approved grants by the Greater London council under section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972.

Sir George Young: I shall reply shortly.

Departmental Staffing

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the total staffing of his Department in each year since 1979-80.

Mr. Waldegrave: The number of staff employed by the Department of the Environment (including PSA) since 1979-80 is as follows:

	Number
1 April 1979	50,258
1 April 1980	46,102
1 April 1981	43,507
1 April 1982	38,802
1 April 1983	36,491
1 April 1984	33,836
1 April 1985	*33,009

* Estimated.

Litter

Mr. Shersby asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will initiate an analysis of the type of litter deposited by members of the public in the hedgerows and ditches and other areas; if he will introduce further preventtive measures; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: Some information is already available on the type of litter deposited by the public and the Government do not plan to instigate a specific study of this matter. We believe that the long term solution to the problem must lie in educating the public not to drop litter. To this end we give financial support to the Keep Britain Tidy Group who offer a systematic litter abatement programme for adoption by local authorities. This recognises that litter is produced from many sources, and can be effectively tackled in the long term only by community co-operation.

The Government believe that the existing legislation provides sufficient back-up to this community approach.

Ozone Layer

Mr. Maclean asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made in regard to the convention for the protection of the ozone layer negotiated under the auspices of the United Nations Environment Programme.

Mr. Waldegrave: My Department led the United Kingdom delegation at the diplomatic conference in Vienna which completed work on the text of the convention on 22 March. The United Kingdom expects to sign the convention shortly. The European Community and all other member states are expected to become parties, along with at least 20 other countries.

The convention—which will be formally known as the Vienna convention for the protection of the ozone layer—is the first global convention to be concluded under the auspices of the United Nations Environment Programme. It established a framework for a range of possible measures to protect the ozone layer along lines that are fully compatible with the Community's environment policy of concentrating on the prevention rather than the cure of damage.

Agreement was also reached in Vienna to continue work on an associated Protocol to control the use of chlorofluorocarbons, the family of chemicals principally implicated in potential depletion of the ozone layer.

Geographic Information

Mr. Andy Stewart asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the setting up of a committee of inquiry into the handling of geographic information in the United Kingdom, as agreed in the

Government's response to the First Report of the House of Lords Select Committee on Science and Technology on remote sensing and digital mapping, Cmnd. 9320.

Mr. Waldegrave [*pursuant to his reply*, 28 February 1985, c. 233]: On the setting up of the committee of Inquiry into the handling of geographic information in the United Kingdom, I am pleased to announce that the following people have also been appointed members of the committee.

Dr. J. Balfour—Chairman of the Countryside Commission for Scotland 1972-1982.

Mr. I. Gilfoyle — Deputy County Planning Officer, Cheshire CC.

Prof. D. Rhind — Head of Geography Department, Birkbeck College, University of London.

Mr. F. P. Russell — Distribution Engineering Manager, British Gas.

Dr. R. Schiller — Head of Research at Hillier Parker, Chartered Surveyors.

Mr. G. Singh—Chairman and Executive Director, Pinpoint Analysis Ltd.

Mr. D. T. Sinker—Managing Director, Hunting Surveys and Consultants Ltd.

Dr. J. R. Townshend—Reader in Geography, University of Reading.

Waste Disposal

Mr. Shersby asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will initiate discussions with the manufacturers and distributors of beverages sold in metal cans and with the tobacco companies whose products are sold in packets about measures to seek to encourage the public to dispose of empty containers properly through refuse collection facilities.

Mr. Waldegrave [*pursuant to his answer*, 27 March 1985]: My Department already has regular contact with the packaging industry and particularly the industry committee for packaging and the environment which actively campaigns for the proper disposal by the public of empty containers. This is achieved in a wide variety of ways including strong encouragement for the use of appropriate labelling on packaging to effect recycling or proper disposal. We also give direct support to the Keep Britain Tidy Group for their comprehensive litter abatement work which includes substantial interface with industry to obtain appropriate labelling of packaging containers and litter bins with the international Tidyman symbol. The group also operates a systematic community environment programme involving industry and local authorities.

SCOTLAND

Licensing Laws (Report)

Mr. Hayward asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when the report into experience in Scotland following reform of the liquor licensing laws in 1976 will be received by Her Majesty's Government; when it will be published; and when he expects to announce the conclusions of Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Ancram: My right hon. Friend expects to receive the report of the OPCS survey into attitudes to the licensing laws in the summer. Publication is expected before the end of the year, but we hope to publish preliminary key findings of the survey in June. Once the necessary consideration and consultations have been undertaken, my right hon. Friend will make a statement about his conclusions, probably in the Spring of 1986.

Housing Finance

Mr. Bruce asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* in respect of each local housing authority in Scotland (i) the rate-fund contribution to housing revenue accounts budgeted for in 1985-86, (ii) the statutory limit to such contributions allowed by law, (iii) the average weekly rent increases for 1985-86 and (iv) the percentage increase in average weekly rents for 1985-86 over 1984-85.

Mr. Ancram: The information requested is set out in the following table:

Authority	*1 Budgeted Rate Fund Contribution 1985-86 (£m)*	*2 Rate Fund contribution Limit 1985-86 (£m)*	*3 Increase in Average Weekly Rent 1985-86 (£)*	*4 Per cent. increase in Average Weekly Rent 1985-86 (per cent.)*
Berwickshire	(0·061)	Nil	0·96p	7·5
Ettrick & Lauderdale	(0·316)	Nil	−0·10p	−1·0
Roxburgh	0·052	0·052	1·27	9·4
Tweeddale	(0·023)	Nil	−0·02p	−0·2
Clackmannan	0·712	0·712	0·44p	3·9
Falkirk	2·953	2·953	0·95p	8·9
Sterling	3·197	2·026	1·00	10·8
Annandale & Eskdale	0·195	0·195	1·00	7·8
Nithsdale	0·292	0·292	0·98p	9·4
Stewartry	0·084	0·084	0·15p	1·1
Wigtown	Nil	Nil	1·47	10·3
Dunfermline	1·229	1·229	Nil	Nil
Kirkcaldy	1·406	1·406	1·00	8·6
North East Fife	Nil	Nil	1·15	9·2
Aberdeen	6·015	6·015	2·25	25·2
Banff & Buchan	0·111	0·111	1·49	12·1
Gordon	0·484	0·484	1·76	14·7
Kincardine & Deeside	0·053	0·169	1·25	10·6
Moray	Nil	Nil	2·17	18·7
Badenoch & Strathspey	0·071	0·071	1·00	8·0
Caithness	0·258	0·258	1·00	8·5
Inverness	0·913	0·914	1·98	17·5

Authority	1 Budgeted Rate Fund Contribution 1985-86 (£m)	2 Rate Fund contribution Limit 1985-86 (£m)	3 Increase in Average Weekly Rent 1985-86 (£)	4 Per cent. increase in Average Weekly Rent 1985-86 (per cent.)
Lochaber	0·681	0·681	0·53p	6·6
Nairn	0·128	0·128	1·33	11·0
Ross & Cromarty	0·190	0·233	0·74p	6·1
Skye & Lochalsh	0·122	0·122	2·00	15·4
Sutherland	0·113	0·113	0·93p	7·8
East Lothian	0·545	0·545	1·00	9·0
Edinburgh	8·462	2·824	−0·09p	−0·7
Midlothian	1·012	1·012	1·09	10·1
West Lothian	1·378	1·378	0·82p	7·3
Argyll & Bute	0·088	0·088	0·65p	4·4
Bearsden & Milngavie	0·394	0·395	0·77p	6·8
Clydebank	—	1·183	—	—
Clydesdale	0·491	0·491	1·46	13·7
Cumbernauld & Kilsyth	0·703	0·703	1·92	17·8
Cumnock & Doon Valley	0·823	0·823	0·75p	7·2
Cunninghame	3·136	3·137	0·01p	0·1
Dumbarton	1·977	1·977	Nil	Nil
East Kilbride	0·282	0·284	1·00	8·0
Eastwood	0·081	0·081	0·56p	5·1
Glasgow	26·553	26·553	1·00	10·4
Hamilton	3·547	3·548	0·92p	9·0
Inverclyde	2·422	2·422	2·14	23·6
Kilmarnock & Loudoun	1·990	1·990	1·00	10·4
Kyle & Carrick	1·760	1·760	1·23	11·3
Monklands	2·705	2·705	2·02	21·7
Motherwell	4·586	4·586	1·38	14·0
Renfrew	4·720	4·720	1·01	11·4
Strathkelvin	1·285	1·285	1·01	9·6
Angus	Nil	Nil	1·05	9·0
Dundee	4·917	4·917	1·00	11·3
Perth & Kinross	(0·434)	Nil	1·15	10·7
Orkney	0 ·276	0·276	2·20	20·2
Shetland	0·598	0·598	3·01	28·6
Western Isles	—	0·950	—	—

Notes

1. The information contained in columns 1, 3 and 4 of the table is taken from returns, or in the case of Stirling, other information, submitted to the Scottish Development Department by authorities. Information from Clydebank district council and Western Isles islands council has yet to be received.

2. The figures in brackets in Column 1 are credit balances.

3. Changes in an authority's housing stock, e.g. through sales, can result in a marginal increase or decrease in the average rent. The rent increase figures shown in column 3 are not, therefore, necessarily wholly the result of authorities' decisions on rent levels.

Mr. Bruce asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* in respect of each district and islands area of Scotland the amounts paid or estimated to be paid by the Housing Corporation in respect of *(a)* new built housing and *(b)* improvements to housing (i) in cash terms and (ii) per head of population.

Mr. Ancram: The information requested for 1983-84, the most recent year for which figures are available, is set out in the following table:

	Expenditure on new build £000	Expenditure per head (new build) £	Expenditure on improvement £000	Expenditure per head (improvement) £
Borders region				
Berwickshire	1,207	66	105	6
Ettrick and Lauderdale	1,618	49	—	—
Roxburgh	1,361	39	—	—
Tweeddale	48	3	—	—
Central region				
Clackmannan	1,263	26	—	—
Falkirk	2,278	16	333	2
Stirling	457	6	44	1
Dumfries and Galloway region				
Annandale and Eskdale	158	4	—	—
Nithsdale	399	7	87	2
Stewartry	—	—	—	—
Wigtown	67	2	—	—

	Expenditure on new build £000	Expenditure per head (new build) £	Expenditure on improvement £000	Expenditure per head (improvement) £
Fife region				
Dunfermline	74	1	39	—
Kirkcaldy	447	3	3	—
North East Fife	603	9	—	—
Highland region				
Badenoch and Strathspey	—	—	—	—
Caithness	4	—	—	—
Inverness	292	5	—	—
Lochaber	126	6	—	—
Nairn	—	—	—	—
Ross and Cromarty	879	19	77	2
Skye and Lochalsh	117	11	—	—
Sutherland	28	2	—	—
Grampian region				
City of Aberdeen	2,697	13	775	4
Banff and Buchan	867	11	181	2
Gordon	761	11	—	—
Kincardine and Deeside	51	1	8	—
Moray	923	11	—	—
Lothian region				
East Lothian	397	5	—	—
City of Edinburgh	6,710	15	6,309	14
Midlothian	1,062	13	390	5
West Lothian	1,539	11	—	—
Strathclyde region				
Argyll and Bute	1,223	19	2,345	36
Bearsden and Milngavie	5	—	—	—
Clydebank	—	—	1,901	37
Clydesdale	181	3	—	—
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	55	1	1	—
Cumnock and Doon Valley	142	3	—	—
Cunninghame	—	—	24	—
Dumbarton	50	1	160	2
East Kilbride	10	—	—	—
Eastwood	14	—	188	3
City of Glasgow	5,757	8	48,154	65
Hamilton	—	—	867	8
Inverclyde	426	4	—	—
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	144	2	—	—
Kyle and Carrick	42	—	—	—
Monklands	987	9	1	—
Motherwell	506	3	932	6
Renfrew	1,073	5	2,689	13
Strathkelvin	314	4	—	—
Tayside region				
Angus	—	—	53	1
City of Dundee	2,191	12	3,213	18
Perth and Kinross	319	3	107	1
Islands Councils				
Orkney	—	—	—	—
Shetlands	108	5	—	—
Western Isles	—	—	—	—

Notes:
i. All figures have been rounded to the nearest whole unit.
ii. —=nil or less than 0·5 of a unit.

Rateable Values

Mr. Bruce asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* for each local authority area in Scotland the percentage increase in the average rateable values of *(a)* domestic, *(b)* commercial, *(c)* industrial, *(d)* public utilities and *(e)* miscellaneous properties as a result of the recent revaluation.

Mr. Ancram: The only complete information available centrally is based on assessors' estimates made at 1 November 1984 of the valuations to be effective from 1 April 1985. The figures for average increases in rateable value have been calculated by comparing 1 April 1985 estimates with 1 April 1984 valuations and thus do not take account of new entries in the valuation roll during 1984-85 nor of appeals settled in that year. The figures for "commercial" and "miscellaneous" subjects could also be

misleading due to some reclassification of individual subjects between these categories. Subject to these comments, the average percentage increases in rateable values in each local authority area at revaluation are as follows:

Area	*Domestic per cent.*	*Commercial per cent.*	*Industrial per cent.*	*Public Utilities per cent.*	*Miscellaneous per cent.*
BORDERS	170	180	100	180	120
Berwickshire	180	160	110	380	110
Ettrick & Lauderdale	170	180	110	380	120
Roxburgh	170	190	90	140	120
Tweeddale	170	200	90	Nil	100
CENTRAL	160	110	120	80	120
Clackmannan	150	110	130	90	110
Falkirk	160	120	110	90	110
Stirling	170	110	150	60	130
DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY	170	150	120	250	110
Annandale & Eskdale	170	160	140	330	110
Nithsdale	170	160	100	140	110
Stewartry	170	140	120	280	110
Wigtown	170	120	160	200	100
FIFE	150	140	220	130	110
Dunfermline	150	140	230	130	120
Kirkcaldy	150	130	230	130	110
North East Fife	150	150	100	160	120
GRAMPIAN	180	160	120	200	110
City of Aberdeen	200	170	180	110	110
Banff & Buchan	160	130	40	230	110
Gordon	180	130	160	290	100
Kincardine & Deeside	180	140	180	240	120
Moray	160	150	170	150	110
HIGHLAND	160	160	140	220	40
Badenoch & Strathspey	160	130	100	330	60
Caithness	170	240	240	150	60
Inverness	160	160	140	230	40
Lochaber	160	170	130	200	50
Nairn	170	150	140	90	40
Ross & Cromarty	160	170	150	170	40
Skye & Lochalsh	160	170	110	290	60
Sutherland	160	170	140	360	40
LOTHIAN	170	130	120	120	70
East Lothian	150	100	120	140	70
City of Edinburgh	180	130	130	90	70
Midlothian	150	130	110	100	80
West Lothian	160	110	100	160	80
STRATHCLYDE	160	110	70	110	100
Argyll & Bute	140	120	100	160	100
Bearsden & Milngavie	170	130	70	60	100
Clydebank	160	110	130	110	80
Clydesdale	140	80	80	80	170
Cumbernauld & Kilsyth	160	80	70	130	100
Cumnock & Doon Valley	160	110	140	60	120
Cunninghame	140	100	130	120	80
Dumbarton	150	100	50	80	90
East Kilbride	170	90	60	140	90
Eastwood	180	140	Nil	70	140
City of Glasgow	180	120	60	90	90
Hamilton	160	130	60	120	110
Inverclyde	160	110	70	140	100
Kilmarnock & Loudoun	150	120	110	130	100
Kyle & Carrick	150	130	120	50	100
Monklands	170	90	80	140	140
Motherwell	160	90	70	170	120
Renfrew	170	90	60	120	90
Strathkelvin	170	110	80	70	100
TAYSIDE	170	160	110	150	120
Angus	180	190	120	150	130
City of Dundee	170	150	90	110	120
Perth & Kinross	180	150	150	170	120
ORKNEY	150	30	−20	130	130
SHETLAND	190	30	80	30	320
WESTERN ISLES	160	200	170	190	50

Housing Improvement Grants

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many housing improvement grants have been paid in Scotland for each year from 1982 to date.

Mr. Ancram: The information requested is as follows:

Year	*Estimated number of grants paid*
1982	24,000
1983	46,000
1984	57,000

The figures, which are based on incomplete returns, include grants paid for improvement, conversion and repair, and the provision of standard amenities.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide the latest estimates for spending on housing improvement grants by each district council in Scotland for 1984-85 and 1985-86, indicating, in each case, the potential under or overspend on original estimates *(a)* in cash terms and *(b)* in percentage terms.

Mr. Ancram: Expenditure on housing improvement grants is one component of non-housing revenue account block expenditure, and will depend on how authorities choose to spend the resources allocated to them for that block. The only estimates of expenditure specifically on housing improvement grants in 1984-85 were those submitted by local authorities in January 1985 and are given in the table below. There are no other estimates with which to compare them. Estimates for 1985-86 are not available.

Authority	*£ million*
Berwickshire	0·415
Ettrick and Lauderdale	0·450
Roxburgh	0·200
Tweeddale	0·140
Clackmannan	0·180
Falkirk	1·366
Stirling	0·530
Annandale and Eskdale	0·315
Nithsdale	0·285
Stewartry	0·381
Wigstown	0·710
Dumfermline	1·084
Kirkcaldy	1·100
North East Fife	1·322
Aberdeen	3·866
Banff and Buchan	1·400
Gordon	0·800
Kincardine and Deeside	0·450
Moray	1·000
Balenoch and Strathspey	0·210
Caithness	2·200
Inverness	0·665
Lochaber	0·126
Nairn	0·131
Ross and Cromarty	2·000
Skye and Lochalsh	0·590
Sutherland	1·000
East Lothian	0·705
Edinburgh	17·554
Midlothian	1·000
West Lothian	0·621
Argyll and Bute	4·857
Bearsden and Milngavie	0·310
Clydebank	0·700
Clydesdale	0·552
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	0·290
Cumnock and Doon Valley	0·040
Cunninghame	1·450
Dumbarton	1·099
East Kilbride	0·240
Eastwood	0·660
Glasgow	72·130
Hamilton	1·037
Inverclyde	1·885
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	0·156
Kyle and Carrick	0·763
Monklands	0·500
Motherwell	0·317
Renfrew	3·860
Strathkelvin	0·672
Angus	1·000
Dundee	5·000
Perth and Kinross	2·000
Orkney	1·500
Shetland	0·805
Western Isles	4·240

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the most recent information he has on the amount likely to be spent on housing improvement grants in Scotland and Inverclyde, respectively, during 1984-85 and 1985-86.

Mr. Ancram: The amounts estimated to be spent on housing improvement grants in Scotland and Inverclyde district during 1984-85 are £149 million and £1·885 million respectively. Estimates for 1985-86 are not available.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is, in real and cost terms, the total estimated spending on housing improvement grants by district councils for 1984-85 and 1985-86; and how this compares with the figures for 1983-84.

Mr. Ancram: Total estimated expenditure by local authorities on housing improvement grants in 1984-85 is, in cash terms and at 1983-84 prices, £149 million and £142·6 million respectively. This compares with £181 million spent in 1983-84.

An estimate for 1985-86 is not available. Expenditure on housing improvement grants is one component of non-HRA block expenditure, and will depend on how authorities choose to spend the resources allocated to them for that block.

Housing Action Areas

Mr. White asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number of houses improved and demolished in housing action areas in each year since 1970.

Mr. Ancram: The information requested from 1978 onwards, when statistics were first collected, is shown in the following table:

Period	*Number of dwellings*	
	Improved	*Demolished*
1 April to 31 March		
1978-80*	5,376	4,975
1980-81	2,761	821
1981-82	3,646	1,153
1982-83	3,426	974
1983-84	4,616	994

* 2 years.

Labour Statistics

Mr. White asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many job opportunities are available to young people in *(a)* the Glasgow, Pollok constituency, *(b)* the Glasgow area and *(c)* Scotland.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The information requested is not available: statistics on job vacancies are not classified by age group. Rather than entering the labour market directly young people may prefer to take advantage of the opportunities available for further education and training, and the expansion of the youth training scheme will be of particular benefit in this respect.

Mr. White asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the present level of youth unemployment in the Glasgow, Pollok, constituency; and what were the figures for 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983 and 1984, respectively.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The information on youth unemployment is not available on a constituency basis. However, the number of unemployed young people aged under 18 in the Shawlands, Govan and Barrhead jobcentre areas within which the Glasgow, Pollok constituency is located is available in the House of Commons Library for the period requested.

The figures are not directly comparable due to the change in October 1982 from a registrant to a claimant-based count.

Woodilee and Stonyetts Hospitals

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what progress is being made on the modernisation and maintenance of the Greater Glasgow health board houses at Woodilee and Stonyetts hospitals.

Mr. John MacKay: This is a matter for the health board. I am informed by the board that substantial progress has been made on the first phase of the programme which involves expenditure of over £200,000. The board was however informed on 21 March that the contractor involved had been taken into receivership. The board is urgently negotiating with another contractor to take over and complete the works with the minimum of delay, and hopes to be able shortly to determine the full extent of work which it will be able to carry out in the new financial year.

Administration of Justice (Cash Limit)

Mr. Corrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what change will be made to the 1984-85 cash limit for Class XV, Vote II, Administration of Justice, Scotland.

Mr. Younger: The outturn for this Vote for 1983-84 showed expenditure of £50,000 in excess of that year's cash limit. The overspend arose as a result of a mis-estimation of expenditure required for services provided under the property repayment services scheme. In accordance with normal practice, the cash limit for this Vote for this financial year is reduced by the amount of the previous year's overspend. The cash limit will therefore be reduced by £50,000 from £7,662,000 to £7,612,000.

Area Health Boards

Mr. Ewing asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* the membership of the area health boards in Scotland, indicating for each board the names of members who were not reappointed in the recent appointments, together with the names and nominating organisations of the new members appointed to replace them.

Mr. John MacKay [*pursuant to his reply*, 18 March 1985, c. *402-3*]: The information is set out in the following tables, detailing each individual health board.

AYRSHIRE AND ARRAN HEALTH BOARD

1. CURRENT MEMBERSHIP

Members appointed to 31 March 1985

Mr J Cahill
Dr H Cameron
Mrs C L Hutchison
Dr J J Morrow
Mrs C R Murray
Mr G M Pettitt
Mr I B Valentine
Mrs A B Wilson
Dr W M Wilson

Members appointed to 31 March 1987

Mrs M M Bicker, MBE
Mrs A Dunbar
Mr P Hunter
Mrs N M Lambie
Mr F J McCaffery
Mr W S McConnell
Mrs M Macdonald
Mr D M McMillan
Mr B A Murphy
Mr D Shankland
Dr J P Wiltshire

2. MEMBERS NOT BEING RE-APPOINTED AT 1 APRIL 1985

Dr H Cameron
Mrs C L Hutchison
Mrs C R Murray
Mr G M Pettitt

3. NEW APPOINTMENTS FROM 1 APRIL 1985

Mrs A M Campbell *proposed by* Scottish Society for the Mentally Handicapped
Mr T Dickie *proposed by* Health Board
Mr J W G Donaldson *proposed by* Health Board
Mrs M W Gallie *proposed by* Constituency Member

ARGYLL AND CLYDE HEALTH BOARD

1. CURRENT MEMBERSHIP

Members appointed to 31 March 1985

Mrs E M Cockburn, OBE
Dr R Erskine
Mr J E Fyfe
Mr J H Gillougley
Mrs J C Le Roux
Mr N S MacCallum
Dr J Moffat
Mr T A Stewart
Miss A A Thomson

Members appointed to 31 March 1987

Mr A H Brabender
Mr J Campbell
Mr L Capaldi
Mr J Cattanach
Mr I D F Halligan
Dr S G McAlpine
Mr J M McCorkindale
Miss P McGowan
Miss M MacLeod
Mr R R Reid
Mr E T F Spence, MBE

2. MEMBERS NOT BEING RE-APPOINTED AT 1 APRIL 1985

Mr J E Fyffe
Mr N S MacCallum
Miss A A Thomson
Mr T A Stewart

3. NEW APPOINTMENTS FROM 1 APRIL 1985
Mrs M A Foggie *proposed by* Inverclyde Local Health Council
Dr Anne M Kelly *proposed by* Association of Clinical Biochemists
Mr C J Needle *proposed by* Inverclyde District Council
Rev J Young *proposed by* Renfrew Local Health Council

BORDERS HEALTH BOARD

1. CURRENT MEMBERSHIP
Members appointed to 31 March 1985
Dr W B Aitken
Mr P S Elliot
Mr R W Jack
Mr A C Purves, MBE
Mrs E W Reid
Dr S A Stephen
Mr R A Stewart, MBE

Members appointed to 31 March 1987
Mr A P Dorward
Mrs M Millican
Mrs F M Nisbet
Mr A G Rennie
Mr W Scott CBE
Mrs G M L Shaw Stewart
Mr A S Watt

2. MEMBERS NOT BEING RE-APPOINTED AT 1 APRIL 1985
Mrs E W Reid

3. NEW APPOINTMENTS FROM 1 APRIL 1985
Lady F E Sanderson proposed by Borders Local Health Council

DUMFRIES AND GALLOWAY HEALTH BOARD

1. CURRENT MEMBERSHIP
Members appointed to 31 March 1985
Mr W D Beck
Mr W H J Campbell
Dr J M M Mair
Miss C G C Paterson
Mrs J M H Steele
Mr M Webb
Mr G Willacy
Mr W I Wilson

Members appointed to 31 March 1987
Mrs M H Bonn
Mr R R Goudie
Mrs A U G Harper
Mrs J D Jack
Mr H S McFadzean
Mr J A McIntyre (appointed Chairman from 1 April 1985)
Mr W Seright
Mr W Service
Dr J B Wilson

2. MEMBERS NOT BEING RE-APPOINTED AT 1 APRIL 1985
Dr J M M Mair
Miss C G C Paterson
Mrs J M H Steele

3. NEW APPOINTEMENTS FROM 1 APRIL 1985
Mr I S F Brown proposed by Constituency Member
Miss A C Kelly proposed by Health Board
Miss I A Stewart proposed by Council for Professions Supplementary to Medicine
Dr T S R Train proposed by Constituency Member

FIFE HEALTH BOARD

1. CURRENT MEMBERSHIP
Members appointed to 31 March 1985
Dr P Aitken
Mr J S Edmiston
Mr H C Forwell
Dr J B Gallacher
Dr A A H Lawson
Miss A McFadden
Mr J C Murray
Mr G Reid
Mrs C C Sharp, MBE

Members appointed to 31 March 1987
Mrs J H P Buchanan
Mrs A H Ferguson
Mr D L Fulton
Dr M L Graham
Mrs C Haddow
Mr K R Hayward
Mr J H Henderson
Mr J H B Ivers
Mr I A McCrone
Mr D Stoddart
Mr C Whitlock

2. MEMBERS NOT BEING RE-APPOINTED AT 1 APRIL 1985
Dr P Aitken
Miss A McFadden
Mr J C Murray
Mrs C C Sharp, MBE

3. NEW APPOINTMENTS FROM 1 APRIL 1985
Mr J I M Burns *proposed by* Health Board
Mr G H D Mackie, OBE *proposed by* Confederation of British Industry
Mr J Marshall *proposed by* British Medical Association, Royal College of Surgeons
Miss M M Nelson *proposed by* Royal College of Midwives

FORTH VALLEY HEALTH BOARD

1. CURRENT MEMBERSHIP
Members appointed to 31 March 1985
Dr F O Brown
Mr J Cross
Mr A B Cruikshank
Mrs F E M Davidson
Dr L Dunbar
Mr J M Hendry

Members appointed to 31 March 1987
Mr J F C Armstrong
Mrs M R Ferguson
Dr J R G Furnell
Mr L J M Hynd (appointed Chairman from 1.4.85)
Mrs M C Lambie
Mr J G G Lees
Mr W D M Leithead
Miss M K Ritchie
Mrs R M Scott
Dr W J Thomson
Mrs J S Young

2. MEMBERS NOT BEING RE-APPOINTED AT 1 APRIL 1985
Dr F O Brown
Mrs F E M Davidson
Mr J M Hendry

3. NEW APPOINTMENTS FROM 1 APRIL 1985
Mr T Downs *proposed by* Clackmannan District Council
Mrs J I D Isbister *proposed by* (Secretary of State nominee)
Professor P McEwen *proposed by* University of Stirling
Mrs W J A Macfarlane *proposed by* Scottish Trades Union Congress
Mr A D McNeill *proposed by* British Medical Association

GRAMPIAN HEALTH BOARD

1. CURRENT MEMBERSHIP
Members appointed to 31 March 1985
Mrs E A Bailey
Mrs J B M Ellis, OBE
Captain C A Farquharson
Dr J G Henderson
Mrs C Houldsworth
Mrs M Mackenzie, MBE
Dr N C Sharp, MBE

Miss E A Sheldon, MBE
Professor R D Weir

Members appointed to 31 March 1987
Professor A G M Campbell
Mr H D Cochran
Mr D Davidson
Mr N Donald
Mrs J R Lamond
Dr Margaret McGregor
Mr J Murison
Mr G S Peterkin
Dr E A Smith, CBE
Professor E A Tait

2. MEMBERS NOT BEING RE-APPOINTED AT 1 APRIL 1985
Mrs E A Bailey
Mrs J B M Ellis, OBE
Mrs M Mackenzie, MBE
Dr N C Sharp, MBE

3. NEW APPOINTMENTS FROM 1 APRIL 1985
Mr P S Cook proposed by Grampian Regional Council
Professor M C Meston proposed by Health Board
Mr J Ramage proposed by Scottish Trades Union Congress
Mrs V A Stevenson proposed by Area Dental Committee, British Dental Association
Dr A J Taylor proposed by British Medical Association

GREATER GLASGOW HEALTH BOARD

1. CURRENT MEMBERSHIP
Members appointed to 31 March 1985
Lady S Gould
Lady B Gunn, OBE
Professor E M McGirr, CBE
Dr J MacKay, OBE
Mr B A Maan
Dr G B S Roberts
Mr H Sherriff
Mr C Williams

Members appointed to 31 March 1987
Miss E Donachie
Mr J F Dunnachie
Mr A D Garland
Mr J Ross-Harper
Mr P W Holst
Mr J Jackson
Mrs I D Kerr
Professor I M Ledingham
Mrs M McGarry
Mr J A Peel
Miss D B Rigg
Mr D S Sinnott

2. MEMBERS NOT BEING RE-APPOINTED AT 1 APRIL 1985
Lady B Gunn, OBE
Professor E M McGirr, CBE
Dr G B S Roberts

3. NEW APPOINTMENTS FROM 1 APRIL 1985
Mrs A Jarvis proposed by Strathkelvin District Council
Professor A C Kennedy proposed by Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow, University of Glasgow, Royal College of Physicians Church of Scotland
Rev J T Lang and Dr T J Thomson proposed by Scottish Joint Consultants Committee, Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow, Royal College of Psychiatrists (Scottish Division)
Mr. L Turpie (Secretary of State nominee)

HIGHLAND HEALTH BOARD

1. CURRENT MEMBERSHIP
Members appointed to 31 March 1985
Miss J F M Brims
Dr R D Guy
Miss M T Hadden
Dr W M Lancaster
Rt Hon Lord Macdonald of Sleat
Dr A D McIntosh
Mrs R J MacLennan
Mr B A Merchant

Members appointed to 31 March 1987
Mrs M Hinds
Mr W G Johnston
Mrs M A MacDougall
Mr A A MacKenzie
Mrs L Mackenzie
Mr T D Martin
Mr W Monaghan
Mrs I Munro, BEM
Mrs R M Tulloch

2. MEMBERS NOT BEING RE-APPOINTED AT 1 APRIL 1985
Miss J F M Brims
Dr R D Guy
Dr W M Lancaster
Mrs R J MacLennan

3. NEW APPOINTMENTS FROM 1 APRIL 1985
Mrs H E Betts-Brown *proposed by* Health Board
Mr R J B Bryson *proposed by* Chartered Society of Physiotherapy, Council for Professions, Supplementary to Medicine
Dr R S C Fergusson *proposed by* British Medical Association, Local Medical Committee
Dr W D Murray *proposed by* Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh, Health Board, Hospital Medical Staff Association, Royal College of Physicians
Mrs S M C South *proposed by* Health Board

LANARKSHIRE HEALTH BOARD

1. CURRENT MEMBERSHIP
Members appointed to 31 March 1985
Mrs A P C C Allison
Dr G A Bell
Mr J A Campbell, BEM
Mrs A S Hinshalwood
Mrs J H Holmes
Mrs D C McGirr
Mr A E McIlwain, CBE
Dr A M Mathewson
Mr A R Miller, CBE
Members appointed to 31 March 1987
Mr W Bertram, MBE
Miss H Brown, MBE
Dr D Datta
Mr R J Logan
Mr D McClymont
Mrs A M Maggs
Mr W O'Brien
Mr T S L Reid
Mr J P Robison
Mr S J Scott
Mr W Traynor

2. MEMBERS NOT BEING RE-APPOINTED AT 1 APRIL 1985
Mrs A P C C Allison
Mr J A Campbell, BEM
Mr A R Miller, CBE

3. NEW APPOINTMENTS FROM 1 APRIL 1985
Mrs N Cochrane *proposed by* Hamilton and East Kilbride Local Health Council, Hamilton District Council
Mr G McIntosh *proposed by* Confederation of British Industry
Mr J B Russell *proposed by* Co-operative Union Limited
Mr J Thomson *proposed by* Voluntary Association for Mental Welfare

LOTHIAN HEALTH BOARD

1. CURRENT MEMBERSHIP
Members appointed to 31 March 1985
Mrs P Bell
Mr I Capperauld
Mr A T Clarke, CBE, MVO
Mrs W E Donaldson
Mr G S Douglas

Dr A R Milne
Mr J I Thomson
Mrs M Waterston
Mr R B Weatherstone

Members appointed to 31 March 1987
Mrs G Barton
Mr A B Dunlop
Miss B Jamieson
Dr R J Kellett
Mr J M MacNeill, CBE
Mr E A Matthews
Mr G S Millar
Mr D Molloy
Mr E J Rawlings
Mr A H Russell
Mr A G Smart
Professor J Williamson

2. MEMBERS NOT BEING RE-APPOINTED AT 1 APRIL 1985
Mr G S Douglas
Mr J I Thompson

3. NEW APPOINTMENTS FROM 1 APRIL 1985
Sir James D Fraser *proposed by* British Medical Association
Mr W B Herald *proposed by* Scottish Trades Union Congress
Mr J F Wilson proposed by Bank of Scotland

ORKNEY HEALTH BOARD

1. CURRENT MEMBERSHIP
Members appointed to 31 March 1985
Mr B M Clark
Mr F J Groundwater
Mr J Leslie
Mr J Moar, MBE
Dr J S Walker

Members appointed to 31 March 1987
Mr A H Bevan
Mr J C Bevan
Mr J Flett
Mr J M F Groat
Mr W Groundwater
Mrs E M Street
Mr J Towrie
Mr R T Tullock

2. MEMBERS NOT BEING RE-APPOINTED AT 1 APRIL 1985
Mr J Leslie

3. NEW APPOINTMENTS FROM 1 APRIL 1985
Mrs M Porteous *proposed by* Health Board
Mrs J Marwick *proposed by* Orkney Local Health Council, Health Board, Orkney Islands Council

SHETLAND HEALTH BOARD

1. CURRENT MEMBERSHIP
Members appointed to 31 March 1985
Mrs F B Grains (appointed Chairman from 1 April 1985)
Dr M D Hunter
Mr R Leask
Mr R L C Manson
Mr W A Smith, BEM
Mrs L A Stout
Mrs M Williamson

Members appointed to 31 March 1987
Mr R R Bentley
Mr A G Flaws
Mr A H George
Mr J A T Leslie
Mrs J K Sandison
Mr J M Sinclair
Mr S A Zaman

2. MEMBERS NOT BEING RE-APPOINTED AT 1 APRIL 1985
Mr R L C Manson
Mrs L A Stout

3. NEW APPOINTMENTS FROM 1 APRIL 1985
Mr D M Sinclair *proposed by* Royal College of Nursing
Mr R A J Smith *proposed by* Health Board
Captain G Walterson *proposed by* (Secretary of State's nominee)

TAYSIDE HEALTH BOARD

1. CURRENT MEMBERSHIP
Members appointed to 31 March 1985
Rev J Caldwell
Mr E W Cameron, OBE
Mr J Campbell-Smith
Mr R J Croft
Mr J W Duncan, MBE
Professor P D Griffiths
Dr A G R Law
Mrs E C Lowson, MBE

Members appointed to 31 March 1987
Dr P G Aungle
Professor J S Beck
Mrs R Bolton
Mr J S Fair
Mrs L V Grewar
Mr B W M Johnston
Mr M B Kerr
Mrs S D R Kydd
Mr J C Macfarlane, OBE
Mr J T Robb
Mr W Stewart
Mrs A Woore

2. MEMBERS NOT BEING RE-APPOINTED AT 1 APRIL 1985
Rev J Caldwell
Mr R J Croft
Professor P D Griffiths

3. NEW APPOINTMENTS FROM 1 APRIL 1985
Professor D G McDevitt *proposed by* University of Dundee
Miss S D Moncur *proposed by* Chartered Society of Physiotherapy, Council for Professions Supplementary to Medicine
Mr I W Stevenson *proposed by* Tayside Regional Council

WESTERN ISLES HEALTH BOARD

1. CURRENT MEMBERSHIP
Members appointed to 31 March 1985
Mr M Campbell
Mr D N Kesting
Captain J MacIntyre
Mr M J Maciver
Mr M Macleod
Mr A Matheson
Dr W M Spiers
Mr I D Sutherland
Mr A D Whiteford

Members appointed to 31 March 1987
Mr J H Downie
Dr N R Gillies
Mrs C MacEachen
Mr D W MacLeod

2. MEMBERS NOT BEING RE-APPOINTED AT 1 APRIL 1985
Mr M J Maciver
Mr W M Speirs
Mr A D Whiteford

3. NEW APPOINTMENTS FROM 1 APRIL 1985
Mr D A Maclean *proposed by* British Medical Association, Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow
Mr K MacLennan *proposed by* Health Board
Mr J M Morrison *proposed by* Lewis and Harris Local Health Council, Harris Council of Social Service

Crime Statistics

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the number of reported break-ins and attempted break-ins to all forms of property in Scotland for each of the years from 1979 to date; what the percentage increase is from 1979 to date; in how many instances no charges were ever made; and what percentage of the total this represents.

Mr. Ancram [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 January 1984, c. *160*]: The information is set out in the following tables:

Housebreakings recorded by the police, Scotland

Year	*Number Recorded*	*Number not cleared up**	*Percentage not cleared up**
1979	68,505	54,453	79·5
1980	70,130	54,546	77·8
1981	85,160	67,841	79·7
1982	94,818	77,759	82·0
1983	95,236	77,742	81·6

Percentage change 1979-1983 39·0

Attempted Housebreakings recorded by the police, Scotland

Year	*Number Recorded*	*Number not cleared up**	*Percentage not cleared up**
1979	8,130	6,736	82·9
1980	8,316	6,702	80·6
1981	10,521	8,612	81·9
1982	11,453	9,537	83·3
1983	13,284	11,160	84·0

Percentage change 1979-1983 63·4

* A crime is regarded as cleared up if one or more offenders is apprehended, cited, warned or traced for it. Since crimes may be cleared up in the year following the date of recording (or later), the figures for crimes recorded and crimes cleared up in any particular year are not strictly comparable; but any consequent distortion would be minimal.

Note

The figures for housebreaking include breaking into all types of building, including both residential and commercial property. These figures do not include breaking into other types of property such as cars (classified as thefts by opening lockfast places). The number of cases in which no charge was made is not available in the form requested; but the tables indicate the number and percentage of cases not cleared up. The figures for housebreaking are for the years to 1983, the latest date for which information is available.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 29 March 1985

WALES

Salmon

Mr. Onslow asked the Secretary of State for Wales what action his Department has taken since 1979 to counter the threat to salmon stocks from *(a)* illegal netting, *(b)* predation, *(c)* pollution, *(d)* water abstraction, and *(e)* poaching, respectively; and what action his Department takes to monitor salmon stocks.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: In Wales responsibility for the control, maintenance and development of salmon fisheries is vested in the Welsh water authority by the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Act 1975. Since 1979 I have confirmed a number of byelaws made by the Welsh water authority to control salmon fishing and protect salmon stocks.

The consultation paper on the review of inland and coastal fisheries in England and Wales, published jointly in 1981 by my Department and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, recognised illegal netting and poaching as a major problem. Reactions to the paper indicated widespread support for some kind of salmon sales control scheme. Subsequently, fisheries departments have reviewed thoroughly the proposals by the salmon sales group of the National Water Council for a salmon-tagging scheme. Serious practical difficulties over the implementation of such a scheme have been identified, including control of imports, the handling of British farmed salmon and the control of tags. These difficulties and other aspects of salmon sales control remain under urgent examination, and an announcement will be made as soon as conclusions are reached.

My Department has no evidence that salmon suffer predation in Wales or in Welsh coastal waters to an extent which would justify specific action.

The Welsh water authority's statutory responsibilities require the striking of a suitable balance between its water abstraction, pollution control, fisheries and amenity functions. Where there is a game fishery, particular attention is given to ensure that discharges to the river do not adversely affect the fishery. For abstraction, the aim is to ensure that water levels do not reduce to the point where fish stocks are harmed. As part of the implementation of the Control of Pollution Act 1974, my Department, along with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, has in January this year issued a booklet entitled "Code of Good Agricultural Practice," designed to minimise the risks of pollution from farming practices and to give guidance on good agricultural practice for the purposes of section 31(2)*(c)* of that Act.

In order to monitor salmon stocks, fisheries scientists from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food collect and collate data supplied by the water authorities relating to both restocking and catching—by all means —of salmon. Data for 1983 will be published shortly in the fisheries laboratory data research series, and a copy will be placed in the Library of the House.

Council Tenants (Subsidy)

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the average central Government subsidy per council tenant by county in Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Based on returns made by local authorities to the Welsh Office, the average central Government subsidy per council tenant by county in 1984-85 is as follows:

	Average subsidy pa per tenant £
Clwyd	Nil
Gwynedd	4
Dyfed	47
Powys	47
West Glamorgan	10
Mid Glamorgan	27
South Glamorgan	Nil
Gwent	106

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the average local authority subsidy per council tenant by district in Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Based on returns made by local authorities to the Welsh Office, the average local authority subsidy—that is, rate fund contribution—per council tenant by district in 1984-85 is as follows:

	Average subsidy per annum per tenant £
Alyn and Deeside	2
Colwyn	Nil
Delyn	Nil
Glyndwr	Nil
Rhuddlan	Nil
Wrexham Maelor	29
Carmarthen	39
Ceredigion	Nil
Dinefwr	Nil
Llanelli	Nil
Preseli	Nil
South Pembrokeshire	14
Blaenau Gwent	3
Islwyn	Nil
Monmouth	Nil
Newport	Nil
Torfaen	17
Aberconwy	Nil
Arfon	5
Dwfor	Nil
Meirionnydd	8
Ynys Môn	Nil
Cynon Valley	48
Merthyr Tydfil	67
Ogwr	Nil
Rhondda	244
Rhymney Valley	12
Taff Ely	38
Brecknock	2
Montgomery	Nil
Radnor	Nil
Cardiff	11
Vale of Glamorgan	13
Afan	Nil

	Average subsidy per annum per tenant £
Lliw Valley	Nil
Neath	11
Swansea	Nil

New College, Cardiff

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 25 March, *Official Report*, column 6, what is his estimate of the number of jobs which will be created if the offer of a payment of an £80,000 grant to New College, Cardiff, is taken up; and what conditions he has attached to the offer of this grant.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: For reasons of commercial confidentiality, the number of jobs promised by the project and the terms and conditions attached to the grant offer cannot be disclosed.

Job Creation

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Wales whether, for the purposes of grant paid under the Industrial Development Act 1982 in respect of job creation, he draws any distinction between those classified as employed or self-employed and if, in the case of the latter, any grant is paid direct to those persons whose jobs have been so created.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The appraisal of applications for regional selective assistance under the Industrial Development Act 1982 involves detailed scrutiny of the employment associated with each project. Assistance is related only to jobs provided by the applicant company or firm as a direct consequence of the project.

Payment of grant is made to the company or firm carrying out a project and not to individual employees.

Sir Melvyn Rosser

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list all those appointments held under his patronage by Sir Melvyn Rosser since 1979.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I have not appointed Sir Melvyn Rosser to any public body in Wales for which I am the responsible appointing Minister. I was consulted by the chairman of the Manpower Services Commission prior to Sir Melvyn's initial appointment as chairman of the MSC Committee for Wales in 1980, and on his reappointment in 1983.

Residential Homes

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will estimate the total number of people employed by local authorities in Wales from 1980 to the latest available date in connection with their duties under the Residential Homes Act 1980.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: This information is not available.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Wales what additional resources have been made available to local authorities in Wales to enable them to meet their responsibilities under the Residential Homes Act 1980 for each year of its operation.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: No additional resources were made available specifically. Local authorities were expected to meet the cost of their responsibilities under the Act within their total budgets for personal social services. Under current legislation, the Registered Homes Act 1984, there has been a substantial increase in the fees payable by those seeking registration; the level of these fees is to be reviewed in the light of operational experience.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Wales what expenditure has been incurred by his Department for each year since 1980 on the administration of the Residential Homes Act 1980 or on any matters arising from the Act.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: This information is not available.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many applications for registration have been refused and how many licences revoked per county in Wales under the Residential Homes Act 1980 during each year of its operation.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: This information is not held centrally.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many old persons' homes have been registered per county in Wales under the Residential Homes Act 1980, for each year of its operation.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information requested is given in the following table:

Local Authority	Number of registered Private and Voluntary old persons' homes at 31 March 1981	1982	1983	1984
Clwyd	52	59	66	85
Dyfed	4	3	7	10
Gwent	5	5	7	11
Gwynedd	27	27	31	43
Mid Glamorgan	3	4	6	9
Powys	1	2	4	4
South Glamorgan	10	13	12	10
West Glamorgan	5	6	9	11

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Black Children (Nottingham)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has about the number of black children suspended from schools in the Nottingham area; how this compares with the national average; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: The Government do not collect information on school pupils on an ethnic basis; nor are there national figures about suspensions from schools.

University Visitor

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he proposes to introduce any changes in the role of the university visitor; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: My right hon. Friend has no power to determine the role of the university visitor. He is aware of the problems the hon. Member has in mind and is awaiting the outcome of the consideration being given by the CVCP to these and other matters.

Member's Correspondence

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to be in a position to reply to the letter sent to him by the hon. Member for Birkenhead on 19 December 1984 concerning the son of Mr. Francis Joseph McKeown.

Mr. Brooke: I replied to the hon. Member on 28 March 1985.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Youth Training

Mr. Beggs asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the projects by name and indicate the number of trainees in each youth training programme and the action for community employment scheme, together with the amount of public money advanced annually to each scheme operating in Larne borough which is funded by the Department of Economic Development.

Dr. Boyson: The following organisations are sponsoring projects in Larne borough:

Youth Community Projects (YCP)

Name of sponsor	*Number of approved training places*	*Maximum annual grant aid* £
Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (Larne)	24	24,100

Action for Community Employment (ACE)

Name of sponsor	*Number of approved jobs*	*Maximum grant aid for any period of 52 weeks* £
Age Concern—Larne Branch	1	2,480
Cairndhu Golf Club	1	9,700
Drumalis Retreat Centre	5	20,170
Glenarm Improvement Group	2	9,390
Larne Congregational Church	1	4,400
Larne Community Hall	1	2,950
Larne Football Club	1	4,690
St. Anthony's and St. McNissi's Youth Clubs	4	19,260

Mr. Beggs asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the projects by name and indicate the number of trainees in each youth training programme and the action for community employment scheme, together with the amount of public money advanced annually to each scheme operating in Carrickfergus borough which is funded by the Department of Economic Development.

Dr. Boyson: The following orgainsations are sponsoring projects in Carrickfergus borough:

Youth Community Projects (YCP)

Name of sponsor	*Number of approved training places*	*Maximum annual grant aid* £
Carrickfergus YMCA (North Eastern Education and Library Board)	10	48,400
Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (Whitehead)	23	82,500

Action for Community Employment (ACE)

Name of sponsor	*Number of approved jobs*	*Maximum grant aid for any period of 52 weeks* £
Barn United Football and Recreation Club	2	9,310
Carrickfergus Congregational Church	1	4,660
Carrickfergus Methodist Church	2	4,910
Carrickfergus Golf Club	2	9,300
Carrickfergus Sailing Club	2	9,700
Carrickfergus YMCA	7	34,740
Enterprise Carrickfergus Ltd.	16	76,190
Federation of Ulster Local Studies	1	5,360
First Presbyterian Church Carrickfergus	1	4,910
Joymount Presbyterian Church	1	4,660
Railway Preservation Society	5	25,600
Sunnylands Youth Centre	1	4,660
St. Colman's Parish Church	1	4,660
St. Nicholas Parish Church	2	9,830
Whitehead Golf Club	3	13,620
Whitehead youth Centre	1	4,400
Woodlands Presbyterian Church	1	4,660
Carrickfergus Borough Council	3	66,090

Youth Training Programme (YTP)

Name of Provider	*Number of places*	*Funding 1984-85 Financial year* £
Carrickfergus Youth and Community Workshop Ltd	85	298,673

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Famine (Petition)

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement in response to the petition on famine conveyed to him by the hon. Member for Welwyn Hatfield on behalf of constituents.

Mr. Raison: The Government are committed to providing emergency aid to Ethiopia and other famine stricken countries throughout 1985 and beyond. As was clear at the recent Geneva conference, our partners in the European Community, other donors and United Nations agencies share that commitment. Our humanitarian assistance is given without conditions, and our policy is to provide it to those in need wherever they may be. Within the limit of the resources available, we continue to improve the volume and impact of our longer term development aid to Africa through all appropriate channels.

PRIME MINISTER

International Youth Year

Mr. Cohen asked the Prime Minister how much money Her Majesty's Government have allocated and what activities are planned in respect of International Youth Year; and how much of this applies specifically to (i) unemployed and (ii) ethnic minority youth; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Total grant aid to the national co-ordinating committees in the United Kingdom is expected to be some £300,000. Many activities in Government programmes have relevance to the objectives of the year, including existing grants in connection with youth participation, support of a visit of 250 young people from 22 European countries, programmes in respect of the young unemployed and those from ethnic minorities. The youth training scheme also has particular relevance.

European Community (Spain and Portugal)

Mr. Forth asked the Prime Minister if she will ensure that, before Parliament is asked to approve the accession of Spain and Portugal to the European Economic Community, details of all of the additional costs and any loss of benefit to the United Kingdom are made available to Parliament.

The Prime Minister: Most recent Commission estimates suggest that at the end of transition enlargement will represent a cost to the Community budget as a whole of between 0·1 per cent. and 0·2 per cent. of the VAT own resources base annually. It is not yet possible to estimate actual costs and benefits to the United Kingdom. Because of the Fontainebleu abatement mechanism, the United Kingdom will pay around 7 per cent. net of the additional costs to the allocated Community budget arising from enlargement.

Mr. Peter Levene

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Prime Minister if, pursuant to her answer of 21 March, *Official Report*, column 571, she will list the organisation from which the secondment of Mr. Levene was considered.

The Prime Minister: No.

Defence Procurement

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Prime Minister whether, in the coming year, any official of the defence procurement section will be involved in vetting or awarding contracts in which United Scientific Holdings and related companies have an interest.

The Prime Minister: Any bids received in the coming year from United Scientific Holdings and its subsidiary companies for Ministry of Defence contracts would be vetted and examined by officials of the procurement executive in the normal way, but, as I have already made clear, Mr. Peter Levene would not be involved.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Prime Minister what steps are being taken to avoid any potential conflict of interest for the new Chief of Defence Procurement in vetting and awarding tenders to United Scientific Holdings and other related companies after April 1986.

The Prime Minister: Mr. Levene has resigned his directorships in United Scientific Holdings and all of its subsidiaries. He has disposed of his own and his immediate family's shareholdings in United Scientific Holdings.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Prime Minister what steps are being taken to avoid any potential conflict of interest for the new Chief of Defence Procurement in vetting and awarding tenders to members of the Defence Manufacturers Association.

The Prime Minister: Mr. Levene has resigned his directorships in United Scientific Holdings and all its subsidiaries. He has no formal connection with them or any other defence contractor whatsoever. He holds no shares in any Ministry of Defence contractor in the United Kingdom or overseas.

Public Expenditure

Mr. MacKenzie asked the Prime Minister (1) if she will cause to be published in the *Official Report* a table showing for the last year for which figures are available the sums of money spent on *(a)* roads and road improvement, *(b)* sewerage, *(c)* new housing, housing repairs and house modernisation, *(d)* hospital and health service building works, *(e)* education building, *(f)* new works on airstrips, *(g)* harbours and repairs and *(h)* modernisation of such facilities.

(2) if she will cause to be published in the *Official Report* a table showing for the last year for which figures are available the sums spent on *(a)* roads and road improvement, *(b)* sewerage, *(c)* new houses, housing repairs and house modernisation, *(d)* hospital and health service building work, *(e)* education building, *(f)* new work on airstrips, *(g)* harbours and repairs and *(h)* modernisation of such facilities in Scotland.

The Prime Minister [*pursuant to her reply*, 27 March 1985]: The information requested is set out in the following table, which should be read with its footnotes.

Public Expenditure in Certain Categories, 1983-84 (£ million)*

	Great Britain	*Scotland*
(a) Roads and road improvements†	2,762	365
(b) Sewerage‡	288	54
(c) New houses, housing repairs and house modernisation‖	6,081	921
(d) Hospital and health service building work¶	650	90
(e) Education building●	633	82
(f) New work on airfields■	290	19
(g) Harbours and repairs★	71	1

Notes:
* The information in the table is consistent with that in the public expenditure White Paper (Cmnd. 9428).
† Includes structural maintenance and repair expenditure.
‡ The amount spent on modernisation is estimated at £210 million of the total.
‖ Comprises gross expenditure, capital and current: receipts from council house sales have not been deducted.
¶ Represents health authorities' expenditure on hospitals and new building. Modernisation expenditure cannot be readily distinguished.
● Modernisation expenditure cannot be readily distinguished.
■ Includes both civilian and defence facilities. Figures on airstrips and modernisation cannot readily be distinguished.
★ Excludes public corporations' maintenance and repairs expenditure.

THE ARTS

Sponsorships

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State answering in respect of the Arts if he will list the number of outside businesses which have placed investments in arts spheres within the framework of his business sponsorship incentive scheme for the arts.

Mr. Waldegrave: By the end of this month, awards under the business sponsorship incentive scheme will have been made to 57 arts organisations in respect of £2·5 million of new sponsorship. The following companies were involved:

Business Sponsorship Incentive Scheme Award Winners

	Arts Body	*Sole/Principal Sponsor(s)*
November 1984	Filmhouse, Edinburgh	Arthur Bell and Sons plc
	National Museum of Photography Films and Television	Yorkshire Television
	British American Arts Association	Endless Holdings
	Leeds Leisure Services	Leeds Permanent Building Society
	Natural History Museum	IBM (UK) Ltd.
	National Jazz Centre	BP
	Royal Academy of Arts	Trafalgar House
	Barbican Arts Gallery	Peter Stuyvesant Foundation
	Arts Council of Great Britain	Citibank
	Ballet Rambert	Lloyds Bank
	Northern Arts	*Lloyds Bank
	Bristol Festival for Children	*Bristol Evening Post
January 1985	Chichester Festival Theatre	Nissan (UK) Ltd.
	Royal Opera House	Heron International plc and The British Printing and Communication Corporation plc
	Royal Philharmonic Orchestra	Bankers Trust Company
	Welsh National Opera	Amoco (UK) Exploration Company
	Royal Exchange Theatre	Mobil Oil Company Ltd.
	Northcott Theatre	Canon (South West) Ltd.
	Theatrical Management Association	Barclaycard
	Haddo House Choral and Operatic Society	*Mobil North Sea Ltd.
	Colchester Arts Centre	*Royal London Mutual Insurance
	Darlington Civic theatre	Terry's of York
March 1985	Commonwealth Institute	IBM Area South
	Palace Theatre, Manchester	Norwest Holst Ltd.
	British Film Institute	Thorn—EMI
	London Festival Ballet	Barclays Bank
	Royal Photographic Society	Kodak Ltd.
	Courtauld Institute	Arthur Andersen Foundation
	Ironbridge Gorge Museum	*Lloyds Bank plc
	National Motor Museum Trust	Wincanton Group Ltd.
	Yorkshire Contemporary Art Group	Rank Xerox Ltd.
	English National Opera	British Olivetti Ltd.
	Wavendon Allmusic Plan	Tesco Stores Ltd.
	Western Orchestral Society Ltd.	Citibank
	Birmingham Hippodrome	*PMG Investments Ltd.
	Sadlers Wells	Prudential Assurance
	Battersea Community Arts Centre Trust Ltd.	*ICL and Adams Falla Associates
	London Symphony Orchestra	ICI Petrol chemicals and Plastics Division, Nikon (UK) Ltd. and Creditanstalt Bankverein
	Tolly cobbold/Eastern Arts National Exhibition Committee	*Tolly Cobbold
	Midlands Arts Centre	*Central Independent Television plc
	Hanover Band	*Cepharex Ltd.
	National Theatre	Arthur Andersen Foundation
	Bath Festival	*Phillips Fine Art Auctioneers
	Kendal Brewery Arts Centre Trust	Legal and General Group plc
	Polka Children's Theatre	J. Sainsbury's plc
	Scottish Opera	F. J. C. Lilley plc
	Opera '80	National Westminster Bank plc
	Arts and Museums Division Bradford Metropolitan Council	Christie's International
	City of Cardiff	Allied Steel and Wire Ltd.
	Billingham International Folklore Festival	ICI Agricultural Division
	Northern Sinfonia	*ICI Agricultural Division
	South Hill Park Arts Centre and Wilde Theatre	*Wickens Building Group Ltd., BMW and Lloyds Bank
	National Art Collections Fund	Lex Services plc
	Mayfest	*Tennent Caledonian Breweries Ltd.
	Merseyside Arts	*Unilever plc
	National Youth Choir of Wales	ESSO Exploration and Production (UK) Ltd.
	Arts Express	*BP

Notes:
*Signifies the principal sponsor(s) in cases where one or more smaller sponsors also contributed to the arts activity.
The awards are listed in order of the size of the sponsorship.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Multi-fibre Arrangement

Mr. Gould asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many Customs and Excise officials have specialised in the implementation and enforcement of the multi-fibre arrangement and other textile trade regulations in each year since 1979.

Mr. Hayhoe: Since 1982, six Customs and Excise headquarters officials have specialised in the implementation of the multi-fibre arrangement; previously the figure was five. All officials responsible for enforcing controls on imported freight are expected to take account of the MFA and other controls relating to the textile trade, but it is not known whether any specialise in this work. In addition, since 1980 Customs investigation division has deployed a team of around 10 specialist investigators devoted to licensing matters generally.

Mr. Gould asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many prosecutions of importers have taken place in each year from 1982 for the fraudulent importation of textile and clothing goods in circumvention of the quotas agreed under the multi-fibre arrangement.

Mr. Hayhoe: Companies and individuals prosecuted each year from 1982 for the fraudulent or attempted fraudulent importation of goods in circumvention of quotas agreed under the multi-fibre arrangement are as follows:

	Number
1982	19
1983	3
1984	6
1985	2

*To date.

Since 1983, Customs normal policy has been to offer to compound proceedings in all but the most blatant cases of fraud. A significant number of cases are, therefore, settled out of court. However, to identify the number of cases involved would involve a disproportionate use of resources.

Taxation and National Insurance

Mr. Rooker asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will now update his answer to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr of 27 March 1984, *Official Report*, column 109, by giving information about the reductions in the basic rate of income tax which would be necessary to restore tax payments to their 1978-79 levels in 1985-86.

Mr. Moore: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Rooker asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the estimated yield from all sources of taxation, including excise and other duties, for 1985-86; what was the comparable yield for 1978-79 revalued at 1985-86 prices; and if he will publish a breakdown by categories of the real increase in taxes between 1978-79 and 1985-86, similar to that in his answer of 28 March 1984, *Official Report*, column 206.

Mr. Moore: The estimated total yield of taxes, local authority rates and national insurance contributions is £138 billion in 1985-86; the yield in 1978-79 revalued at 1985-86 prices using the GDP deflator is £109 billion. The other information requested is in the table.

£billion 1985-86 prices

	Change on 1978-79
Income tax	−0·4
Non North Sea corporation tax	—
North Sea taxes*	+12·4
Capital taxes and stamp duty	+0·6
NIC—employees	+4·4
NIC—employers	+1·1
NIS	−3·9
LA rates	+2·8
Taxes on expenditure	+11·8
Total change†	+29·0

* Before advance corporation tax set-off.
† Components do not sum to total because of rounding.

Mr. Rooker asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will provide information on the net income after income tax, national insurance contributions and child benefit at *(a)* actual prices and *(b)* equivalent 1984-85 prices of typical household units (i) single, (ii) married couple, (iii) married couple with two children and (iv) married couple with four children, whose earnings from work are equivalent to the following points on the male earnings distribution: (1) lowest decile, (2) median and (3) highest decile for each year since April 1978.

Mr. Moore: Information in the following tables is based on estimates of earnings for those in full-time work paid at adult rates, with pay unaffected by absence. Estimates are based on information from the new earnings surveys.

Income tax rates and allowances for April 1979 are those specified in the Finance Act 1979, later replaced by those announced in June 1979; for other Aprils, they are the rates and allowances for the financial year immediately following. Taxpayers are assumed to have no reliefs or allowances other than the appropriate personal allowance. National insurance contributions are at the contracted-in rate.

The calculations take no account of means-tested benefits to which those at the lowest decile may be entitled. Changes in the purchasing power of net earnings have been calculated by reference to movements in the general index of retail prices between Aprils.

Earnings after income tax, National Insurance Contributions and Child Benefit

	At current prices	At constant (April 1984) prices	At constant prices (April 1978=100)	At current prices	At constant (April 1984) prices	At constant prices (April 1978=100)
	£	£		£	£	
		Single man			*Married man*	
At the lowest decile gross earnings						
April 1978	39·35	70·71	100·0	42·84	76·98	100·0
April 1979	44·09	71·98	101·8	47·90	78·20	101·6
April 1980	53·47	71·70	101·4	57·92	77·66	100·9
April 1981	57·67	69·02	97·6	62·11	74·34	96·6
April 1982	61·95	67·76	95·8	67·03	73·32	95·1
Arpil 1983	66·91	70·37	99·5	72·73	76·50	99·4
April 1984	74·43	74·43	105·3	81·07	81·07	105·3
At the median of gross earnings						
April 1978	56·29	101·15	100·0	59·78	107·42	100·0
April 1979	63·94	104·39	103·2	67·75	110·60	103·0
April 1980	78·52	105·29	104·1	82·96	111·24	103·6
April 1981	85·56	102·39	101·2	90·00	107·71	100·2
April 1982	93·00	101·73	100·6	98·8	107·28	99·9
April 1983	100·64	105·85	104·6	106·47	111·97	104·2
April 1984	116·19	116·19	114·9	122·82	122·82	114·3
At the highest decile of gross earnings						
April 1978	85·50	153·64	100·0	88·99	159·92	100·0
April 1979	96·89	158·17	102·9	100·70	164·39	102·8
April 1980	123·64	165·78	107·9	128·08	171·74	107·4
April 1981	139·36	166·79	108·6	143·81	172·10	107·6
April 1982	151·76	166·00	108·0	156·84	171·55	107·3
April 1983	165·83	174·41	113·5	171·66	180·53	112·9
April 1984	196·55	196·55	127·9	203·18	203·18	127·0
		*Married man with two children**			*Married man with four children†*	
At the lowest decile gross earnings						
April 1978	48·71	87·53	100·0	55·15	99·11	100·0
April 1979	55·90	91·26	104·3	63·90	104·32	105·3
April 1980	65·92	88·38	101·0	73·92	99·11	100·0
April 1981	71·61	85·70	97·9	81·11	97·07	97·9
April 1982	77·53	84·80	96·9	88·03	96·29	97·1
Arpil 1983	84·43	88·80	101·4	96·13	101·11	102·0
April 1984	94·07	94·07	107·5	107·07	107·07	108·0
At the median of gross earnings						
April 1978	65·65	117·97	100·0	72·15	129·66	100·0
April 1979	75·75	123·67	104·8	83·75	136·72	105·4
April 1980	90·96	121·97	103·4	98·96	132·70	102·3
April 1981	99·50	119·08	100·9	109·00	130·45	100·6
April 1982	108·58	118·77	100·7	119·08	130·25	100·4
April 1983	118·17	124·28	105·3	129·87	136·58	105·3
April 1984	135·82	135·82	115·1	148·82	148·82	114·8
At the highest decile of gross earnings						
April 1978	94·86	170·46	100·0	101·36	182·15	100·0
April 1979	108·70	177·46	104·1	116·70	190·51	104·6
April 1980	136·08	182·46	107·0	144·08	193·19	106·1
April 1981	153·31	183·47	107·6	162·81	194·84	107·0
April 1982	167·34	183·04	107·4	177·84	194·52	106·8
April 1983	183·36	192·84	113·1	195·06	205·15	112·6
April 1984	216·18	216·18	126·8	229·18	229·18	125·8

* Both children under 11.
† Two children under 11, one child 11-15, one child over 16.

Mr. Rooker asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the comparison between the yield in real terms in 1978-79 and what he is now proposing for 1985-86 in *(a)* direct taxes including national insurance and *(b)* indirect taxes.

Mr. Moore: The information is in the following table:

Changes on 1978-79

	£ billion, 1985-86 prices
Direct taxes*	+16·9
Indirect taxes†	+12·1
	+29·0

* Including employees' NICs.
† Including employers'NICs.

Mr. Sean Hughes asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will construct an index, with 1978-79 equalling 100, of the changes in the level of income tax and national insurance contributions for each subsequent year for a taxpayer on *(a)* two thirds, *(b)* average, *(c)* five times average and *(d)* 10 times average earnings for households where the taxpayer is (i) single, (ii) married, (iii) married with two children and (iv) married with four children, and in all cases assuming that the wife does not work, in the manner of the answer of 23 November 1983, *Official Report*, column 171-2.

Mr. Rooker asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will construct an index with 1978-79 equalling 100, of the changes in the level of income tax and national insurance contributions for each subsequent year for a taxpayer on *(a)* half, *(b)* two thirds, *(c)* average, *(d)* five times and *(e)* 10 times average earnings for households where the taxpayer is (i) single, (ii) married, no children (iii) married with two children and (iv) married with four children, in all cases assuming the wife does not work.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 March 1985, c. *603*]: The following table shows *(a)* income tax plus national insurance contributions less child benefit, where appropriate, as a percentage of gross earnings ; and *(b)* real net income after income tax, NIC and child benefit in index number form with 1978-79 equalling 100. The calculations assume that the taxpayer has no reliefs other than the appropriate personal allowance and that national insurance contributions are at the contracted-in rate. Average earnings ae those for full-time males paid at adult rates whose pay was not affected by absence. Figures for 1984-85 and 1985-86 are provisional.

Multiple of average earnings

	Half		*Two-thirds*		*One*		*Five*		*Ten*	
	(a)	*(b)*	*(a)*	*(b)*	*(a)*	*(b)*	*(a)*	*(b)*	*(a)*	*(b)*
Single										
1978-79	23·6	100·0	27·6	100·0	31·5	100·0	52·2	100·0	67·5	100·0
1979-80	22·9	102·6	26·3	103·5	29·7	104·4	42·8	121·6	51·4	151·9
1980-81	24·7	103·5	27·7	104·9	30·7	106·3	44·3	122·5	52·1	154·6
1981-82	26·9	100·1	29·6	101·7	32·3	103·5	46·4	117·3	53·2	150·5
1982-83	27·3	100·3	30·2	101·7	33·0	103·2	45·9	119·4	53·0	152·5
1983-84	27·0	104·5	30·0	105·7	33·0	107·1	45·1	125·7	52·5	159·5
1984-85	26·4	107·8	29·6	108·8	32·7	110·0	45·2	128·4	52·6	163·1
1985-86	26·1	109·8	29·3	110·8	32·5	111·9	45·3	129·9	52·7	165·2
Married										
1978-79	16·0	100·0	22·0	100·0	27·8	100·0	50·5	100·0	66·5	100·0
1979-80	16·0	101·7	21·2	102·7	26·3	103·8	41·5	120·3	50·7	149·7
1980-81	17·9	102·7	22·7	104·1	27·3	105·7	42·9	121·2	51·5	152·4
1981-82	20·8	98·7	25·1	100·5	29·3	102·5	45·2	115·8	52·6	148·1
1982-83	20·8	99·4	25·4	100·9	29·8	102·5	44·6	118·0	52·3	150·2
1983-84	20·1	104·0	24·9	105·3	29·6	106·7	43·7	124·3	51·9	157·3
1984-85	19·2	107·7	24·2	108·7	29·1	109·9	43·8	127·2	51·9	160·9
1985-86	18·7	109·9	23·9	110·8	28·9	111·8	43·9	128·8	51·9	163·1
Married with 2 children (both under 11)										
1978-79	2·5	100·0	11·7	100·0	20·9	100·0	48·8	100·0	65·6	100·0
1979-80	1·4	102·8	10·3	103·3	19·0	104·2	40·0	119·1	50·0	147·9
1980-81	4·9	102·5	13·0	103·5	20·8	105·1	41·6	119·8	50·8	150·4
1981-82	7·3	99·5	15·0	100·7	22·5	102·5	43·9	114·7	51·9	146·3
1982-83	6·9	100·6	15·0	101·5	22·8	102·8	43·2	116·9	51·6	148·4
1983-84	5·9	105·5	14·3	106·2	22·5	107·2	42·3	123·2	51·2	155·4
1984-85	4·8	109·3	13·5	109·7	21·9	110·5	42·3	126·1	51·2	159·1
1985-86	4·5	111·2	13·3	111·5	21·8	112·3	42·4	127·6	51·2	161·2
Married with 4 children (two under 11, one 11-15 and one over 16)										
1978-79	*−11·7*	*100·0*	*0·4*	*100·0*	*13·3*	*100·0*	*46·7*	*100·0*	*64·6*	*100·0*
1979-80	*−13·2*	*103·1*	*−0·6*	*102·7*	*11·6*	*103·6*	*38·5*	*117·4*	*49·3*	*145·6*
1980-81	*−8·1*	*101·7*	*3·3*	*102·0*	*14·3*	*103·8*	*40·3*	*117·7*	*50·2*	*147·8*
1981-82	*−6·2*	*99·5*	*4·9*	*99·9*	*15·8*	*101·7*	*42·5*	*112·9*	*51·3*	*143·9*
1982-83	*−6·9*	*101·0*	*4·7*	*100·9*	*15·9*	*102·3*	*41·8*	*115·1*	*50·9*	*146·0*
1983-84	*−8·3*	*106·1*	*3·7*	*105·8*	*15·3*	*106·8*	*40·9*	*121·4*	*50·4*	*152·9*
1984-85	*−9·7*	*109·9*	*2·7*	*109·3*	*14·7*	*110·2*	*40·9*	*124·3*	*50·4*	*156·5*
1985-86	*−9·7*	*111·5*	*2·6*	*111·0*	*14·6*	*111·8*	*41·0*	*125·8*	*50·5*	*158·6*

Mortgage Interest (Wales)

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the average mortgage interest tax relief per owner occupier by county in Wales.

Mr. Moore: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Gross Domestic Product

Mr. Fatchett asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list regional gross domestic product per head, expressed as a percentage of the United Kingdom average for each year since 1978.

Mr. Peter Rees: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Finance Bill

Mr. Robert B. Jones asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the Finance Bill will be published.

Mr. Peter Rees: The Finance Bill will be published on Tuesday 16 April.

SCOTLAND

Broadleaved Woodland

Mr. John Mark Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if the Forestry Commission will give an undertaking to meet the national voluntary conservation organisations concerned about broadleaved woodland before 8 May.

Mr. John MacKay: The views of the major voluntary conservation bodies have been clearly presented to the Forestry Commission, which does not feel that there is a need for special meetings with them before the seminar on 8 May.

Mr. John Mark Taylor: asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what action has been taken to ensure that an agreement is reached between the Forestry Commission and the Nature Conservancy Council regarding management guidelines for broadleaved woods.

Mr. John MacKay Discussions are continuing between the Forestry Commission and the Nature Conservancy Council on these management guidelines.

Felled Woodland (Replanting)

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the areas of felled woodland which have been replanted by the Forestry Commission in each of the last 10 years, and also showing the percentage of that area which has been planted with each of the main tree species.

Mr. John MacKay: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Forestry Policy (Seminar)

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if the Forestry Commission will invite Friends of the Earth, Scotland, to take part in its seminar on forestry policy on 8 May.

Mr. John MacKay: The Forestry Commission has been concerned to keep the numbers of persons attending the seminar within manageable proportions in order to ensure a constructive discussion. The bodies invited represent a balanced cross-section of interests. In these circumstances, the commission does not propose to issue any further invitations.

Housing

Mr. White asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many new houses were started in Scotland in the last six months for which figures are available; and how many were started in the similar period for each of the last five years.

Mr. Ancram: The information requested is shown in the following table and refers to the period 1 July to 31 December each year.

Period July to December	*Number of dwellings started*
1979	11,629
1980	6,805
1981	6,832
1982	8,810
1983	9,232
*1984	8,450

* Estimate.

Salmon Stocks

Mr. Onslow asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what action his Department has taken since 1979 to counter the threat to salmon stocks from *(a)* illegal netting, *(b)* predation, *(c)* pollution, *(d)* water abstraction, and *(e)* poaching, respectively; and what action his Department takes to monitor salmon stocks.

Mr. John MacKay: The principal measures taken are as follows:

(a) Illegal netting: The ban on drift net fishing for salmon in the sea off Scotland has been continued and enforcement of that ban by the Fishery Protection Service has been stepped up with considerable success. Power has been taken in the Inshore Fishing (Scotland) Act 1984 to prohibit the carriage by British fishing vessels in Scottish waters of certain types of nets used mainly for illegal fishing. Power has also been taken to prohibit fishing for salmon in the sea by specified nets set from the shore.

(b) Predation: Licences have been issued under the Conservation of Seals Act 1970 for defensive shooting of seals at salmon net fishing stations during close seasons and under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 for the shooting of cormorants, goosanders and mergansers to prevent serious damage to salmon fisheries.

(c) Pollution: The prevention of pollution of Scottish rivers is a matter for the river purification boards, but the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland has an ongoing research programme to measure the effects of acid deposition and afforestation on freshwater ecosystems. In 1983 the Scottish Development Department published "Water Pollution Control in Scotland: Recent Developments" which reported continuing progress in the field of water pollution control. The report concluded that 99 per cent. of Scottish rivers were now unpolluted or of fairly good quality.

(d) Water Abstraction: Legislation governing the supply and resource protection of waters, together with the power to control the supply of water during periods of drought was consolidated and reaffirmed by the Water (Scotland) Act 1980. Certain problems regarding abstraction were identified by the Scottish River Purification Advisory Committee in its 1978 report on the control of water abstraction. My right hon. Friend intends to introduce legislation as soon as the parliamentary timetable permits to simplify the control provisions in the Spray Irrigation (Scotland) Act 1964 and to extend its application to other forms of irrigation.

(e) Poaching: We have been reviewing Scottish salmon and freshwater legislation and administration with interested organisations. Efforts by district salmon fishery boards and the police to control river poaching continue unabated and there were 324, 411 and 395 prosecutions in 1981, 1982 and 1983, respectively. The final figures for 1984 are not yet available but are thought to be approximately 320. We are considering possible systems of salmon sales control as a means of reducing illegal fishing in the rivers and in the sea.

(f) Monitoring of Salmon Stocks: Research into the state of salmon stocks is carried out at the Freshwater

Fisheries Laboratory, Pitlochry. This includes a comprehensive system of catch recording and sampling. Exploitation rates are measured by tagging experiments. Detailed investigations are carried out on selected rivers.

Terrorism (Deaths)

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the number of deaths which have occurred in Scotland in the years 1983 and 1984, respectively, connected with the present civil unrest in Northern Ireland; and how many of those deaths were caused by action taken by the police and each of the known terrorist or paramilitary groups.

Mr. Ancram: No such deaths have occurred in Scotland in the years in question.

Agricultural Land (Rating)

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish his Department's most recent estimate of the likely yield of rating on agricultural land.

Mr. Ancram: Agricultural land is by statute excluded from valuation for rating. Valuations on which any estimate of rate yield could be made are not, therefore, available.

Local Authorities (Debts)

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* the amount of expenditure on debt charged in respect of past borrowings authorised by central Government in each local authority in Scotland and give the percentage which this represents.

Mr. Ancram: Since 1975 Scottish local authorities have not required the Secretary of State's consent to borrow for capital expenditure purposes. Figures are not available for the current cost to local authorities of borrowing authorised by the Secretary of State before that date.

Housing Benefit (Rating Expenditure)

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* the amount of rating expediture in each of the district and islands authorities in Scotland on housing benefit and give the percentage of expenditure which this represents.

Mr. Ancram: The information is as follows:

Authority / *District Councils*	*Housing Benefit Expenditure** £000	*Col. (1) As percentage of total expenditure†* Per cent.
Borders		
Berwickshire	63	4·5
Ettrick and Lauderdale	113	4·5
Roxburgh	145	4·6
Tweeddale	43	4·5
Central		
Clackmannan	132	3·0
Falkirk	726	4·2
Stirling	222	2·1
Dumfries and Galloway		
Annandale and Eskdale	90	3·4
Nithsdale	132	3·5
Stewartry	57	3·6
Wigtown	86	4·4
Fife		
Dunfermline	507	4·4
Kirkcaldy	490	3·1
North East Fife	109	1·9
Grampian		
Aberdeen	533	1·6
Banff and Buchan	188	2·9
Gordon	134	2·8
Kincardine and Deeside	60	1·9
Moray	157	2·6
Highland		
Badenoch and Strathspey	38	5·2
Caithness	60	2·1
Inverness	146	2·5
Lochaber	54	2·6
Nairn	20	2·3
Ross and Cromarty	107	2·4
Skye and Lochalsh	22	2·1
Sutherland	36	2·4
Lothian		
East Lothian	325	3·6
Edinburgh	2,191	3·9
Midlothian	289	3·5
West Lothian	455	3·7
Strathclyde		
Argyll and Bute	296	2·9
Bearsden and Milngavie	45	1·2
Clydebank	147	1·5
Clydesdale	136	2·4
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	80	1·3
Cumnock and Doon Valley	209	3·9
Cunninghame	311	1·9
Dumbarton	98	0·9
East Kilbride	48	0·6
Eastwood	52	1·2
Glasgow	4,540	2·8
Hamilton	556	4·0
Inverclyde	299	1·9
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	114	1·1
Kyle and Carrick	346	2·4
Monklands	420	2·6
Motherwell	590	2·9
Renfrew	781	2·6
Strathkelvin	160	1·5
Tayside		
Angus	277	3·6
Dundee	558	1·9
Perth and Kinross	280	2·9
Islands		
Orkney	32	0·2
Shetland	57	0·1
Western Isles	125	0·4

Notes:

* The information is based on authorities' budget estimates for 1984-85.

† For both islands and district authorities housing benefit expenditure shown in column (1) is housing benefit administration costs on rent rebates and rent allowances (including any central administration costs allocated to this expenditure item) and rate fund contributions towards the payment of rent rebates and allowances. The figures for islands authorities also include administration costs (including central administration) on rate rebates.

‡ Total expenditure against which housing benefit expenditure has been measured in percentage terms in column 2 is total expenditure relevant for rate support grant purposes, including loan charges, total rate fund contributions to the housing revenue account and total rate fund contributions to other non-relevant services (including rent rebates and allowances).

Health Boards

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list his responsibilities for Scottish health boards under the National Health Service.

Mr. John MacKay: My right hon. Friend's responsibilities for Scottish health boards are set out in the National Health Service (Scotland) Act 1978, as amended principally by the Health Service Act 1980 and the Health and Social Services and Social Security Adjudications Act 1983.

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what guidelines he has issued to Scottish health boards on expenditure within the National Health Service on items other than those directly connected with patient care.

Mr. John MacKay: Guidelines to Scottish health boards on matters relating directly to patient care, and to the other services required for the management and support of these services, are contained in circulars and other communicaions issued from time to time by the Scottish Home and Health Department. The guidance on these other services is very extensive, and cannot be summarised briefly.

Employment

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many manufacturing jobs were *(a)* lost and *(b)* created in Scotland in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The information requested, for the period up to 1981-82, is available from the Scottish Manufacturing Establishments Record* and is set out in the table.

Year	*Gross employment decrease (Thousands)*	*Gross employment increase (Thousands)*	*Net change in employment (Thousands)*
1974-75	66	34	−32
1975-76	63	37	−26
1976-77	39	41	+2
1977-78	46	29	−17
1978-79	30	23	−7
1979-80	60	17	−43
1980-81	79	19	−60
1981-82	59	25	−34

NOTE: Provisional estimates of the net changes in employees in employment in manufacturing are available from Department of Employment. For 1982-83 and 1983-84 there were decreases of 31,000 and 10,000 respectively.

* The Scottish Manufacturing Establishments Record (SCOMER) covers all manufacturing units in Scotland with 11 or more employees.

Electricity

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to place a statutory duty on the generating boards in Scotland to produce electricity at the lowest possible price.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I am satisfied that the boards' existing statutory duties, together with the objectives set by the Secretary of State, are sufficient to encourage the boards to produce electricity in the most economic and efficient way.

Cumbernauld

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many jobs in the high technology industries have been created; and how many have been lost in each year since May 1979 in Cumbernauld new town.

Mr. Allan Stewart [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 March 1985]: The information requested is not available as there is no accepted definition of high technology industry. The available information for jobs in the electronics industry based on estimates compiled by Cumbernauld Development Corporation, is set out in the following table:

	Net jobs gained (+)/ lost (−)
1979-80	+17
1980-81	−606
1981-82	−418
1982-83	−7
1983-84	−49

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many jobs in the paper and board industry have been created; and how many have been lost in each year since May 1979 in Cumbernauld new town.

Mr. Allan Stewart [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 March 1985]: The information is not readily available in the form requested. The available information, based on estimates compiled by Cumbernauld Development Corporation, relates to Order XVIII—Paper, Printing and Publishing —of the standard industrial classification and is set out in the following table:

	Jobs gained	*Jobs lost*	*Net jobs gained/lost*
1979-80	14	3	+11
1980-81	0	61	−61
1981-82	17	28	−11
1982-83	*	*	−32
1983-84	*	*	−4

* Information not readily available.

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many jobs in the engineering industry have been created; and how many have been lost in each year since May 1979 in Cumbernauld new town.

Mr. Allan Stewart [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 March 1985]: This information is not readily available in the form requested, for the years 1982-83 and 1983-84. The available information, based on estimates compiled by Cumbernauld Development Corporation, is set out in the following table:

	Jobs gained	*Jobs lost*	*Net jobs gained/lost*
1979-80	170	209	−39
1980-81	121	662	−541
1981-82	97	744	−647
1982-83	*	*	+27
1983-84	*	*	−55

* Information not readily available.

Note:

The electronics industry is included within the definition of the engineering industry.

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many jobs in the clothing industry have been created; and how many have been lost in each year since May 1979 in Cumbernauld new town.

Mr. Allan Stewart [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 March 1985]: The information is not readily available in the form requested, for the years 1982-83 and 1983-84. The available information, based on estimates compiled by Cumbernauld Development Corporation, is set out in the following table:

	Jobs gained	*Jobs lost*	*Net jobs gained/lost*
1979-80	14	107	−93
1980-81	35	42	−7
1981-82	100	556	−456
1982-83	*	*	+74
1983-84	*	*	+73

* Information not readily available.

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many jobs in the food industry have been created; and how many have been lost in each year since May 1979 in Cumbernauld new town.

Mr. Allan Stewart [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 March 1985]: The information is not readily available in the form requested, for the years 1982-83 and 1983-84. The available information, based on estimates compiled by Cumbernauld Development Corporation, is set out in the following table:

	Jobs gained	*Jobs lost*	*Net jobs gained/lost*
1979-80	20	6	+14
1980-81	14	8	+6
1981-82	2	19	−17
1982-83	*	*	+57
1983-84	*	*	+46

* Information not readily available.

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many jobs in the distribution industry have been created; and how many have been lost in each year since May 1979 in Cumbernauld new town.

Mr. Allan Stewart [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 March 1985]: The information is not readily available in the form requested, for the years 1982-83 and 1983-84. The available information, based on estimates compiled by Cumbernauld Development Corporation, is set out in the following table:

	Jobs gained	*Jobs lost*	*Net jobs gained/lost*
1979-80	168	90	+78
1980-81	118	200	−82
1981-82	129	178	−49
1982-83	*	*	−153
1983-84	*	*	−105

* Information not readily available.

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many jobs in the construction industry have been created; and how many have been lost in each year since May 1979 in Cumbernauld new town.

Mr. Allan Stewart [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 March 1985]: Information is not readily available in the form requested. The information which is available, based on estimates compiled by Cumbernauld Development Corporation, is set out in the following table:

	Net jobs gained (+)/ lost (−)
1979-80	+150
1980-81	−90
1981-82	+38
1982-83	−29
1983-84	+30

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Non-Tariff Barriers

Mr. Skeet asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps have been taken to reduce the non-tariff barriers that exist between France and the United Kingdom and the other European Community countries.

Mr. Channon: The Council of Ministers has reached agreement on a number of measures identified at the European Council in December 1982 to reduce technical barriers to trade and ease frontier formalities between Community countries.

Bankruptcies

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many bankruptcies have occurred in the east midlands since May 1979.

Mr. Fletcher: The total number of bankruptcies administered from May 1979 to December 1984 inclusive by county courts in the east midlands was 2,080.

Kung Fu Weapons (Import)

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will take steps to prohibit the import of the kung fu weapon known as death stars; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon: There is no justification for a ban on such imports since the misuse of such articles is adequately covered by existing criminal legislation.

Tourism

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if, pursuant to the answer of 25 March, he will list the current obstacles to the further success of tourism in Great Britain.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Manufacturing (Investment)

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list, by region, the level of investment in manufacturing industry for the years 1979 to 1984, expressed in 1979 prices.

Mr. Butcher: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Exchange Risk Guarantee Scheme

Mr. Fallon asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement about the future of the exchange risk guarantee scheme.

Mr. Norman Lamont: On 18 December I announced that the exchange risk guarantee scheme for loans from the European Investment Bank and the European Coal and Steel Community would be extended until 31 March 1985. The future of the scheme was to be reviewed in the light of the recently introduced changes in regional industrial policy. That review is nearly complete and I hope to be able to announce the Government's decision shortly. In the meantime, applications for cover under the scheme will continue to be accepted.

British Overseas Trade Board

Mr. Richard Page asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he is satisfied that the reallocation of British Overseas Trade Board resources since 1979, reducing support for overseas trade fairs and increasing support for the overseas projects fund and the market entry guarantee scheme, has assisted small United Kingdom manufacturing companies to increase their exports.

Mr. Channon [*pursuant to the reply*, 27 March 1985]: I would expect the changes to BOTB services since 1979 to have helped small United Kingdom manufacturing companies to increase their exports but it is not possible to demonstrate a direct relationship. The market entry guarantee scheme is aimed very specifically at helping smaller firms; the support for trade fairs, gross expenditure on which from 1979 to date has been broadly maintained in real terms, also helps many small firms; and the overseas projects fund, while aimed directly at firms seeking major contracts, benefits a large number of smaller firms associated with the work as subcontractors and in other ways. This scheme's share of the overall budget this year is less than that in 1979-80.

TRANSPORT

Departmental Achievements

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list his Department's principal achievements since 1979.

Mr. Ridley: The Government have increased competition in transport to promote better services to customers and greater efficiency.

The 1980 Transport Act deregulated the long distance express coach market, leading to a substantial number of new coach services and reduction in fares. The Public Transport Bill will remove restrictions on competition in the provision of local bus services throughout Great Britain (except for the time being in London) while maintaining standards of safety. The structure of the bus industry will be changed, including the privatisation of the NBC, to remove the dominance of very large public sector operators and to allow competitors an opportunity to enter the market. These proposals will end 50 years of protection and reverse the decline of the bus industry.

The Civil Aviation Act 1980 required the Civil Aviation Authority to give greater emphasis to competition between British airlines and to give users' interests equal ranking with those of airlines. The White Paper, "Airline Competition Policies", underlines the Government's commitment to this policy and the promotion of a sound and competitive multi-airline industry in Britain. We have obtained the agreement of the overseas countries concerned so that British Caledonian's exchange of routes with British Airways can go ahead on 31 March. As a result, British Caledonian will be strengthened and will be better placed to exploit new opportunities. We have also encouraged the development of services at our regional airports; Manchester in particular is becoming a major hub for both domestic and international services, with 17 new routes opening this year, including New York and Hong Kong. The Government have welcomed the Civil Aviation Authority's proposals for liberalising domestic services which, on many domestic routes, should enable airlines to operate in a virtually free market.

We have carried forward our commitment to the liberalisation of air services within Europe. We welcomed the adoption by the Council of Ministers of the directive on scheduled inter-regional air services although we regretted its limited scope. The Council has now agreed guidelines which, although not as liberal as we hoped, should allow further useful European Community measures to be adopted before too long. In the meantime, we have negotiated with the Netherlands new bilateral arrangements which are by far the most liberal in Europe. This and liberal arrangements we have recently negotiated with the Federal Republic of Germany and Luxembourg are already leading to improved services, lower fares and increased travel. We have secured routes from London to several major European destinations for a second United Kingdom carrier and have opened up the London-Hong Kong route to British Caledonian and Cathay Pacific in addition to the existing British Airways service.

In other discussions within Europe, the Government have been pursuing vigorously their commitment to liberalise road freight. The European Community has agreed to double the existing quota by 1989 and to work towards the elimination of quota restrictions. We have also achieved significant increases in permits in other bilateral discussions. The Government are continuing to pursue their policy that world shipping markets should be kept open to competition. In particular, we are taking a leading role in the efforts to secure an agreement between the consultative shipping group countries and the United States on competitive access to each other's ocean shipping trades; we will be striving within the European Community to achieve a liberalisation of the internal shipping market on the basis of proposals put forward by the Commission and we will soon be acceding to the United Nations code of conduct for liner conferences in the context of the Community Brussels package.

We have substantially extended opportunities for the private sector within the transport field. The National Freight Corporation was sold in 1982 to a consortium of its own managers and employees and is now operating more profitably. Associated British Ports has also made a good start in the private sector. We have sold 37 our of 38 English motorway service area leases, earning £50 million and leading to better, more competitive services to motorists. British Rail's hotel, ferry and hovercraft

activities have all been privatised, and more than £300 million of non-operational property has been sold. Legislation has been passed to privatise British Airways. In 1981 the design and supervision work on motorway and trunk road schemes worth over £2,000 million was transferred to private firms of consulting engineers and work on further schemes valued at over £700 million has since been placed with private firms.

The Government have encouraged a more competitive approach and greater efficiency within the public transport industries. In October 1983 we gave the chairman of the Railways Board clear and realistic objectives for his business. These included achieving a reduction of over 20 per cent. in real terms in the requirement for PSO grant by 1986 while providing attractive and reliable services to customers; we also made clear that we did not wish BR to embark on a programme of major route closures. With our encouragement, BR has established a firm policy on competitive tendering; and it has also drawn up criteria for assessing proposals for the introduction of competition for the provision of support services to the railway.

The London Regional Transport Act has established a better organisation for public transport in London. I have given the chairman of LRT objectives for his business including more attractive bus and underground services; involvement of other public and private operators; and improving value for money for passengers, ratepayers and taxpayers. I have set a tough but realistic financial target to halve revenue subsidy by 1987-88. The successful drive on efficiency by the new board of LRT has already resulted in a planned reduction in revenue support for 1985-86 by some £60 million, allowing increased investment while holding the ratepayer levy to some £50 million less than the amount of the GLC's budgeted grants to LRT in 1984-85. I have approved the formation of LRT's operating companies—London Bus Limited (LBL) and London Underground Limited (LUL)—which commence trading on 1 April 1985. Better co-ordination between LRT's and British Rail's services for London is being achieved.

The Transport Act 1983 requires PTEs to invite tenders for operation of any service or ancillary function where suitable, and under other provisions of the Act we have issued statutory guidance to the metropolitan county councils on the level of public transport revenue support so helping to protect ratepayers from unreasonably high public transoprt subsidies.

We have approved investment to improve services to the travelling public. Since 1979, BR has invested some £2 billion plus about £100 million each year installing continuous welded rail. Major schemes authorised by the Government include the electrification of the ECML and new builds of locomotives, coaching stock, and multiple units. Capital investment by LRT has been increased by some £45 million in 1985-86. An extension of LRT's Piccadilly line to Heathrow terminal 4 is under construction, as is the Docklands light railway costing some £77 million. We have approved the construction and financing of new passenger terminals and other improvements at Heathrow and Gatwick airports; we have also maintained a high level of provision for capital investment at regional airports.

Progress with the motorway and trunk road construction programme has been very good. The spending cuts in the programme made by the last Labour Administration have been reversed; expenditure is now running at 30 per cent. in real terms above the level in 1979. We have completed more than 480 miles of new national roads, including some 200 miles of motorway, and renewed to modern standards the equivalent of 380 miles of older motorway. Priority has been given to the completion of the M25; the final contracts have been let and the road is on target for completion in 1986. Schemes bypassing 145 towns and villages have been completed and a further 150 bypass schemes are now either under construction or in earlier stages of preparation. Important steps have been taken to promote competition in road construction and maintenance. Fee competition for consultants has been introduced and competition on time taken on site added to price competition for motorway maintenance schemes as an experiment.

We have also given generous support to local authority spending on roads. Transport supplementary grant has been turned into a capital-only grant for roads expenditure; the 1985-86 settlement covered £320 million of accepted expenditure including 289 major schemes.

We have taken action to help elderly and disabled people and to draw attention to their transport needs. In May 1983, my Department organised the mobility road show, a motor show for disabled people, which gave them an opportunity to test drive a wide range of cars. A second mobility road show is to be held later this year.

Good progress has been made in safety and environmental protection. We have introduced a package of measures to improve the safety of the heavy lorry, to make it less environmentally intrusive and to improve its efficiency so minimising the number of lorry journeys. In 1979 and 1984 we introduced noise certification orders giving effect to the latest agreed ICAO aircraft noise certification standards. This policy has contributed to the progressive phasing out by airline operators of non-complying jet aeroplanes and their replacement with quieter ones resulting in a real improvement in the noise climate around United Kingdom airports. We have improved motor cycle training and testing, brought in a new penalty points system for motoring offences, and improved the safety of children in cars. Following a vote in this House we have introduced compulsory front seat belt wearing. We have improved the enforcement of parking regulations and introduced a streamlined and more effective procedure to deal with drinking and driving offences. I have recently announced a review of road traffic law.

Sealink Ferries (Deaths)

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will set out in the *Official Report* for each of the last six years, the number of people who have died on Sealink ferries plying to and from British ports in respect of *(a)* British, *(b)* Belgium, *(c)* Dutch and *(d)* French vessels; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: The number of people who have died on Sealink ferries registered in the United Kingdom is:

	Number
1979	9
1980	8
1981	*11

	Number
1982	5
1983	5
1984	8

* includes three deaths on vessels not previously identified as part of the Sealink fleet.

Information about foreign registered vessels is not available.

Seafarers' Safety (Persian Gulf)

Mr. Allen McKay asked the Secretary of State for Transport how he proposes to seek to ensure that United Kingdom seafarers on foreign ships with foreign ship owners are informed of the risks of sailing into the Persian Gulf;

(2) what steps he proposes to take to seek to ensure the safety and well being of United Kingdom seafarers on foreign ships with foreign ship owners by securing for them the same rights as the seafarers on British ships sailing into the Persian Gulf;

(3) what steps he intends to take to seek to ensure that British seafarers are not coerced into sailing into the Persian gulf war zone;

(4) what advice he currently offers to shipowners as to circumstances in which they should not send their vessels into the Persian Gulf war zone;

(5) if he has any plans to take over from shipowners the responsibility to inform the crews of the dangers of sailing in the Gulf;

(6) if, in the light of increased hostilities, he will issue further and more detailed advice to seafarers sailing into the Persian Gulf;

(7) what assessment he makes of the requirement for more regular updates and detailed information to seafarers sailing into the Persian Gulf such as location, frequency and effects of attacks on civilian shipping;

(8) what action he takes against shipowners who are found to have penalised seafarers for exercising their right not to sail into the Persian Gulf war zone.

Mr. David Mitchell: I have periodically issued guidance to United Kingdom shipowners and seafarers' unions on the situation in the Gulf, most recently on 15 February and in these terms:

> The Iran/Iraq conflict continues to present a threat to shipping in the Gulf. The Government's advice to British shipping companies remains that they should consider the latest information on the situation in the Gulf before deciding to send vessels into the area. It is for the companies to inform their crews about the risks involved. Masters should exercise all necessary vigilance whilst in the Gulf.

I believe that owners and masters are best placed to inform crews of the dangers a voyage to the Gulf may involve and to decide on measures of safety in particular circumstances, and I have no intention of taking over those roles.

The general guidance I issue is reviewed regularly in the light of the latest reports of attacks on shipping. These attacks are, of course, reported on extensively in the press, by radio and by television, in the United Kingdom and abroad. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office has made arrangements for British seafarers to be able also to obtain advice on current situations from diplomatic posts in the areas of potential danger and the services of consular officials are available to seafarers in the usual way.

It is British shipowners' normal practice to inform their crews when a voyage will involve a passage within the Gulf, and the National Maritime Board agreement between the General Council of British Shipping and the seafarers' unions affords seafarers an opportunity to leave a ship if they wish to before it enters the designated war zone. The agreement was reached without intervention by me. I have no powers to enforce its continuance, or to require foreign shipowners to enter into similar arrangements.

DEFENCE

Departmental Achievements

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list his Department's principal achievements since 1979.

Mr. Butler: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given by my right hon. Friend to my hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Murphy) on 9 May 1984 at column *409*. Since that date the principal achievements in the field of defence have included the following:

(a) we have sustained our role within NATO and our contribution to both the conventional and the nuclear forces of the Alliance;

(b) we are continuing to enhance the capailities of our armed forces to discharge the four principal roles we perform within the Alliance. The programme for replacing our Polaris strategic nuclear deterrent with Trident in the mid-1990s is proceeding on schedule. We are enhancing the United Kingdom's own defences through the introduction of new and improved equipment and by strengthening our regular and reserve forces. We are further improving the combat effectiveness, sustainability, and equipment of BAOR and RAF Germany, and have introduced, for example, the Saxon armoured personnel carrier, more Challenger tanks, Milan ATGW and Tornado GR1 aircraft into service. We have ordered a number of vessels for the Royal Navy during the year, including the first type 23 frigate, and are continuing to introduce modern and sophisticated weapons and sensors into the fleet;

(c) in concert with our allies, we have taken our part in the modernisation of NATO's intermediate-range nuclear forces, by continuing with the deployment of ground launched cruise missiles in the United Kingdom, following the Soviet Union's failure to accept measures of arms control that would have made this unnecessary. We have also participated in Alliance decisions on shorter-range theatre nuclear weapons that will lead to cuts of one third in the number of nuclear warheads deployed by the Alliance in Europe, resulting in the smallest stockpile in 20 years;

(d) in September 1984 we successfully mounted Exercise Lionheart, in which the largest ever deployment of troops from the United Kingdom to BAOR took place, to test procedures for rapidly reinforcing our forces in the central region;

(e) we have played a major role in seeking to foster greater co-operation between our European and other NATO partners and have participated fully in the increasingly significant activities of the independent European programme group, the Eurogroup and the Western European Union;

(f) we have continued to promote Western defence interests outside the NATO area;

(g) we have assisted in famine-relief operations in Ethiopia;

(h) we have achieved economies in defence procurement and support activities through the more widespread use of competition in defence contracts, and the privatisation or contracting out of activities. Increased

efficiency has been pursued by the continuing transfer of resources from the support areas to the front line, and we have continued the steady reduction in numbers of United Kingdom-based civilian staff;

(i) using the powers conferred by the Ordnance Factories and Military Services Act 1984, we have transformed the royal ordnance factories into a company, Royal Ordnance plc, which now operates on a fully commercial basis in the same way as any other company;

(j) we introduced, on 2 January 1985, a major restructuring of the central organisation for defence, designed to provide stronger central control of defence policy, operations and resources, while decentralising day-to-day management responsibilities to the services and to the staff of the procurement executive.

Defence Expenditure

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of gross domestic product is now spent on defence; and how this compares with 1979.

Mr. Butler: Expenditure on defence in the current year, based on the United Kingdom definition of the defence budget, is expected to amount to 5·2 per cent. of GDP. The corresponding figure for 1978-79 was 4·4 per cent.

RAF (Basic Trainer Aircraft)

Sir Patrick Wall asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will release the information on which the Royal Air Force basic trainer decision was reached.

Mr. Lee: As my right hon. Friend explained on 21 March 1985, column 997, cost was the decisive factor in our choice of the Tucano aircraft. However, as my right hon. Friend also explained, we took full account of suitability for the RAF training role as well as the employment opportunities consequent on the RAF order and exports.

Mr. Gerald Howarth asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he is satisfied that no elements of financial subsidy by the Brazilian Government or by the British Government were contained in the Short Brothers bid to supply the Tucano to the Royal Air Force.

Mr. Lee: As my right hon. Friend explained on 21 March 1985, at column 997, cost was the decisive factor in the choice of the Short Brothers Tucano, and the essential first consideration was value for money for the defence budget. Any element of financial assistance in the Shorts bid is a question that should be addressed to the company or to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Gerald Howarth asked the Secretary of State for Defence how long he estimates it will take before the re-engined Shorts Tucano will be available for flight testing; whether that aeroplane will be taken to royal aircraft establishment, Boscombe Down, for technical evaluation before signature of any purchase contract; and whether any other design changes are anticipated.

Mr. Lee: The re-engined Shorts Tucano will be available for flight testing in about a year.

Subject to completion of negotiations, the contract will be signed very shortly, well before the aeroplane is flown to the aeroplane and armament experimental establishment, Boscombe Down. As my right hon. Friend explained on 21 March 1985, at column 1003, such lack of final testing is a common phenomenon in competitions for defence equipment, and there is no likely reason why the Garrett engine will not prove perfectly satisfactory. No other design changes to the aircraft are currently anticipated.

Mr. Gerald Howarth asked the Secretary of State for Defence on what date, during the week commenced 18 March, British Aerospace submitted a final bid to supply the Pc-9 to the Royal Air Force; and what price was quoted in that submission.

Mr. Lee: On 19 March. It is not the practice to release details of tender bids which are commercially confidential.

Mr. Peter Levene

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence why Mr. Peter Levene, while chairman of United Scientific Holdings and a senior office-bearer of the Defence Manufacturers Association, was asked to approach defence manufacturers with a view to ascertaining their interest in contracts for managing the royal dockyards.

Mr. Butler: In order to establish the likely extent of such interest.

Nuclear Tests (Inquiry)

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will take steps to arrange for the medical records submitted to the National Radiological Protection Board as part of its inquiry into the medical consequences of the British nuclear tests in the Pacific in the 1950s, to be made available in summary form before the board completes its report; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butler: The Ministry of Defence has provided all information required by the National Radiological Protection Board. As stated in my reply to the hon. Member for Eccles (Mr. Carter-Jones) on 21 March 1985, at columns *579-80*, service medical records are not required by the NRPB. I understand that it is not the board's intention to produce any form of interim report.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will take steps to make available to the National Radiological Protection Board during its inquiry into the medical consequences of the British nuclear tests in the Pacific in the 1950s the evidence submitted to the Australian Royal Commission examining the same subject.

Mr. Butler: The National Radiological Protection Board has been well aware for some time of the considerable bulk of documentary evidence that has been made available to the Australian Royal Commission. It is free to make any use of this information which it considers necessary.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the latest estimate of the date by which the National Radiological Protection Board is expected to have completed its study of the medical consequences of the British nuclear tests in the Pacific in the 1950s.

Mr. Butler: It is expected that, as previously announced, the study will be completed in October 1986.

EMPLOYMENT

MINIS (Departmental Benefits)

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Employment what estimated financial benefits have been achieved in his Department in 1984-85 by the financial management initiative system.

Mr. Peter Morrison: In line with the two White Papers on financial management in Government Departments — Cmnd. 9058 of September 1983 and Cmnd. 9297 of July 1984—and the published reports on implementation in my Department, considerable progress is being made in introducing new systems to meet the objectives of the financial management initiative.

Much has already been done to increase cost-consciousness with top management review bodies supervising and strengthening efforts to improve efficiency and economy throughout the Department of Employment group. Comparing 1983-84 and 1984-85, the unemployment benefit service, for example, is increasing productivity with the ratio of numbers on its register to staff improving from 114:1 to 122:1; and output per staff unit in the employment division of the Manpower Services Commission is rising from 534 job placings to 615. There are similar improvements in vacancies notified, training applications taken and employment rehabilitation centre throughput. The net cost per person no longer unemployed by virtue of various employment measures has also fallen significantly. The Department of Employment group expects to have reduced permanent staffing by some 2,000 posts between April 1984 and April 1985 with roughly equal numbers coming from the Manpower Services Commission and the rest of the group.

For the future, the new systems will be used increasingly both to control costs better and to set challenging, yet practical, targets for achieving better value for money from the resources at our disposal.

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Employment what evidence there is in the survey of youth training scheme providers reported to the last meeting of the Manpower Services Commission's youth training board suggesting that the number of adult workers employed to supervise trainees on mode A of the scheme differs significantly according to the occupational training family of the trainees; and whether he will summarise such evidence.

Mr. Peter Morrison: There is no such evidence.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what new specific vocational opportunities he intends to introduce into the youth training scheme; and what initiatives he plans to promote, to extend the involvement of the private sector and charities in the community programme;

(2) on what factors he bases his estimation that once the second year of training announced in the Budget in respect of the youth training scheme is operational all school leavers under the age of 18 years will have access to a job, training or further education.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list region by region the number of companies which presently employ school leavers under the age of 18 years within the framework of the youth training scheme.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The information is not available.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for Employment what is the rate of employment in the service industries in the east midlands as compared with the national rate.

Mr. Alan Clark: In September 1984, the latest date for which information is available, it is estimated that of the 1,419,000 employees in employment in the east midlands, 755,000 or 53 per cent. were employed in the service industries. The corresponding proportion for Great Britain was 64 per cent.

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for Employment what is the level of unemployment in Derbyshire at the latest available date; and what was the comparable figure in May 1979.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following information is in the Library. On 14 February 1985 the number of unemployed claimants in Derbyshire was 49,681. It is difficult to make a comparison with May 1979, because of the change in the basis of the count in October 1982, the 1983 Budget provisions which mean that some men, mainly aged 60 or over, no longer need to sign on at the unemployment benefit offices to receive benefit, and the change to a ward-based sytem for allocating claimants to localities. The number of registered unemployed in jobcentre areas approximating to Derbyshire in May 1979 was 14,988.

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many 18 to 24-year-olds were unemployed in the east midlands in 1979 and 1984.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following information is in the Library. The table shows figures for registered unemployed in the east midlands in October 1979, for unemployed claimants in October 1984, and figures for October 1982 on both bases.

The comparison is affected by the change in the basis of the unemployment count in October 1982.

Unemployment in East Midlands—18 to 24 years of age

	Numbers
Unemployed registrants	
October 1979	24,332
October 1982	57,697
Unemployed claimants	
October 1982	54,021
October 1984	62,309

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for Employment what is the rate of youth unemployment in the east midlands at the latest available date.

Mr. Alan Clark: Unemployment rates by age are calculated at national level only.

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many people in the east midlands have been unemployed for more than one year at the latest available date.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following information is in the Library. On 10 January 1985, the latest date for which an analysis of unemployment by duration is available, a total of 76,783 claimants in the east midlands region had been unemployed for over one year.

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many people became unemployed in the east midlands between December 1983 and December 1984.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following information is in the Library. In the period between December 1983 and December 1984, on average 23,900 claimants became unemployed each month in the east midlands region, while an average of 22,800 claimants per month ceased to be unemployed.

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many people were unemployed in the east midlands in 1979 and 1984; and what was the rise in the rate of unemployment in that period.

Mr Alan Clark: The following information is in the Library. The average number of unemployed claimants in the east midlands region in 1984 was 193,400 representing an unemployment rate of 12·1 per cent. The corresponding estimate for 1979 was 70,900, an unemployment rate of 4·4 per cent.

The comparison is affected by the 1983 Budget provisions which means that some men, mainly aged 60 years and over, no longer need to sign on in order to receive supplementary benefits or national insurance credits. It is estimated that some 14,600 men in the east midlands were affected.

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list, for the latest available date, the current level of unemployment for the 16 to 19 age group by region, and the percentage of the total regional unemployment which this represents.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following information is in the Library. The figures relate to unemployed claimants on 10 January 1985, the latest date for which an analysis of unemployment by age is available.

Unemployment by region—Under 20 years of age

Region	*Number unemployed*	*Percentage of region total*
South-East	121,799	15·3
East Anglia	14,243	17·2
South-West	34,877	16·3
West Midlands	60,954	17·1
East Midlands	34,426	16·7
Yorkshire and Humberside	57,250	18·4
North-West	80,230	17·4
North	43,112	17·7
Wales	33,778	18·2
Scotland	71,606	19·8
Northern Ireland	19,389	15·7

Wages Councils Orders

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for Employment what is the approximate number of employers governed by wages councils orders in the east midlands at the latest available date.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: On 1 January 1985 there were 16,500 employers on the Wages Inspectorate's register in the midlands east division.

Agricultural Workers

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will publish in the *Official Report* the amount paid out in redundancy payments to agricultural workers each year since 1970 and the numbers affected.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Separate figures are not available for this industry. Figures for the agriculture, forestry and fishing industries combined are as follows:

	Amount paid £ million	*Number of employees*
1972	1·1	4,313
1973	0·9	3,118
1974	1·1	3,038
1975	1·8	4,334
1976	2·2	4,742
1977	2·1	3,743
1978	2·3	3,599
1979	2·5	3,316
1980	4·3	4,670
1981	6·5	7,197
1982	6·1	6,065
1983	7·1	6,291
1984*	1·8	1,477

* 1st Quarter.

Parental and Family Leave

Mr. Maclean asked the Secretary of State for Employment what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government towards the proposed European Community directive on parental and family leave; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Government believe that the matters covered by the draft directive are best dealt with between employers and employees according to their own priorities, needs and circumstances, rather than by Government or Community intervention. The Government are also concerned at the potential costs and administrative burdens such a measure would impose on employers and believe that measures of the kind envisaged in the draft directive are not priorities for additional public expenditure.

My Department is today consulting interested parties on the draft directive, and I shall report the outcome to the House.

Textile Industry

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what evidence has been sent to him or to the Manpower Services Commission regarding skill shortages in the textile industry generally, and specifically in hosiery and knitwear; and what discussions are being held with employers and trade unions to seek to overcome any obstacles to the recruitment of labour;

(2) whether he will request the Manpower Services Commission to send a task force to Leicester to prepare a report for him on the difficulties for employers in the hosiery and knitwear industry in filling vacancies for skilled workers; and whether he will request an early report on this matter.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I am aware of the concerns expressed by my hon. Friend and have seen the reports in the *Leicester Mercury*.

I have therefore asked the Manpower Services Commission to look into the issue as a matter of urgency and to report to me as quickly as possible. Following this investigation, it will be for the commission, in consultation with employers and trade unions, to decide what needs to be done to tackle any problems it may identify in this area. I will, of course, keep my hon. Friend fully informed about developments.

Wages Councils

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Employment what research he has conducted into the effects of wages councils on employment prospects.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) on 21 February 1985 at column 516.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Employment what consultations he intends to seek with representatives of the Confederation of British Industry to discuss the expected effects of abolition of wages councils on work forces.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: My right hon. Friend issued a consultative paper on 21 March setting out broad options for the future of wages councils and seeking views by the end of May. The Confederation of British Industry is amongst the bodies from which comments are being sought.

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list *(a)* the proportion of female and male workers covered by each wages council order and *(b)* the proportion of full-time and part-time workers covered by each wages council order.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The information requested is not available for each wages council. It is estimated that about four fifths of workers covered by wages councils are female and that about two thirds of workers are part-time.

International Labour Convention 26

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Employment from what bodies he has invited responses to the consultative paper which he issued recently before taking his intended decision in June to deratify International Labour Convention 26.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: My right hon. Friend has invited a number of bodies representing employers' and employees' interests, as well as other interested organisations and individuals, to comment on the options for the future of wages councils set out in the consultative paper. My right hon. Friend is consulting the Confederation of British Industry and the Trades Union Congress on the Government's proposal to deratify International Labour Convention 26.

Overtime

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has about the current levels of overtime worked in each of the industries covered by wages council orders.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to tables 14, 15, X1 and 47 of the "New Earnings Survey 1984." Copies are available in the Library.

Miners (Unemployment Benefit)

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many cases involving the refusal of unemployment benefit to miners dismissed during and after the recent strike, have been brought to the attention of the adjudication officer by his Department; what action has been taken in those cases where the adjudication officer has made a ruling; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information about the number of cases is not readily available and can be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The subsequent action taken on benefit claims would depend upon the decision given by the adjudication officer.

Unemployed Young Persons

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Employment whether discussions have taken place between his Department and the Manpower Services Commission over financial responsibility for unemployed 16 and 17-year-olds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

ENVIRONMENT

Equal Opportunities Officer

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will now appoint a departmental equal opportunities officer with responsibility for co-ordinating the Civil Service policy of non-discrimination within his Department.

Sir George Young: Two such officers were designated for my Department in November 1984, one of them with specific responsibilities for staff in the Property Services Agency.

Rate Support Grant

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the accumulated reduction in rate support grant since 1978-79 in England at 1985-86 prices breaking down the figures between *(a)* 1978-79 and 1979-80, *(b)* 1978-79 and 1980-81, *(c)* 1978-79 and 1981-82, *(d)* 1978-79 and 1982-83, *(e)* 1978-79 and 1983-84, *(f)* 1978-79 and 1984-85 and *(g)* 1978-79 and 1985-86.

Mr. Patrick Jenkin: Rate support grant in England at 1985-86 prices for the years 1978-79 to 1985-86 was as follows:

	£ million
1978-79	12,226
1979-80	11,733
1980-81	11,623
1981-82	10,196
1982-83	9,565
1983-84	9,205
1984-85	8,585
1985-86	8,489

Merseyside Development Corporation

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the latest data on the

expenditure to date by the Merseyside development corporation; and if these data can be divided as to whether the expenditure was undertaken on the Liverpool or Wirral side of the Mersey.

Mr. Patrick Jenkin: The expenditure to date by the Merseyside Development Corporation is £76·4 million. Of this amount, £73·3 million has been spent on the Liverpool side of the Mersey and £3·1 million on the Wirral side. I continue to seek ways to resolve the difficulties over those parts of the Birkenhead docks which lie within the MDC's designated area.

Construction (Expenditure Statistics)

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has concerning per capita expenditure on construction in the latest year for which figures are available in United States dollar equivalents in the following countries: the United Kingdom, Canada, France, Japan, the Federal Republic of Germany and the United States of America.

Mr. Gow: I shall answer this question shortly.

Play Projects

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the Government's policy on funding permanent play projects under the traditional urban programme with particular reference to *(a)* existing play projects when they become time expired and *(b)* new play projects submitted for funding under the traditional urban programme.

Sir George Young: It is for local authorities to consider the long-term revenue funding of projects which they submit for initial support under the traditional urban programme. The urban programme offers capital resources, and revenue support for a limited term. When projects become time expired, they may be resubmitted for a further period of support. Applications for both new and time expired projects are considered on their merits against alternative possible uses for the available funds in terms of the extent to which they address special needs, the priority given them by the local authority, and the level of deprivation locally.

Local Government Reform

Mr. Squire asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make a statement about the arrangement for the transfer of the property rights and liabilities of the Greater London council and metropolitan county councils to successor authorities on abolition.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I have today deposited in the Library of the House a copy of a memorandum containing the Government's proposals for the transfer of property rights and liabilities of the GLC and metropolitan county councils. This reflects the principles set out in the White Paper, "Streamlining the Cities" (Cmnd. 9063), and developed in "the Yellow Book" of July 1984.

Copies have been sent today to the local authorities concerned, and to other interested bodies, with a request for comments by the end of April. Further copies of the memorandum are obtainable from my Department.

Mr. Squire asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make a statement about the future of the Greater London council's central purchasing unit in the event of the abolition of that council.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: In my statement in November about common specialist services, I said that their future was in the hands of successor authorities, but that my Department would use its good offices in considering how worthwhile services could be maintained if there was a demand for this.

It is clear that there is a general interest in the provision of a central purchasing service, probably under the aegis of ILEA, but equally that there are other practicable arrangements which are being considered.

The new ILEA will need to make its own purchasing arrangements. It could well be in its interests to continue to supply others, including London boroughs which have been using the unit. It would take some time for these authorities to set up other purchasing arrangements and they will soon need to start taking decisions. The Government hope that ILEA will open discussions with them as soon as possible, in the interests of the staff concerned and before the viability of the present unit comes into question.

My Department and that of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science continue to stand ready to use their good offices to that end.

Ministers' Offices (Staffing and Maintenance)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the total cost of staffing and maintenance of Ministers' offices in his Department for each year since 1979-80.

Sir George Young [*pursuant to his reply*, 28 March 1985]: The estimated total cost (at 1984-85 prices) of staffing Ministers' offices in the Department of the Environment for each year since 1979-80 is as follows:

	£ million
1979-80	0·858
1980-81	0·880
1981-82	0·831
1982-83	0·771
1983-84	0·817
1984-85	0·879

HOME DEPARTMENT

Detention Centres

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give details of the treatment that detention centre inmates will receive during the first week of their sentence under the extended short, sharp shock regime.

Mr. Mellor: Copies of a note summarising the main features of the new regime were placed in the Library and the Vote Office on 13 February 1985.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the Home Office will be monitoring the effect of the extension of the short, sharp shock regimes to all detention centres.

Mr. Mellor: The new regime in detention centres is being covered under the general arrangements for operational oversight and statistical monitoring of young offender establishments.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the categories of offenders sentenced to periods at detention centres who will be excluded from the short, sharp shock regime.

Mr. Mellor: The new regime is in operation in all detention centres in England and Wales. All new receptions at detention centres have a thorough medical examination, and where an inmate appears to be unfit the medical officer is able to direct what restrictions should be placed on his activities or, if necessary, arrange for his admission to an outside hospital.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has received any allegations of assault or mistreatment of inmates at Aldington detention centre.

Mr. Mellor: Recent allegations of staff misconduct at Aldington have been referred to the police for investigation.

Parole

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners, who were eligible for parole following the exercise of the powers contained in section 33 of the Criminal Justice Act 1982, had not been considered for parole by the time of their earliest release date in 1984 by the Prison Department.

Mr. Mellor: I am not aware of any eligible inmate who had not been considered for parole by his earliest date of release in 1984. If the hon. Member has any particular case in mind, perhaps he will write to me about it.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the criteria which are used by the Home Office to determine exceptions to the new parole regulations.

Mr. Mellor: Parole cases are considered on their individual merits. It is not possible to specify the circumstances that may be found to be exceptional.

Time Trials

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he hopes to introduce time trials to determine the length of statutory limit for remands; and if he will make a statement about the nature of those trials.

Mr. Mellor: We hope after consultation to begin the field trials later this year. We are considering their precise form and the areas where they should be held. The trials will be designed to test the feasibility and effectiveness of particular time limits, both generally and in relation to variations in the courts' work load between different areas; their implications for all concerned in the operation of the criminal justice process; and the procedures required to ensure and check compliance with such limits. My right hon. and learned Friend will ask prosecutors and the courts in the areas selected to arrange for cases to be brought to committal or trial as if the time limits which he will specify for the purpose of the trials were operative. Although under the field trials no legal consequences will follow from failure to comply with a time limit, arrangements will be made to identify those cases and to asses whether under the statutory scheme there would have been grounds for extending the limit.

Prisoners (Correspondence)

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department in respect of which categories of prisoners correspondence to and from *(a)* Members of Parliament, *(b)* social workers, *(c)* probation officers and *(d)* legal advisers the correspondence is photocopied.

Mr. Mellor: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to his questions on 25 March at columns 14-15. A prisoner's security category is not a relevant consideration, except to the extent that there is a relaxation of censorship in open establishments.

P5 Division

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the functions of P5 division of his Department; and in what circumstances this division liaises with the police.

Mr. Mellor: P5 division forms part of the directorate of operational policy in the prison department of the Home Office. Its role is to carry out various duties in relation to the following: prison security and control, the effective use of prison accommodation, policy and casework on unsentenced prisoners, fire precautions in prison department establishments, the transport of prisoners to court and between establishments, the security of custody areas in Crown court buildings, the production of prisoners at court in certain circumstances—for example, where a prisoner is a party to civil proceedings—planning for emergencies, prison statistics and the management of the prison dog service. In many of these functions there is naturally close liaison between the division and the police.

Terrorism (Deaths)

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the number of deaths which have occurred in England and Wales for the years 1983 and 1984, respectively, connected with the present civil unrest in Northern Ireland; and how many of these deaths were caused by action taken by the police and each of the known terrorist or paramilitary groups.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to his question on 1 February at column 331.

Electoral Divisions (Shire Counties)

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish a list of all the county electoral divisions or wards within the 39 English shire counties, identifying the district councils in which these divisions are situated.

Mr. Mellor: No such list exists at present and it could be compiled only at disproportionate cost. Copies of the relevant county electoral arrangemens orders are sent to the headquarters of all the major political parties.

Kung Fu Weapons

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received advocating legislation to stop the sale of weapons such as the kung fu weapon known as death stars.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Police National Computer

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department why details of stolen construction plant and machinery are not placed upon the police national computer.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Details of some items of stolen construction plant and machinery are held on the police national computer.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list those types of stolen goods, details of which are placed upon the police national computer.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The police national computer holds records of the following types of stolen property:

1. All vehicles.
2. Trailers, caravans and sidecars.
3. Plant including attachments and agricultural machinery.
4. Marine engines and outboard motors.

Police Cadets (Training)

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will issue guidance to chief constables to ensure that police cadets are given adequate training in dealing with the theft of construction plant and machinery from construction sites.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Police cadets are appointed to undergo training with a view to becoming members of a police force, and it is not appropriate for them to be employed on operational duties needing police powers. The training provided for probationer constables covers a wide range of crime and crime prevention matters, and is kept under review to meet current needs. Dealing with plant and machinery theft is essentially an operational matter, and it is for individual chief officers of police to ensure that adequate measures are taken in each force.

Prevention of Terrorism (Advisers)

Mr. Mark Carlisle asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has appointed any new advisers under the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984.

Mr. Brittan: Mr. Henry Brooke QC has agreed to act as my adviser under the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984, in addition to Mr. Hugh Carlisle QC and Sir Brian Bailey OBE, J.P.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Milk (School Supplies)

Mr. Jim Spicer asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the quantity of milk currently being supplied to each local education authority under European Economic Community regulations.

Mr. MacGregor: Quantities of school milk on which EC subsidy was claimed by local education authorities and local authorities in Great Britain during the 1983-84 school year, the latest for which figures are available, were as follows.

Quantities of whole milk for which subsidy was claimed by local education authorities for the school year 1983-84 (all figures in gallons)

Education Authorities	*Gallons*
Avon	476,304
Barking	47,980
Barnet	8,511
Barnsley	144,996
Bedfordshire	131,831
Berkshire	267,819
Bexley	69,730
Birmingham	149,108
Bolton	118,529
Bradford	110,988
Brent	165,968
Bromley	94,255
Buckinghamshire	67,456
Bury	123,273
Calderdale	73,202
Cambridgeshire	2,532
Cheshire	38,966
Cleveland	80,063
Coventry	5,278
Cornwall	33,550
Croydon	117,645
Cumbria	181,529
Derbyshire	394,802
Devon	272,625
Doncaster	100,943
Dorset	202,594
Dudley	30,143
Durham	137,112
Ealing	180,366
Enfield	36,652
Essex	15,476
Gateshead	114,053
Gloucestershire	263,527
Hampshire	159,148
Haringey	142,663
Harrow	45,393
Havering	58,745
Hereford & Worcester	149,115
Hertfordshire	444,054
Hillingdon	20,264
Hounslow	117,508
Humberside	123,991
ILEA	1,248,801
Isle of Wight	17,572
Kent	415,510
Kingston-on-Thames	6,381
Kirklees	133,797
Knowsley	114,214
Lancashire	532,803
Leeds	248,750
Leicestershire	181,940
Lincolnshire	35,180
Liverpool	244,785
Manchester	412,570
Merton	23,962
Newcastle-on-Tyne	222,318

Education Authorities	Gallons
Newham	173,797
Northamptonshire	43,924
Norfolk	92,869
Northumberland	50,681
Nottinghamshire	316,297
Oldham	103,381
Oxfordshire	149,591
Redbridge	11,769
Richmond-on-Thames	30,474
Rochdale	91,147
Rotherham	23,620
St. Helens	58,082
Salford	163,844
Sandwell	121,264
Sefton	39,699
Sheffield	332,750
Shropshire	128,790
Solihull	30,235
Somerset	312,562
Staffordshire	181,172
Stockport	33,366
Suffolk	95,672
Sunderland	143,194
Surrey	244,267
East Sussex	169,079
West Sussex	69,138
Sutton	4,585
Thameside	164,197
Trafford	23,888
North Tyneside	105,890
South Tyneside	139,185
Wakefield	102,964
Waltham Forest	170,307
Walsall	122,243
Warwickshire	149,355
Wigan	22,809
Wiltshire	155,356
Wirral	96,117
Wolverhampton	175,545
North Yorkshire	168,586

Quanties of whole milk for which subsidy was claimed by local authorities for the school year 1983-84 (all figures in gallons)

Authorities	Gallons
Ackworth	12,337
Bath	28,449
Bentham	3,520
Blackburn	2,197
Bracknell	11,935
Brewood	159
Bristol	26,083
East Cambridgeshire	4,980
North East Derbyshire	3,416
Erewash	8,095
Fordbridge	3,077
Flyde	3,310
Gosfield	1,903
Great Budworth	284
Hammersmith	1,729
Harborough	1,722
Harlow	47,212
Kensington	1,922
Kingshurst	6,491
Lancaster	6,359
Lichfield	1,654
Northavon	5,455
Ribble Valley	11,624
Rutland	25,288
Stafford	7,979
East Staffordshire	24,821
Stanway	1,454
Thurrock	33,493
Wansdyke	9,152
Wandsworth	3,022
Westminster	8,816
Winsford	9,556
Woodspring	24,881
Wrekin	46,569
Wyre	19,174
Wales	
Connah's Quay	6,763
Sealand	1,761
Clwyd	109,643
Dyfed	38,032
Mid-Glamorgan	232,955
South Glamorgan	34,677
West Glamorgan	20,987
Gwent	19,482
Gwynedd	62,496
Powys	24,679
Scotland	
Borders	6,989
Central	208,197
Dumfries & Galloway	36,002
Fife	319,485
Grampian	191,891
Highland	29,273
Lothian	363,435
Orkney Isles	14,334
Shetland Isles	6,970
Strathclyde	1,662,344
Tayside	132,711
Western Isles	29,349

Equal Opportunities Officer

Mr. Janner asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will now appoint a departmental equal opportunities officer with responsibility for co-ordinating the Civil Service policy of non-discrimination within his Department.

Mr. Jopling: A grade 5 officer in my Ministry was designated in February 1984 as equal opportunity officer, with responsibility for advising on the full scope of equal opportunity matters as they concern race and sex discrimination.

Salmon

Mr. Onslow asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action his Department has taken since 1979 to counter the threat to salmon stocks from *(a)* illegal netting, *(b)* predation, *(c)* pollution, *(d)* water abstraction, and *(e)* from poaching, respectively; and what action his Department takes to monitor salmon stocks.

Mr. MacGregor: In England and Wales responsibility for the control, maintenance and development of salmon fisheries is vested in the water authorities by the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Act 1975. Since 1979 we have confirmed many byelaws and orders made by English water authorities to control salmon fishing and protect salmon stocks.

Our consultation paper on the review of inland and coastal fisheries in England and Wales published in 1981 recognised illegal netting and poaching as a major problem and reactions to that document indicated widespread support for some kind of salmon sales control scheme. We have carried out a very thorough review of the proposals by the salmon sales group of the National Water Council for a salmon tagging scheme and this has indicated some serious practical difficulties over the implementation of such a scheme, including control of imports, the handling of our own farmed salmon and the control of tags. These difficulties, together with other aspects of salmon sales control, are under urgent examination and I will make an announcement as soon as we have been able to reach conclusions.

In January this year my Department and the Welsh Office jointly issued a booklet entitled "Code of Good Agricultural Practice" designed both to minimise the risks of pollution from farming practices and to give guidance on good agricultural practice for the purposes of section 31(2)*(c)* of the Control of Pollution Act 1974. In 1984, following a joint working party on which my Department and the Department of the Environment were represented, the National Farmers Union issued two booklets for fish farmers advising on standards of good husbandry and safe use of chemicals. Following a visit I made with my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Scottish Office, to the Solway area last year, a working party of the North West Water Authority and the Annan District Salmon Fisheries Board has been set up, with the co-operation of the Fisheries Departments, to examine whether joint arrangements can be worked out to control salmon fishing and reduce illegal netting in this area.

In 1981 the Government commissioned a study by the Natural Environment Research Council on the interaction between grey seals and fisheries. A report was published last year and the findings arre still being considered by the conservation and fisheries organisations directly concerned, including those with a particular interest in salmon. Last year the water authorities raised with us the possibility of a ban on fishing in times of drought. My offiicals are considering this possibility, but there is considerable doubt whether existing legislation provides the powers to implement bans at short notice. We shall be holding further discussions with the water authorities on this matter.

In order to monitor salmon stocks, my fisheries scientists collect and collate data supplied by the water authorities relating to both restocking and catching (by all means) of salmon. Data for 1983 will be published shortly in our Fisheries Laboratory Data Research series and a copy will be placed in the Library of the House.

Badgers

Mr. Soames asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what evidence he has that badgers are carriers of bovine tuberculosis.

Mrs. Fenner [*pursuant to her reply*, 28 March 1985]: Post mortem examinations of badgers taken in official investigations have revealed evidence of infection by bovine tuberculosis in over 1,500 animals. Tubercular lesions have frequently been found in lymphatic glands and in the lungs and occasionaly in the kidneys and other organs. *Mycobacterium bovis* has been isolated from all these sites and from samples of sputum, faeces and bite wound pus. Details of these studies have been published in appropriate scientific journals.

Mr. Soames asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many badgers were killed in each of the last three years under the anti bovine tuberculosis campaign.

Mrs. Fenner [*pursuant to her reply*, 28 March 1985]: The numbers of badgers taken in official investigations are as follows:

1982—1,005
1983—1,239
1984—1,333 (provisional)

The figure for 1982 excludes badgers killed by gassing before the suspension of gassing in June of that year.

African Swine Fever

Mr. Nicholas Baker asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he is taking to check the import of meat products from Spain and Belgium in the light of the nine confirmed outbreaks of African swine fever in Belgium close to the Dutch border.

Mrs. Fenner [*pursuant to her reply*, 28 March 1985]: We introduced an immediate ban on imports from Belgium of pigmeat products which might give rise to risk when the first outbreaks of African swine fever were confirmed in that country. Subsequently, when the situation became clearer, all member states of the European Community agreed on co-ordinated action on similar lines in relation to the affected area. Imports from other parts of Belgium are subject to checks at the ports of entry.

Imports of pigmeat and pigmeat products from Spain were already banned for other animal health reasons.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Board and Lodging Regulations

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has had from the National Association of Probation Officers about his Department's proposals to alter board and lodging regulations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney The National Association of Probation Officers was one of the bodies which made representations to the Social Security Advisory Committee on our proposals for supplementary benefit board and lodging payments. In finalising the regulations now laid in draft before the House, we took account of the views of the Social Security Advisory Committee and the representations received.

Housing Benefit

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate how many tenants in each of the housing authorities in Wales will experience a diminished weekly housing benefit as the result of the

new regulations published on 19 March; how many of those affected have already experienced a decrease in housing benefit in April 1984 and November 1985; and how many so affected are *(a)* pensioners and *(b)* handicapped people living in sheltered accommodation,

Mr. Whitney: I regret that the information on which to base the estimates requested is not available.

Social Security Reviews

Mr. Yeo asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to publish the recommendations of his social security reviews.

Mr. Whitney: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to the hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) on 12 March at column *107*.

Resettlement Units (Costs)

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the average cost per bedspace per week in each of the resettlement units operated by his Department.

Mr. Whitney: The average cost per bedspace per week in each of the Department's resettlement units for the year ended 31 March 1984, is given in the table.

Unit	*Cost per bed-space (£)*
Alvaston (nr. Derby)	66·64
Brighton	102·98
Crown Quay Lodge (Sittingbourne)	101·71
Fazakerley (Liverpool)	104·13
Glasgow	97·38
Leeds	68·81
Leicester	78·66
Newbury	91·94
Plawsworth (Co. Durham)	67·98
Southampton	94·33
South Wales (nr. Bridgend)	84·95
Walkden (nr. Manchester)	87·16
West Midlands (nr. Stourbridge)	62·37
Winterbourne (nr. Bristol)	58·16
Woodhouse (nr. Sheffield)	70·58
Bridge House (North Kensington)	74·34
Camberwell	105·20
Camden	152·17
Cedars Lodge (Clapham)	99·04
Lancelot Andrewes House (Southwark)	136·22
Pound Lodge (Willesden)	95·82
Spur House (Lewisham)	94·01
West End House (Soho)	134·86

Benefits and Allowances

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will present in tabular form for each year since 1979 (1) all supplementary benefit *(a)* claimants and *(b)* dependants, (2) all supplementary pensions *(a)* total, *(b)* retirement pensioners and national insurance widows and *(c)* other, (3) all supplementary allowances *(a)* total, *(b)* unemployed (i) with contributory benefit and (ii) without contributory benefit and *(c)* sick and disabled (i) with contributory benefit and (ii) without contributory benefit, (4) national insurance widows under 60 years, (5) other one parent families and (6) other claimants.

Mr. Whitney: The information is in the table.

Thousands

Year	*All Supplementary Benefits**		*Supplementary pensions*			
		Claimants	*Dependants†*	*All pensions**	*Retirement pensioners and NI widows aged 60 and over**	*Others*
1979		2,850	1,520	1,720	1,630	97
1980		3,120	1,750	1,690	1,590	101
1981		3,720	2,400	1,740	1,640	95
1982		4,270	2,800	1,780	1,700	82
1983‡		4,340	2,870	1,640	1,560	85

Thousands

	Supplementary Allowances							
	Unemployed		*Sick and disabled*			*NI widows under 60*	*One-parent families not included in other groups*	*Others*
	*All allowances**	*With contributory benefit*	*Without contributory benefit*	*With contributory benefit*	*Without contributory benefit*			
1979	1,130	80	486	52	155	19	306	32
1980	1,420	176	678	57	148	15	316	34
1981	1,980	234	1,084	66	155	16	369	61
1982	2,490	285	1,437	83	157	20	415	90
1983	2,690	207	1,611	237	237	15	448	175

Source: Annual Statistical Enquiry for relevant years. Information for 1979-1982 is published in Social Security Statistics tables 34.30 and 34.31, copies of which have been placed in the Library.

* Rounded to nearest ten thousand.

† Includes partners and children of claimants.

‡ Provisional figures which may subsequently require amendment.

Miners (Benefits)

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will explain the basis upon which miners dismissed during and after the recent strike are subject to a deduction of £16 per week from their social security benefits; what information he has as to the number of claimants affected in this way; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: A person who loses employment because of a stoppage of work which is due to a trade dispute at his place of employment is disqualified for receiving unemployment benefit unless he can show that he is not participating in or directly interested in the dispute, and the disqualification continues until the stoppage ends, unless he earlier becomes bona-fide employed elsewhere. Any supplementary benefit paid in respect of his dependants is subject to the deduction of a specified amount, currently £16 a week. When the stoppage of work ends is a question which has to be decided on the facts and in accordance with caselaw by the independent adjudicating authorities.

Information about the number of dismissed miners affected in this way is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Old People's Homes

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the maximum weekly sum currently payable to his Department's claimants in respect of accommodation at old people's homes; and if he has any plans to review this figure.

Mr. Whitney: Under the currently locally determined limits frozen at the levels applicable at 5 September 1984 the maximum amounts of supplementary benefit allowed for accommodation in residential care homes varies from £55 to £220 a week. Under the proposed new arrangements announced by my hon. Friend on 21 March at column 1008, a new structure of national limits based on different categories of establishments would be introduced as follows:

	Maximum weekly sum £
Residential care homes for the elderly	110
Residential care homes for the mentally ill	120
Residential care homes for drug and alcohol misusers	120
Residential care homes for the mentally handicapped	140
Residential care homes for the physically disabled below pension age	170

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what action his Department has taken to ensure that benefit paid to claimants resident in old persons' homes is used for the purposes for which it is granted; and if he will make a statement on his Department's actions in ensuring the protection of the financial interests of such claimants.

Mr. Whitney: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the total annual sum by year from 1980 paid to Department of Health and Social Security claimants in respect of residence and maintenance in old persons' homes in Wales.

Mr. Whitney: Separate figures are not available for Wales and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Housing Benefit (Cost)

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average payment of housing benefit per council tenant by county in Wales.

Mr. Whitney: The information in the table has been derived from authorities' initial claims for subsidy for the year 1984-85. The average weekly payment of housing benefit for council tenant, and new town tenant, recipients by county in Wales is estimated as follows:

	Certificated cases £	*Standard cases* £	*All cases* £
Clwyd	9·90	6·20	8·30
Dyfed	13·60	9·30	11·70
Gwent	14·80	9·30	12·20
Gwynedd	15·00	9·00	12·50
Mid-Glamorgan	15·80	10·00	13·10
Powys	14·30	8·10	10·70
South Glamorgan	16·50	9·40	14·00
West Glamorgan	13·70	7·70	11·10

Board and Lodging Payments

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many *(a)* single people aged 16 or 17 years, *(b)* single people aged between 18 and 25 years, *(c)* single people aged between 26 years and retirement age, *(d)* single people aged over retirement age, *(e)* couples without dependent children, *(f)* single parents with one dependent child, *(g)* single parents with two dependent children, *(h)* single parents with three or more dependent children, *(i)* couples with one dependent child, *(j)* couples with two dependent children, and *(k)* couples with three or more dependent children in receipt of supplementary benefit were assessed as boarders living in (i) private rented accommodation, (ii) bed and breakfast accommodation and hotels, (iii) hostels and (iv) common lodging houses in: *(a)* December 1982 and *(b)* December 1983: and if he will give this information for Great Britain as a whole, and for each social security region.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 March 1985, c. *86-87*]: Information is not available in the form requested; and reliable estimates for couples and claimants with children cannot be given. The available information is set out in the table.

Single people in ordinary board and lodging hostels and common lodging houses—1982, 1983 (provisional)—Great Britain*

	Age 16-17		Age 18-25		Age 26 to Pension age		Pensioners	
	1982	1983	1982	1983	1982	1983	1982	1983
Ordinary board and lodging (eg guest houses, hotels, private landladies)	3,000	5,000	12,000	22,000	26,000	34,000	9,000	8,000
Hostels and common lodging houses	1,000	2,000	5,000	5,000	18,000	19,000	5,000	6,000

* Without dependants.
Source: Annual Statistical Enquiry.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 1 April 1985

PRIME MINISTER

Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Council

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Prime Minister if she will list all of Her Majesty's Ministers who have taken part in meetings of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Council since October 1983 and the dates and locations of such meetings, together with the names of Ministers from the Irish Republic who were present.

The Prime Minister: I met the Irish Taoiseach at Chequers on 7 November 1983 and again on 19 November 1984 within the framework of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Council. On both occasions I was accompanied by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. Dr. Garret FitzGerald was accompanied by the Tanaiste, Mr. Dick Spring, TD, and the Irish Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Peter Barry TD. Other meetings under the auspices of the council have taken place as stated on the attached list.

2 November 1983 London	Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and Republic of Ireland Minister for Agriculture (Mr. Austin Deasy TD)
29 November 1983 Dublin	Secretary of State for Transport and Republic of Ireland Minister for Transport (Mr. Jim Mitchell TD)
10 January 1984 Dublin	Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland Minister for Justice (Mr. Michael Noonan TD)
20 January 1984 Belfast	Under-Secretary of State, Northern Ireland Office and Republic of Ireland Minister for Education (Mrs. Gemma Hussey TD)
7 February 1984 Dublin	Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Republic of Ireland Minister for Foreign Affairs (Mr. Peter Barry TD)
17 February 1984 London	Secretary of State for the Environment and Tanaiste and Republic of Ireland Minister for Energy (Mr. Dick Spring TD)
21 February 1984 Dublin	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Northern Ireland Office and Republic of Ireland Minister for the Environment (Mr. Liam Kavanagh TD)
22 February 1984 Dublin	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Northern Ireland Office and Republic of Ireland Minister for Communications (Mr. Jim Mitchell TD)
15 March 1984 London	Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and Republic of Ireland Minister for Foreign Affairs (Mr. Peter Barry TD)
16 March 1984 London	Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland Minister for Foreign Affairs (Mr. Peter Barry TD)
19 April 1984 Belfast	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Northern Ireland Office and Republic of Ireland Minister for Health (Mr. Barry Desmond TD)
6 June 1984 Dublin	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport and Republic of Ireland Minister for Communications (Mr. Jim Mitchell TD)
20 June 1984 Belfast	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State Northern Ireland Office and Republic of Ireland Minister of State, Department of the Environment (Mr. Fergus O'Brien TD)
20 June 1984 Dublin	Minister of State, Department of Trade and Industry and Republic of Ireland Minister of State for Industry, Trade, Commerce and Tourism (Mr. John Bruton TD)
21 June 1984 Dublin	Minister of State, Department of Trade and Industry and Republic of Ireland Minister for Foreign Affairs (Mr. Jim O'Keefe TD)
4 July 1984 Dublin	Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office and Tanaiste and Republic of Ireland Minister for Energy (Mr. Dick Spring TD)
31 August 1984 Dublin	Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland Minister for Foreign Affairs (Mr. Peter Barry TD)
18 October 1984 London	Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Republic of Ireland Minister for Foreign Affairs (Mr. Jim O'Keefe TD)
25 October 1984 Dublin	Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland Minister for Foreign Affairs (Mr. Peter Barry TD)
29 October 1984 London	Secretary of State for Transport and Republic of Ireland Minister for Communications (Mr. Jim Mitchell TD)
28 November 1984 Belfast	Under-Secretary of State, Northern Ireland Office and Republic of Ireland Minister for the Environment (Mr. Liam Kavanagh TD)
5 December 1984 Dublin	Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health and Social Security and Republic of Ireland Minister for Health and Social Affairs (Mr. Barry Desmond TD)
12 December 1984 London	Secretary of State for Transport and Republic of Ireland Minister for Communications (Mr. Jim Mitchell TD)
28 January 1985 London	Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and Republic of Ireland Minister for Agriculture (Mr. Austin Deasy TD)
4 February 1985 London	Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland Minister for Foreign Affairs (Mr. Peter Barry TD)
28 February 1985 London	Secretary of State for Employment and Republic of Ireland Minister of Labour (Mr. Ruairi Quinn TD)
15 March 1985 Belfast	Under-Secretary of State, Northern Ireland Office and Republic of Ireland Minister for Agriculture (Mr. Austin Deasy TD)
15 March 1985 London	Under-Secretary of State, Department of Environment and Republic of Ireland Minister of State, Department of the Environment (Mr. Fergus O'Brien TD)
22 March 1985 Dublin	Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland Minister for Foreign Affairs (Mr. Peter Barry TD)
26 March 1985 Dublin	Under-Secretary of State, Northern Ireland Office and Republic of Ireland Minister for Education (Mrs. Gemma Hussey TD)

Rates

Mr. George Robertson asked the Prime Minister if she will publish figures for the current year's rates increase for a sample of Scottish districts with comparable English local authority areas; and if she will arrange for these statistics to be allowable in appeals against the new revaluations in Scotland.

The Prime Minister: Information on rates in individual local authorities is contained in "Rating Review", which covers Scotland, and in "Finance and General Statistics" for England. Both publications are produced by CIPFA and are available in the Library.

The average domestic rate bill in Scotland, including water rates, in 1984-85 was £328, as compared with £393 in England for domestic rates and water charges. It is estimated that the corresponding figures in 1985-86 will be £397 and £429 respectively.

The fixing of rateable values, and the handling of appeals against the assessors' decisions, have to take account of statutory provisions, and I have no power to intervene in these processes.

Air Services (Far East)

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Prime Minister if she will be discussing the current dispute between the Malaysian airline system and British Airways when she makes her official visit to Malaysia on 5 April.

The Prime Minister: I expect to do so. There have been constructive discussions between the two airlines about the scope for increased services, but it must be on the basis of equal opportunity; it will be necessary to resolve the problems created by the discriminatory tax measures introduced by the Malaysian Government.

Sir Fergus Montgomery asked the Prime Minister whether the subject of air services between Manchester and Colombo by Air Sri Lanka will be on the agenda for discussion during her forthcoming visit to the far east.

The Prime Minister: The Sri Lankan authorities have not indicated that they wish to discuss civil aviation during my visit. Arrangements for air services are usually in the first instance discussed bilaterally between the aeronautical authorities.

School Visits

Mr. Fisher asked the Prime Minister if she will list and date all the visits to schools that she has made during the last 12 months.

The Prime Minister: In the past year I have made visits to schools on two occasions:

21 September 1984 — Maes Garmon comprehensive school, Mold.

15 March 1985—St. Bartholomews, school, Newbury.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Pesticides

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the total quantity of organophosphorus pesticides manufactured in the United Kingdom and imported; and if he will make a statement as to its distribution and handling and the present precautions advised by his Department in regard to its handling and usage.

Mrs. Fenner: The manufacture and import of pesticides are matters for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, while the safe handling of pesticides in the distribution trade is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment.

As regards advice on precautions to be taken when the pesticide is used, I should explain that many factors can affect the safety in use of a pesticide and formulated organophosphorus pesticides vary greatly from product to product. The precise active ingredient contained in the product, its concentration and the nature of the formulation (eg liquid, powder or granule) can all affect the safety of the product and hence the precautions which should be taken in handling and using it. Under the pesticides safety precautions scheme all the advice and recommendations necessary to ensure the safe use of a pesticide product, including, where necessary, the appropriate provisions of the Poisonous Substances in Agriculture Regulations, are clearly printed on the product labels.

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Forth asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what estimate he has made, or is available to him, of the impact of the possible accession to the European Economic Community of Spain and Portugal on the total level of financial support within the common agricultural policy for wine, olive oil and tomatoes; and what are the implications of the proportion of the total budget of the common agricultural policy represented by this figure in terms of support for dairy products, cereals, beef and sheepmeat.

Mr. Jopling: Estimation of these future costs is beset by a number of major uncertainties about developments between now and the end of the 10-year transition period. Among these are the response of production in the acceding States to changes in national support prices towards Community levels; the evolution of CAP prices themselves in the light of resources available; and the impact on costs of future modifications in individual regimes, notably that for olive oil.

Agricultural Land (Milk Quotas)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has concerning the buying of agricultural land with quota and its subsequent disposal; and if he will estimate the effective value of quota in the market place in terms of £s per tonne of liquid milk.

Mr. Jopling: All transfers of land with quota attached require amendments to the quota registers which the Milk Marketing Board maintain on my behalf. From the forms which producers submit to amend the register it is possible to identify the names and addresses of both parties to the transaction, together with the addresses of all their farms supplying milk, and the amount of quota which has been transferred. When part of a holding has been transferred information on the area of land to which the quota is attached is also collected. No information is collected on the extent to which quotas affect land prices, which is the only way that any asset value of quotas in private transactions can be expressed at present.

Exchange Rate (Budget Calculations)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will publish in the *Official Report* the rate of exchange for the dollar against the European currency unit assumed in the 1983 and 1984 budgets, together with the actual rates in those years; and what is the assumed rate for the current year in the current budget.

Mr. MacGregor: The Commission's assumptions on the rate of exchange for the 1983 budget are not available,

but the 1984 budget was based on a rate of $1=1·1 ecu. The actual rates in those years were $1=1·1 ecu and $1=1·3 ecu respectively. The 1985 budget has not yet been adopted.

Salmon

Mr. Maclean asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the objections which the salmon farmers' sector of the salmon trade has made to a system of salmon tagging.

Mr. MacGregor: Salmon farmers have said that they are generally opposed to the idea of tagging all Atlantic salmon, including farmed salmon, particularly in view of the difficulties which they see arising over tagging salmon taken from sea cages and the burden they consider it would place on their industry in terms of additional costs and decreased efficiency.

Mr. Maclean asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what proposals he has to reduce the present levels of salmon and sea trout theft by poaching;

(2) what practical problems need to be overcome before a system of salmon tagging is introduced; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: The taking of wild salmon and sea trout by illegal means is a matter to which the Government have given a great deal of attention, including a very thorough examination of the possibilities of controlling salmon sales by a tagging scheme. This has involved discussions with the interested parties which have identified particular difficulties over the successful implementation of such a scheme, including the control of imports, the handling of our own farmed salmon and control over the issue and use of tags. I will make an announcement as soon as we have been able to reach a conclusion.

Butter

Dr. Marek asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what estimate he can make of the percentage of European Economic Community intervention butter that was purchased by commercial retail organisations.

Mr. MacGregor: It is unlikely that commercial retail organisations will have purchased butter originating from intervention stocks except under the EC special sale scheme. 142,800 tonnes of intervention butter was made available at the end of 1984 in the Community under this scheme. This is equivalent to 14 per cent of Community interventions stocks of butter in the week that the EC commission regulation authorising the special sale entered into force. This butter was initially made available to packers and importers who are obliged to sell it for direct consumption and in general it will have been sold through commercial retail organisations.

Expenditure (EC)

Sir Peter Mills asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list for each year since 1973 the total expenditure on each farm product for the European Economic Community as a whole under the common agricultural policy.

Mr. Jopling: The following table sets out the expenditure on each farm product under the guarantee section of the European agricultural guidance and guarantee fund from 1973 to 1984. CAP expenditure incurred under the guidance section of the fund is normally not related to specific farm products.

mecu

	1973	*1974*	*1975*	*1976*	*1977*	*1978*	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
Cereals	962·7	383·0	589·3	655·9	629·9	1112·5	1563·7	1669·3	1921·4	1824·5	2441·2	1650·0
Rice	9·9	1·0	3·4	18·4	13·5	17·9	42·9	58·7	21·7	50·3	92·9	47·8
Sugar	130·1	106·1	271·2	229·3	598·4	878·0	939·8	575·2	767·5	1241·9	1316·2	1631·5
Olive oil	245·5	109·9	158·9	143·4	177·1	182·1	388·2	317·9	442·7	493·1	675·3	1096·4
Oilseeds/Proteins	79·1	13·9	40·3	119·1	105·2	186·6	279·7	429·9	648·2	803·5	1087·9	871·2
Textiles	5·9	12·0	15·0	20·7	14·7	15·9	18·1	17·1	72·2	116·4	160·0	108·0
Fruit/Vegetables	31·1	58·5	72·6	185·1	178·2	100·7	442·9	687·3	641·1	914·3	1196·1	1454·6
Wine	10·7	41·0	141·3	133·8	89·9	63·7	61·9	299·5	459·4	570·6	659·2	1222·6
Tobacco	112·5	166·4	200·5	185·4	205·4	216·1	225·4	309·3	361·8	622·6	671·3	776·4
Minor products	19·7	20·7	32·4	40·1	28·0	31·4	40·2	38·2	46·7	53·4	55·6	51·5
Milk	1514·5	1257·9	1193·7	2277·7	2924·1	4014·6	4527·4	4752·0	3342·7	3327·7	4396·1	5441·7
Beef	17·4	322·1	923·3	615·9	467·7	638·7	748·2	1363·3	1436·9	1158·6	1736·5	2546·8
Sheepmeat	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	53·5	191·5	251·7	305·6	433·5
Pigmeat	93·4	69·7	56·9	29·0	37·3	45·0	104·9	115·6	154·6	111·6	145·0	195·9
Eggs/Poultry	22·2	18·2	9·4	15·1	25·6	38·1	79·5	85·5	83·9	103·9	123·3	69·8
Processed goods	23·9	13·7	23·9	67·0	136·3	208·5	252·2	221·2	282·5	414·4	343·2	382·4
ACAs/MCAs	379·5	499·9	780·4	840·2	1190·3	907·5	708·6	298·5	238·4	313·1	488·6	376·2

Sources: 1973-1983 EC Commission Financial Reports. 1984 EC Commission figures.

Sir Peter Mills asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the total expenditure on the common agricultural policy for each year since 1973 for the EC as a whole and as a percentage of the total EC expenditure, and the United Kingdom's gross and net contributions in each of the years.

Mr. Jopling: The table sets out the information requested:

£ million

	Total CAP expenditure	CAP as percentage of total EC expenditure	UK gross contribution	UK net contribution
1973	1,910	82·4	181	102
1974	1,645	75·4	179	29
1975	2,635	78·1	342	*−56
1976	3,605	76·6	463	167
1977	4,655	74·3	737	369
1978	5,975	79·2	1,348	822
1979	7,065	75·7	1,606	947
1980	7,230	73·3	1,767	706
1981	6,450	65·1	2,174	397
1982	7,295	64·0	2,863	606
1983	9,755	68·4	2,976	647
1984	11,180	70·2	3,259	722

* Net receipt.

Sources:

1973-1983 CAP details from EC Commission Financial Reports and Court of Auditors Reports. 1984 from EC Supplementary and Amending Budget.

Surplus Farm Products

Sir Peter Mills asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list all the main European Economic Community farm products in store (surplus) for each of the past five years *(a)* by quantity, *(b)* by estimated days' supply and *(c)* by estimated value for the European Economic Community as a whole and for the United Kingdom separately.

Mr. MacGregor: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) on 14 January, at column *30*. The note referred to in that reply was updated on 13 March and I am sending my hon. Friend a copy. For details of quantities of EC stock levels of previous years I refer my hon. Friend to the further reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) on 23 January, at column *451-52*. Recent values of EC and United Kingdom food stocks were given in the reply to the hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) on 14 March, at column *423*. Information on the value of Community stocks in previous years is provided in the Commission's annual reports on the agricultural situation in the Community which are available in the Library of the House.

I will write to my hon. Friend with the other information as soon as possible.

Milk

Mr. Wainwright asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many days from receipt by milk producers of his most recent offer to them to participate in the outgoers scheme he has allowed for *(a)* acceptance and *(b)* for ceasing to produce.

Mr. Jopling: Since 25 March, 187 producers with over 500,000 litres of quota have been invited to join the scheme. All of these had been told during February that if they were invited to join they would be required to stop production within three weeks. On this basis, they had indicated that they still wished to join the scheme. They have therefore now been asked to return their claim forms within one week and to cease milk sales within three weeks.

Prices

Sir Peter Mills asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the average market prices and intervention prices (or equivalent) for all the main European Economic Community farm products for each year since 1973 *(a)* for the European Economic Community as a whole and *(b)* for the United Kingdom separately.

Mr. Jopling: I will reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Students

Mr. Radice asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what information he has as to the number of students in the United Kingdom who have received awards from public funds for the purpose of postgraduate study in each of the last 20 years; and what was the total cost;

(2) what information he has as to the number of students in the United Kingdom who have received awards from public funds for the purpose of postgraduate study in each of the last 20 years, by gender;

(3) what information he has as to the number of postgraduate student awards which have been made in each of the last 20 years from public funds from each award-making body.

Sir Keith Joseph: The table provides for Great Britain, in 1982-83 and 1983-84, the number of postgraduate students in receipt of bursaries, studentships and fellowships from the Department and the research councils, and the costs to those bodies thereof.

Similar information for earlier years was published in Statistics of Education (vol. 5) Finance and Awards (HMSO), up to and including 1978-79, and thereafter in "Statistics of Finance and Awards" (DES), copies of which are available in the Library.

	1982-83 Number of postgraduates awards*				1983-84 Number of postgraduate awards*			
	Men	Women	Total	Expenditure (£000)	Men	Women	Total	Expenditure† (£000)
Department of Education and Science (England and Wales)‡	—	—	3,077	11,244	—	—	2,475	9,758
Agricultural and Food Research Council	62	51	113	538	61	51	112	558
Medical Research Council	899	509	1,408	5,715	869	592	1,461	6,694
Natural Environment Research Council	904	183	1,087	5,221	864	254	1,118	5,612
Science and Engineering Research Council	6,003	1,327	7,330	35,071	6,923	1,585	8,508	40,771
Economic and Social Research Council	1,163	651	1,814	9,031	1,154	669	1,823	8,044
Total			14,829	66,820			14,489	71,437

* Academic years
† Financial years
‡ Figures for men and women are not available separately in respect of awards made by the Department of Education and Science.

Mr. Radice asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what information he has as to the number of children of European Communities migrant workers who have received awards from public funds for the purpose of postgraduate study in the United Kingdom in each year since the United Kingdom joined the European Communities; and what was the award-making body;

(2) what information he has as to the number of students from member countries of the European Communities who have received awards from public funds for the purpose of postgraduate studie in the United Kingdom under the provisions of the Education (Fees and Awards) Act; and what was the award-making body in each case.

Sir Keith Joseph: This information is not collected by the Department.

Mr. Radice asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what percentage of Government spending on education in the United Kingdom in each of the last 20 years was represented by awards to postgraduate students.

Sir Keith Joseph: In both 1981-82 and 1982-83, the cost to the Department and the research councils of bursaries, studentships and fellowships to postgraduate students amounted to 0·5 per cent. of the total programme expenditure on education for Great Britain. Later information is not yet available, and that for preceding years could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Radice asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many students deemed to be overseas students have received retrospective awards from public funds for the purpose of postgraduate study in the United Kingdom as a consequence of the judgment given in the House of Lords on 16 December 1982; and what was the award-making body in each case.

Sir Keith Joseph: According to information available to the Department, there has been only one such award made to a postgraduate student. The award-making body in that case was the Scottish Education Department.

Equal Opportunities Officer

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will now appoint a departmental equal opportunities officer with responsibility for co-ordinating the Civil Service policy of non-discrimination within his Department.

Sir Keith Joseph: As was made clear in answers given to the hon. and learned Member on 26 April 1984 and 14 May 1984, at columns *60* and *19* respectively, a departmental equal opportunities officer was appointed within the Department on 30 March 1984. He has responsibility for providing advice on the full scope of equal opportunities' matters as they concern race and sex discrimination.

Multicultural Education

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will introduce legislation to require each local education authority to submit for his approval its policy statement on multicultural education; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: No. It is for individual local education authorities and schools to formulate their response to ethnic diversity in the light of their own circumstances.

"Better Schools"

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if, with reference to paragraph 106 of his White Paper, "Better Schools", Cmnd. 9469, he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of all those organisations and individuals who have expressed a view to him on the establishment of AS level courses; and which of those have expressed support and which have expressed opposition to the proposal.

Mr. Fisher asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will estimate the additional costs for *(a)* central Government and *(b)* local education authorities of implementing his proposals on education of ethnic minority pupils published in Cmnd. 9469, "Better Schools";

(2) if he will estimate the additional costs for local education authorities of implementing his proposals on governing bodies and the legal framework published in Cmnd. 9469, "Better Schools";

(3) if he will estimate the additional costs for implementing his proposals on monitoring published in Cmnd. 9469, "Better Schools";

(4) if he will estimate the additional costs for *(a)* central Government and *(b)* local education authorities of implementing his proposals on in-service training published in Cmnd. 9469, "Better Schools";

(5) if he will estimate the additional costs for *(a)* central Government and *(b)* local education authorities of implementing his proposals on teaching quality published in Cmnd. 9469, "Better Schools";

(6) if he will estimate the additional costs for *(a)* central Government and *(b)* local education authorities of implementing his proposals on education of the under-fives published in Cmnd. 9469, "Better Schools";

(7) if he will estimate the additional costs for *(a)* central Government and *(b)* local education authorities of implementing his proposals on examinations and assessment published in Cmnd. 9469, "Better Schools";

(8) if he will estimate the additional costs for *(a)* central Government and *(b)* local education authorities of implementing his proposals on primary and secondary education published in Cmnd. 9469, "Better Schools";

(9) if he will estimate what additional expenditure on *(a)* books, *(b)* equipment, *(c)* science equipment and *(d)* school maintenance will be necessary to implement his proposals in Cmnd. 9469, "Better Schools".

Sir Keith Joseph: The costs to central Government of following-up the objectives set out in the White Paper "Better Schools" (Cmnd. 9469) will fall to be met within the planned provision for the Department of Education and Science and Welsh Office, described in Cmnd. 9428. The costs to local education authorities are discussed in general terms in chapter 11 of Cmnd. 9469. References are also made in other chapers to the resources implications of particular policies and proposals, for example those on the education of the under-fives (paragraph 130), the proposed new specific grant to support local education authority expenditure on most aspects of in-service training (paragraph 176) and the proposed new arrangements for school government (paragraph 262).

Mr. Fisher asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what additional measures and staffing will be required to implement his proposals on monitoring published in Cmnd. 9469, "Better Schools";

(2) what additional staffing will be required to implement his proposals on governing bodies and the legal framework published in Cmnd. 9469, "Better Schools";

(3) what additional resources and staffing will be required to implement his proposals on education of ethnic minority pupils published in Cmnd. 9469, "Better Schools";

(4) what additional resources and staffing will be required to implement his proposals on in-service training published in Cmnd. 9469, "Better Schools";

(5) what additional resources and staffing will be required to implement his proposals on teaching quality published in Cmnd. 9469, "Better Schools";

(6) what additional resources and staffing will be required to implement his proposals on education of the under-fives published in Cmnd. 9469, "Better Schools";

(7) what additional resources and staffing will be required to implement his proposals on examinations and assessment published in Cmnd. 9469, "Better Schools";

(8) what additional resources and staffing will be required to implement his proposals on primary and secondary education published in Cmnd. 9469, "Better Schools";

Sir Keith Joseph: The possible implications for the number of teachers employed by local education authorities of the Government's policies for the schools were explored in the Department's discussion paper "Schoolteacher Numbers and Deployment in the Longer Term", and in the light of that analysis "Better Schools" (Cmnd. 9469) acknowledges that there is a need for some further limited improvement in the overall pupil to teacher ratio for England and Wales. The extent to which this can be achieved, and the pace of any change, must depend on future public expenditure plans.

The employment of non-teaching staff in schools is a matter for individual local education authorities. I look to them to continue to seek greater efficiency in this area taking account, for example, of recent advice from the Audit Commission and within the resources available to support provision in the classroom in pursuance of the policies in Cmnd. 9469.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if, in respect of paragraph 106 of Cmnd. 9469, "Better Schools", he will list those organisations or bodies which have supported or opposed the introduction of the AS level examinations.

Sir Keith Joseph: Over 200 responses were received to the proposals published in May 1984. Those who responded included higher education bodies (the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals, the Standing Conference on University Entrance, the Committee of Directors of Polytechnics, the Council for National Academic Awards and about 15 individual universities and polytechnics); the local authority associations; local education authorities (35); local advisers (5); colleges of further and higher education (20) and schools (about 50); all the GCE boards; the main teachers' associations; subject associations (9); employers' organisations (3); the TUC; professional and learned societies (15); and a variety of other bodies and individuals. No simple tally of those who supported and opposed the proposals is possible because many responses supported some aspects of the proposals while criticising others. Paragraph 105 of the White Paper summarises the tenor of the responses.

Human Embryo Research

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what resources are being made available through the Medical Research Council to finance its voluntary monitoring committee on human embryo research.

Mr. Brooke: The voluntary licensing authority for human in vitro fertilisation and embryo transfer has been set up jointly by the Medical Research Council and the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists. I understand from the MRC that the resources it needs to finance the authority will be found from within the council's grant-in-aid. It is still too early to estimate with any accuracy what the cost will be, but it is likely to be modest.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the members of the voluntary monitoring committee on human embryo research set up by the Medical Research Council.

Mr. Brooke: I understand that the full membership of the voluntary licensing authority set up jointly by the Medical Research Council (MRC) and the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG) is as follows:

Chairman: Dame Mary Donaldson, CBE.

MRC Nominees: Anne McLaren, DPhil, FRS—Director, MRC Mammalian Development Unit.

Sir Douglas Black, MD, FRCP—Formerly Professor of Medicine, Manchester University. Formerly Chief Scientist, Department of Health and Social Security. Past President of the Royal College of Physicians.

Professor G. S. Dawes, CBE, DM, FRCP, FRCOG, FRS—Director of Nuffield Institute for Medical Research, Oxford.

Dame Cicely Saunders, DBE, FRCP — Founder and Medical Director, St. Christopher's Hospice.

RCOG Nominees: Professor M. C. Macnaughton, MD, FRCP (Glas), FRCOG, FRSE—President of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, Professor of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Glasgow University.

Professor R. W. Shaw, MD, FRCS, MRCOG—Professor Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Royal Free Hospital School of Medicine, London.

J. D. O. Loudon, MB, ChB, FRCSE, FRCOG — Consultant Obstetrician and Gynaecologist, Edinburgh. Chairman, RCOG Ethics Committee.

Professor W. Thompson, MD, FRCOG — Professor of Midwifery and Gynaecology, Queen's University, Belfast. Chairman, RCOG Fertility Committee.

Joint MRC/RCOG Nominees: Penelope Leach, PhD, DipSocSci — Social Psychologist, Journalist, Broadcaster, Author.

Rev. Professor G. R. Dunstan, FSA—Formerly Professor of Moral and Social Theology, King's College, London. Chaplain to the Queen. Member, RCOG Ethics Committee.

Sir Cecil Clothier, KCB, QC — Formerly Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration. Formerly Health Service Commissioner for England, Scotland and Wales.

Susan Hampshire — Actress, Authoress, Executive Committee of Population Concern.

Secretary: K. I. Gibson, PhD—Medical Research Council Headquarters Office.

Education Welfare Service

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he proposes to issue a circular on school attendance and the role of the education welfare service, as announced on page 7 of the Government response to the second report from the Social Services Committee, Session 1983-84, Cmnd. 9298, and paragraphs 192-3 of the White Paper on "Better Schools", Cmnd. 9469.

Mr. Dunn: As my right hon. Friend said in reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) on 22 March at column *626*, a draft circular was sent on 21 March to local authority and teacher associations, and other relevant organisations. Copies of the document have been placed in the Library. Comments on the draft have been sought by 30 June. My right hon. Friend hopes that the final version of the circular will be issued soon after that date.

Undergraduate Degree Courses

Mr. Beith asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the average cost per year to the Exchequer of an undergraduate degree course, including maintenance.

Mr. Brooke: It is not possible to identify separately the costs of courses for undergraduates, nor to identify precisely the share of the cost of courses met from Exchequer funds. Approximate average annual expenditure per student for the financial year 1982-83 (the latest year for which information is available) was about £5,200. This figure is composed of the average institutional expenditure per student for universities in Great Britain and polytechnics and other major institutions of advanced further education in England, plus the average maintenance allowance per student for mandatory award holders.

Teachers (Statistics)

Mr. Fisher asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proportion of teachers in schools are graduates in the age groups *(a)* under 30, *(b)* 30 to 40, *(c)* 40 to 50 and *(d)* over 50 years.

Mr. Dunn: The proportions of full-time qualified teachers in maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools in England and Wales on 31 March 1984 who were graduates are as follows:

Age	*Percentage*
Under 30	72
30 and under 40	47
40 and under 50	32
50 and over	23

Mr. Fisher asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science: (1) what proportion of teachers of *(a)* physics, *(b)* chemistry and *(c)* biology in secondary schools are graduates;

(2) what proportion of mathematics teachers in *(a)* primary schools and *(b)* secondary schools are graduates.

Mr. Dunn: No information is available about the proportion of graduates among mathematics teachers in primary schools. Information from the the 1977 sample survey of staffing in maintained secondary schools in England and Wales indicated that of the full-time teachers recorded as teaching those subjects the approximate percentages who were graduates were, for mathematics, physics and chemistry respectively: 45; 70; 75. Comparable information is not readily available for teachers of biology.

Mr. Fisher asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proportion of teachers in *(a)* primary schools and *(b)* secondary schools are graduates; and what were the figures for 1979 and 1974.

Mr. Dunn: The proportions of full-time qualified teachers in maintained schools in England and Wales who were graduates are as follows:

Year (at 31 March)	*Primary (including Nursery) Schools*	*Secondary Schools*
	per cent.	per cent.
1974	7	40
1979	13	48
1984	22	58

Graduate Teachers

Mr. Fisher asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proposals he has to increase the proportion of graduate teachers in schools.

Mr. Dunn: The Government's policy is to move as quickly as possible towards an all-graduate teaching profession. Since 1980, with a limited number of exceptions, entry to initial teacher training has been through courses which are either designed for graduates on entry or lead to degree level qualifications. As a result, all new entrants to the teaching profession are now normally graduates. The Government commend the efforts made by many serving teachers who trained on non-graduate certificate courses to obtain in-service bachelor of education qualifications.

TRANSPORT

Taxis (Deregulation)

Mr. Leigh asked the Secretary of State for Transport if the Government have received any representations concerning the greater deregulation of taxis.

Mr. David Mitchell: I have received over 500 representations concerning the Government's proposals for the taxi industry.

Singapore Airlines (Manchester Airport)

Mr. Arnold asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the most recent representation which he has received from Singapor Airlines about its request for landing rights in Manchester; and what response he is making.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I have not had a formal approach from Singapore Airlines since September 1984. I am however considering an approach which I received on 18 March from the Singapore Government about the proposed Singapore Airlines service to Manchester.

Road Accident Statistics

Mr. Hill asked the Secretary of State for Transport what were the numbers of fatal and non-fatal road traffic accidents, respectively in Hampshire, caused by excessive intake of alcohol, for the 12 months ended December 1984; and what were the comparative figures for 1983.

Mrs. Chalker: Causes of accidents are not identified in statistical reports. The numbers of injury accidents in Hampshire in which a driver gave a positive breath test were as follows:

	1983	*1984 (Jan-Oct)*
Fatal Accidents	7	9
Other Injury Accidents	333	307

Motor Cycles (Fairings)

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will introduce legislation to make it mandatory for manufacturers of motor cycles to fit energy absorbing fairings on the machines.

Mrs. Chalker: Research into energy absorbing devices for motor cycles is currently being conducted by the transport and road research laboratory. The devices being investigated include fairings for the protection of the rider's lower limbs. The research is not sufficiently far advanced for mandatory application to be considered at present.

Under-run Guards

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to introduce a requirement for front under-run guards on commercial vehicles.

Mrs. Chalker: My Department's transport and road research laboratory is conducting practical tests on the effectiveness of front under-run guards, and when the results are available I shall consider whether these devices should be required on all new lorries.

M4 Motorway

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the stretches of the M4 motorway at present without a crash barrier and the dates such crash barriers are scheduled for installation.

Mrs. Chalker: The whole of M4 in England has central reserve safety fencing installed in accordance with normal standards.

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to increase the traffic carrying capacity of the M4 motorway between London and Reading.

Mrs. Chalker: The M4 motorway is at present being widened between the Heathrow Spur (juntion 4) and the new M25 interchange. I have no plans for further improvement at this stage but the capacity of the remainder of the motorway between London and Reading will be kept under review.

East London Assessment Study

Mr. Sedgemore asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what he estimates will be the cost of the East London assessment study which he has set up;

(2) what will be the cost to the taxpayer of his employing *(a)* Ove Arup and Partners, *(b)* Llewelyn Davies Planning and *(c)* Lovejoy and Partners as consultants for the East London assessment study.

Mrs. Chalker: This will depend upon how much work the successive stages of the studies require and the extent to which the GLC and the boroughs make available relevant data.

Mr. Sedgemore asked the Secretary of State for Transport if the questionnaire issued by the consultants for the East London assessment study has been distributed on the basis of a random sample or as quota sample; and if anyone is responsible for checking the statistical validity of the sample.

Mrs. Chalker: I understand that the consultants have distributed leaflets inviting views on transport-related problems to as many as possible of the households within the study area and have also invited views in general advertisements.

Mr. Sedgemore asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will instruct the consultants carrying out the East London assessment study to seek advice from independent consultants versed in survey techniques.

Mrs. Chalker: I am satisfied they have access to all the relevant skills necessary.

A52

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the latest position regarding the proposed bypass of the A52 trunk road at Bottesford, Leicestershire; and when a date for any public inquiry will be announced.

Mrs. Chalker: Draft line, side roads and compulsory purchase orders are due to be published during the summer of this year. If a public inquiry is necessary, the date will be announced about two months before it is due to start.

Bus Services

Mr. Loyden asked the Secretary of State for Transport what are his intentions in dealing with cross subsidisation of bus services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Freud) on 14 January, at column *50*.

South Stack

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 21 March, *Official Report*, column *542*, when the report of his Department's inquiry into the disappearance of the South Stack in the North sea was completed; on what date he received a copy of the report; what evidence the report adduces to suggest that the most probable reason for the vessel's loss was capsizing; whether the inquiry had available to it any evidence of the presence of British or other submarines in the vicinity of the South Stack immediately prior to her loss; and if he will make available a copy of the report to the hon. Member for Warrington, North.

Mr. David Mitchell: The inspector's report on the disappearance of the South Stack in the North sea was completed on 19 January 1984.

At the time of the vessel's disappearance the weather was good and there was no distress signal. Both facts suggest a sudden catastrophe such as capsizing.

The vessel was less than 12 metres in length and therefore did not come within the scope of the survey and certification regulations. It was, however, surveyed for insurance purposes by an independent surveyor. The vessel was known to carry two tons of permanent ballast but there is no record of the adequacy of its stability. It had been fitted for stern trawling and the outriggers are believed to have been subsequently extended. Such arrangements in small vessels can give rise to dangerous heeling forces when carrying the weight of gear and fish, particularly if the gear becomes snagged on the sea-bed. At the time of the loss there was no evidence of the presence of any submarine in the vicinity.

In accordance with normal practice a copy of the factual statement based on the inspector's report has been made available to the next of kin.

Air Services (Far East)

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the dispute existing between the Malaysian airline system and British airways.

Mr. Ridley: I have nothing to add to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister today.

Mrs. Peacock asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received concerning the Britain-Singapore air service agreement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I am considering an approach which I received on 18 March about the proposed Singapore Airlines service to Manchester.

Motorways (Repairs and Construction)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list in the *Official Report* all planned motorway repairs and construction work in April; and if he will detail all planned work for the next six months.

Mrs. Chalker: I have placed in the Library of the House a copy of my Department's major motorway maintenance programme for 1985-86. That provides the information my hon. Friend is seeking on motorway maintenance.

In addition, during the first half of 1985-86 the following major improvements to the network will be in progress:

Motorway	*Junction numbers*	*Details of work*	*Timing*
M4	4-5	Addition of fourth lane in each direction	In progress, completion December 1985
M5	4-5	Addition of third lane in each direction; construction of M5/M42 junction.	In progress completion mid 1987
M6	4-5	Construction of M6/M42 junction	In progress, completion early 1986

A21

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to improve the A21 between Sevenoaks and Hastings; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: We have schemes in our national programme for bypasses of Pembury, Lamberhurst and Robertsbridge, at different stages of preparation. Three smaller improvements — at the southern end of the Tonbridge bypass, at Lindridge north of Lamberhurst, and Coopers Corner, north of Hurst Green—are included in the regional programme.

In addition, I shall be taking account of the results of a comprehensive study into further measures which might be needed along the A21 between Tonbridge and Hastings, in our current review of the trunk road programme.

Second Severn Crossing

Mr. Sayeed asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about the progress of the study for a second Severn crossing.

Mr. Ridley: On 7 February 1984 I announced the setting up of the study and I have today published the report on the first phase which has been received from the consultants Messrs. W. S. Atkins & Partners and G. Maunsell & Partners. Copies of the report have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

As my hon. Friend informed the House on 13 December 1984 at column 578, many possibilities have been investigated for the location and type of river crossing and the link roads to the M4-M5 motorways. The consultants recommended for further study nine crossing options together with 21 route options for linking a new crossing to the existing highway network. The recommended crossing options are all situated south west of the existing bridge and north of Avonmouth and include a mix of bridges, driven tunnels and immersed tunnels.

They fall into three broad corridors—one between the existing bridge and the Dun Sands, one across the English Stones and the third corridor south of the English Stones but to the north of Avonmouth.

I agree with the consultants' recommendation not to consider further possible crossings north of the existing crossing nor south of Avonmouth. Also as the options in the third corridor are clearly more expensive in terms of capital costs I have decided it would be wrong to pursue these options further, and that it is fair to remove now any uncertainty in the minds of those who may fear planning blight.

Approval has been given to the consultants continuing further detailed work on the recommended options in the first two corridors. They will be having further consultations with interested local authorities and other bodies.

ENVIRONMENT

Local Authority

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the sources of finance for *(a)* gross and *(b)* net capital expenditure by local authorities in total in England for each year from 1974 to 1985.

Mr. Patrick Jenkin Based on returns from local authorities, the information requested for England is as follows, where net capital expenditure equals gross capital expenditure less capital receipts. Information for 1984-85 is not yet available.

Local Authority Capital Expenditure and Income: England

£ million

	1974-75	*1975-76*	*1976-77*	*1977-78*	*1978-79*	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84**
Expenditure										
Gross capital expenditure†	3,669	3,926	3,806	3,518	3,628	4,206	4,456	3,896	4,875	5,374
Other expenditure charged to capital account and changes in balances‡	152	216	404	455	535	612	871	1,196	2,033	1,519
TOTAL	3,821	4,142	4,210	3,973	4,163	4,818	5,327	5,092	6,908	6,893
Financed by:										
Contributions from revenue ‖	183	236	257	285	309	369	454	325	321	277
Government grants and reimbursements	128	177	249	255	351	385	318	321	416	397
Loans¶	3,209	3,285	3,097	2,677	2,627	2,992	2,900	2,527	3,358	3,336
Transfers from special funds•	113	142	177	200	256	369	507	380	475	547
Capital receipts	188	302	430	556	620	703	1,148	1,539	2,338	2,306
TOTAL	3,821	4,142	4,210	3,973	4,163	4,818	5,327	5,092	6,908	6,893

* Provisional
† Excluding double counting of flows between authorities
‡ Mostly repayment of debt and changes in balances
‖ Revenue contributions to capital outlay and uncapitalised expenditure
¶ Including internal loans
• Including advances from capital funds

Spending Targets

Mr. Foster asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met the local authority associations to discuss spending targets for the financial years 1985-86 and 1986-87.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend discussed the 1985-86 expenditure targets, and other aspects of the 1985-86 rate support grant settlement, with the local authority associations on 11 December 1984, at a meeting of the Consultative Council on Local Government Finance. We have not yet formally discussed with the associations the question of targets for 1986-87.

Conservation (Special Grants)

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will outline the source or sources of funds made available to voluntary organisations in the

conservation field in relation to his Department's special grants programme; and if he will list the extent of each of the contributions.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Countryside Commission has been informed of 64 management agreements that have been concluded by local authorities under the provisions of the 1981 Act. Of these, 38 involve no financial consideration.

International Conference Centre

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the total cost to date of the new international conference centre in Westminster; what is his latest estimate of the total cost; and if he will list the references or describe *(a)* the uses to which it will be put, *(b)* the charge to non-Governmental organisations, if it is made available to them and *(c)* his estimate of the annual revenue cost.

Sir George Young: Expenditure to 22 February 1985 on the construction and fitting out of the superstructure of the international conference centre (including the fitting out of the extention to the parliamentary telephone exchange) was £26·073 million. The current total estimated cost, at cash prices, including the estimated total cost of variation of price payments, is £46·4 million. The estimated cost of furnishings is £5·3 million. The current estimate of total cost of £54·775 million in Supply Estimates 1985-86 at constant 1985-86 prices includes furnishings.

The centre's primary function will be to accommodate Government conferences, at both national and international level. At other times its facilities will be available on commercial terms to other users, including private sector bodies. The precise charges for these facilities have not yet been settled. Further market research is in hand as a basis for making estimates of the likely annual revenue.

Community and Parish Councils

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he is satisfied with the current operation and role of community and parish councils; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: Parish councils have operated as part of local government since 1894. They continue to perform a useful role in community representation and in administering a limited range of local government services.

Community councils are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Urban Development Corporations

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, in respect of section 12 of the New Towns and Urban Development Corporations Act 1985 and schedule 31 to the Local Government Planning and Land Act 1980, he will state the amounts borrowed by each of the urban development corporations; and what is the upper limit in each case.

Sir George Young: I refer the hon. Gentleman to "Accounts relating to issues from the National Loans Fund" for the years 1981-82 (HC 146 (1982-83) p. 76); 1982-83 (HC 159 (1983-84) p. 78); and 1983-84 (HC 106 (1984-85) p. 72). These accounts include a statement of cumulative grant paid as well as borrowing in relation to the financial limit then in force. There is no separate upper limit on borrowing.

Dog Licences

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on what has happened following the consultation paper reviewing dog licences and proposing new legislation to give local authorities the power to increase licence fees.

Mr. Waldegrave: The closing date for comment on the consultation paper was 28 February. Some 1,400 representations from a wide range of organisations and individuals have been received and are being considered.

Agricultural Land (Rating)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the yield from the imposition of a rate on agricultural land at the full rate charged by local authorities on commercial and business undertakings.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. Friend to the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) on 22 March, at column *637*.

Bradford

Mr. Lawler asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the amount of derelict land in Bradford from 1979 to 1983 and the latest figures available by ownership under the headings of private, nationalised industry, local authority and Government or public corporation.

Mr. Macfarlane: The information on the amount of derelict land in England is not compiled in the precise form requested by my hon. Friend. The 1982 survey of derelict land in England shows that there were 326 hectares of such land in the metropolitan district of Bradford at 1 April 1982. The details of ownership are as follows:

	Hectares
Local authority	15
Other public bodies	24
Private	287

Mr. Lawler asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the percentage increase in housing starts in Bradford in both the private and public sectors for 1984 compared with 1983 and compared with the United Kingdom as a whole.

Sir George Young: The following percentage changes are calculated from the reported number of starts in Bradford published in "Local Housing Statistics" issues 68 and 72, and starts in the United Kingdom published in table 1.2 of "Housing and Construction Statistics" No. 20.

Housebuilding Starts
January to September of 1983 and of 1984: percentage changes

	Public	*Private*	*All*
Bradford	+1	+51	+34
United Kingdom	−16	−7	−9

Mr. Lawler asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what was the amount of urban development grant money allocated for economic projects in Bradford for the years 1982-83 and 1983-84; and what proportion that was of the total;

(2) what has been the number of jobs created by urban development grant projects since 1979 in Bradford.

Sir George Young: The city of Bradford metropolitan district council is a programme authority for the purposes of the Government's urban programme. Total urban programme expenditure in Bradford in 1982-83 was £6·33 million. Economic projects made up 10 per cent. of the approved programme for that year. Total expenditure in 1983-84 was £5·56 million. Economic projects made up 21 per cent. of the approved programme.

The council is in addition one of the authorities which have been invited to put forward schemes for urban development grant. Although one offer of UDG has been made, and other schemes are under discussion with officers of the city, no expenditure has yet been incurred.

Information about the number of jobs created in Bradford since 1979 in consequence of this expenditure is not available.

Crisis Management Measures

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Merionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Thomas) on 12 February, *Official Report*, column 86, he will make a statement on how, and why, his Department takes part in corporate exercises of testing crisis management measures; and if he will list all such forthcoming exercises planned and all those which have taken place in the last two years.

Mr. Waldegrave: Officials of my Department attended inter-departmental meetings during WINTEX-CIMEX 85 at which crisis management measures were discussed. This was done because we would be responsible for taking decisions in a crisis which would affect other Departments, and vice versa. Such exercises have taken place early in the year for many years. It is likely that this pattern will continue in future.

Waste Disposal (Energy)

Mr. Rost asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what action he proposes to help develop energy from waste schemes in those local authorities where disposal costs for landfill are higher than the cost of mass incineration with heat and electricity recovery or refuse-derived fuel production;

(2) what steps his Department is taking to define investment opportunities involving private sector finance for local authority waste into energy recovery schemes.

Mr. Waldegrave: Guidance for local authorities and others on waste disposal options including incineration and the production of waste derived fuel is contained in my Department's publication "Mechanised Household Waste Sorting in the United Kingdom — A General Guide" published by HMSO in 1984; a copy is in the Library of the House of Commons. This document includes information on waste disposal options currently in use; costs and financing; opportunities for the private sector; and marketing of products.

My Department will shortly be publishing a report of the landfill practices review group which will include advice on the control, extraction and distribution of landfill gas as an energy source. We are continuing to support research and development into the recovery of energy from waste.

Mr. Rost asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if his Department collates case study information on schemes in other countries which convert waste into energy.

Mr. Waldegrave: My Department has acquired information from various sources on some of the schemes used for recovering energy from waste in other countries. The Department of Energy also has a certain amount of similar information. However, a more comprehensive collection of such data is held by the Harwell waste management information bureau which is partly funded by my Department.

Control of Mineral Working

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to publish his revised memorandum on the control of mineral working as outlined in circular 3/84.

Mr. Macfarlane: Representatives from the minerals industry and the local authority associations have agreed that to be of long-term use the revised edition of the memorandum needs to await both Parliamentary approval of regulations for the abatement of compensation as provided for in the Town and Country Planning (Minerals) Act 1981 and the making of certain minerals amendments to the Town and County Planning General Development Order 1977. The compensation regulations were laid before the House on 27 March 1985, and I hope that the GDO amendments can be introduced later in this Parliamentary Session. The new edition of the memorandum will be published as soon as possible thereafter.

Ethnic Minority Projects (Funding)

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the projects which are being funded by inner city partnership money in respect of social and community facilities for Bangladeshi communities in England and Wales.

Sir George Young: In 1984-85 the urban programme is supporting the 18 social and community projects listed as follows which specifically address the needs of Bangladeshi communities in Partnership areas. Members of these communities will also benefit from more than 100 UP funded social and community projects, costing over £2·5 million, aimed more generally at Asian and Muslim communities in the Partnership areas.

Partnership Authorities: Urban Programme Social and Community Projects of Special Benefit to Bangladeshi Communities

Partnership	*Cost (1984-85) £*
BIRMINGHAM:	
1. Bangladesh Women's Association—Welfare Project	1,500
2. Jalabad Bangla School—Bengali Teaching Classes	1,000

Partnership	Cost (1984-85) £
3. Bangladesh Islamic Organisation—Bangla Language Teaching Project	1,500
4. Bangladesh Women's Association Welfare Project	500
5. Bangladesh Welfare Organisation—Welfare Advice/Mother Tongue Teaching	2,000
6. Bangladesh Welfare Association—Family Welfare Works	7,000
Total	13,500
HACKNEY:	
1. Bangla Education and Cultural Association	6,800
2. Mother Tongue Teaching Partnership	68,000
3. North London Muslim Youth Centre	400
4. Hackney Asian Association	6,200
Total	81,400
ISLINGTON:	
1. Bangladesh Women's Association	31,000
2. North London Bangladesh Welfare Association	23,400
3. Bengali Women's Group	17,300
4. Islington Muslim Association	12,800
5. Patidal Samaj	27,600
6. Asian Centre	40,000
Total	152,100
MANCHESTER/SALFORD:	
1. Greater Manchester Bangladesh Association	34,000
2. Bangladesh Women's and Children's Welfare Project	29,000
Total	63,000
Grand Total	310,000

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the projects which are receiving partnership funding for ethnic minority communities in Liverpool at the most recent date.

Sir George Young: Projects of particular benefit to ethnic minority communities being funded through the Liverpool inner city partnership in 1984-85 are as follows.

Urban Programme Funding for Ethnic Minority Communities

	Estimated Outturn 1984-85 CAP £000's	REV £000's
VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS		
Charles Wootton Centre		
Fieldwork Post	—	9·5
Hindu Cultural Organisation Centre		
Running Costs	—	12·4
Sports Hall (Phase 2)	70·0	—
Merseyside Asian Social & Cultural Organisation		
Social and Cultural Events and Music Lessons	—	1·0
Merseyside Caribbean Council	111·9	43·5
Community Centre		9·5
Merseyside Somali Community Association Centre	—	9·0
Pakistan Association Centre	116·9	26·8
Pakistan Association	1·6	—
Library Project	—	—
Princes Park Methodist Centre		
Sports Hall	75·0	—
Elimu Wa Nane	—	11·0
Photocopier	3·0	—
Liverpool Sikh Community Centre	12·5	—
Liverpool Muslim Society		
Books, Equipment	1·4	—
Liverpool 8 Law Centre	150·0	—
Refurbishment of 34-36 Princes Road Office Accommodation for Law Centre South Liverpool Personnel and Rialto Community Centre		
South Liverpool Personnel		
Job Placement Agency	—	40·0
Merseyside Community Relations Council		
Electrical Improvements and Additional Security	5·0	—
Public Education Officer	—	8·8
Ujamaa House	—	47·5
Asian Worker	—	7·6
Circle of Literary Friends URDU Speaking Project		
Equipment and Books etc	4·9	0·6
STATUTORY PROVISION		
Crown Street Language Centre	—	31·5
Merseyside Chinese Community Centre —Running Costs	—	34·0
Foundation Courses to Improve Basic Skills	—	85·8
Courses for the Unemployed (Access Programme)	—	136·3
Black Social Work Project	—	175·0
Home Help Service for the Black Community	—	134·0
Domiciliary Meals for Muslims	—	9·4
SUMMARY		
Total Voluntary Projects	552·20	227·20
Total Statutory Projects	Nil	606·20
Grand Total Partnership Funding 1984-85	552·20	833·20

Figures as at 3 December 1984.

Local Government (Staff)

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out in descending order for each London borough the number of local authority employees per 100 inhabitants allowing for the Inner London education authority and the Greater London council.

Mr. Waldegrave: The information is as follows.

Staff per hundred population
Inner London Boroughs (including GLC and ILEA)

Borough	Staff
Camden	6·17
Hackney	5·85
Lambeth	5·84
Islington	5·58
Lewisham	5·29

Borough	Staff
Greenwich	5·07
Towerhamlets	4·98
Westminster	4·73
Hammersmith	4·59
Kensington and Chelsea	3·86
Wandsworth	3·77

Information is not available for Southwark.

Coolscar Quarry, Wharfedale

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, in view of the fact that limestone quarrying operations have begun at Coolscar quarry in Wharfedale, without the necessary planning permission, he will take steps to secure the immediate cessation of those operations until after he has reached a decision on the planning application in relation to which the public inquiry reopens on 21 May.

Mr. Macfarlane: No. The question whether to initiate enforcement action is for North Yorkshire county council, as the mineral planning authority, to determine in the first instance.

Society of Engineers Incorporated

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has included the Society of Engineers Incorporated on the list of approved inspectors for checking and carrying out site supervision under the Housing and Building Control Bill; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: The bodies which my right hon. Friend has in mind to designate for the purposes of approving inspectors under section 49 of the Building Act 1984 are as follows:

The Chartered Institute of Building
The Faculty of Architects and Surveyors
The Incorporated Association of Architects and Surveyors
The Institution of Building Control Officers
The Institution of Civil Engineers
The Institution of Structural Engineers
The Royal Institute of British Architects
The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors

Improvement Policy

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment why the consultation paper on improvement policy, whose publication was announced in paragraph 23 of Vol. II of the 1985 public expenditure White Paper, has still not been made available to the public or placed in the Library.

Sir George Young: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton) on 18 February at column *333*.

Empty Dwellings

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will arrange a meeting with Shelter to discuss the findings of his Department's report on local authority empty dwellings regarding the current shortfall of public sector dwellings for rent.

Sir George Young: The Department invited Shelter's comments on the empty dwellings report and on the draft circular to local authorities setting out ways in which better management can reduce numbers of empty dwellings. No response has so far been received.

Housing

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what assumptions about future housing demand he makes in determining the level of provision for capital expenditure on housing; and on what factual information he bases those assumptions.

Sir George Young: The Government's decisions on the level of provision for capital expenditure on housing are based on a judgment of what can be afforded, having regard to household projections and information about the needs of individual local authorities, the views of the local authority associations and representatives of the voluntary housing movement, and wider economic considerations.

Home Ownership Scheme

Mr. Robert B. Jones asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he intends to change the price limits that restrict the purchase of property under the home ownership scheme for tenants of charitable housing associations.

Mr. Gow: The price limits have been reviewed in the light of changes in house prices and the following limits will apply to all purchases completed after 1 April 1985:

Greater London—£45,000
South East—£40,000
Elsewhere in England and Wales—£30,000

The definition of the south east is wider than the former "home counties" zone and now includes the whole counties of:

Bedfordshire
Berkshire
Buckinghamshire
Essex
Hampshire
Hertfordshire
Isle of Wight
Kent
Oxfordshire
Surrey
East Sussex
West Sussex

The rules for the scheme have also been amended so that tenants may now buy a dwelling outright even if it costs more than the price limit provided that they pay all the excess from their own resources. I believe that these changes will help more people to buy homes that are suitable for their individual needs under the scheme.

Football

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many football matches the Minister for Sport has attended since taking office.

Mr. Macfarlane [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 March 1985, c. *12*]: I list below all the football matches which I have attended since September 1981:

Season 1981-82
England v Hungary
Manchester City v Swansea City
Tottenham Hotspur v Liverpool
England v Northern Ireland
Millwall v Chester
Liverpool v Swansea City

Tottenham Hotspur v Ipswich Town
Liverpool v Manchester United
England v Holland
England v France
Northern Ireland v Yugoslavia
Scotland v Brazil
England v West Germany

Season 1982-83
Bayern Munich v Tottenham Hotspur
Swansea City v Tottenham Hotspur
Ipswich Town v Tottenham Hotspur
West Bromwich Albion v Liverpool
Ipswich Town v Manchester United
Liverpool v Manchester United
West Ham United v Aston Villa
Sutton United v Bishops Stortford
England v West Germany

Season 1983-84
Holland v Spain
Arsenal v West Bromwich Albion
Brighton and Hove Albion v Everton
Queen's Park Rangers v Everton
West Ham United v Manchester United
Ipswich Town v Arsenal
Fulham v Tottenham Hotspur
Everton v Gillingham

Season 1984-85
Everton v Liverpool
Wycombe Wanderers v Sutton United
Norwich City v Sunderland

I shall be attending the Stoke City v Everton match on 20 April. In addition to those matches, I was also to have attended two matches which were cancelled due to bad weather.

I assume the hon. Member refers to association football matches, but since September 1981 I have also attended some 20 rugby football league and rugby football union matches at club and international level. If the hon. Member requires that additional detail I shall write to him.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Contempt of Court Act 1980

Mr. Hayes asked the Attorney-General when he proposes to bring section 13 of the Contempt of Court Act 1980 into force.

The Attorney-General: The Lord Chancellor is giving further consideration to the best arrangements for improving the provision of legal aid for contempt of court cases. He hopes to introduce these this year.

Mr. Alan Lowther

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Attorney-General if he will make a statement concerning the prosecution of Mr. Alan Lowther under section 2 of the Official Secrets Act.

The Attorney-General: Alan Lowther was a member of a working group within the Home Office tasked to assist members of the Metropolitan police fraud squad investigating alleged irregularities in contractual dealings between the Directorate of Industries and Farms and a supplier. He was alleged to have communicated to one of those whom he believed to be under investigation, and contrary to express instructions, parts of a report identifying transactions which were to be the subject of that investigation.

I considered that proceedings were appropriate and granted my consent. However, evidence given at the committal indicated that the information would have been of less assistance to the recipient than it first appeared to be. I therefore decided that it would not be in the public interest for the prosecution to proceed further. This was not a case which involved national security but a possible interference into a criminal investigation.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Student Demonstrators (Manchester)

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the charges brought against those persons arrested while demonstrating against himself at Manchester university students' union this month, the date of appearance in court and the verdict and sentence, where applicable.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The chief constable of Greater Manchester informs me that the following charges have been brought in connection with the demonstration at Manchester university students union on 1 March:

Offence	*Number*
Section 5 of the Public Order Act 1936 (conduct conducive to a breach of the peace)	19
Obstruction of the police	6
Obstruction of the highway	6
Theft of a policeman's helmet	1
Common law breach of the peace	1
	33

None of these cases has yet been dealt with by the courts. One has been adjourned until June; the others are expected to be heard in April.

Children in Care

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to announce the new guidelines relating to safeguards for children in care.

Mr. Giles Shaw: For details of the review into disclosure of convictions in relation to those seeking positions of responsibility for children I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley) on 27 March at column *247*.

Life Sentence Prisoners

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners are currently serving life sentences.

Mr. Mellor: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) on 28 March at column *276*.

Fines

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many defendants appealed against the size of a fine imposed by courts during *(a)* 1981, *(b)* 1982, *(c)* 1983 and *(d)* 1984, respectively;

(2) what was the total number of appeals against all forms of sentence during *(a)* 1981, *(b)* 1982, *(c)* 1983 and *(d)* 1984, respectively;

(3) how many defendants who were fined during *(a)* 1981, *(b)* 1982, *(c)* 1983 and *(d)* 1984 eventually had all or part of that fine remitted.

Mr. Mellor: The information available on appeals against sentence is published annually in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, Supplementary Tabled Vol. 4". The total number of persons appealing against sentence and the number appealing against a fine is given in tables S4.12c and S4.13b of the issues for 1981 and 1982 and tables S4.8c and S4.9b of the issue for 1983; the number of persons whose fine was varied on appeal is given in tables S4.12d-e and S4.13d of the issues for 1981 and 1982 and tables S4.8d-e and S4.9d of the issue for 1983. Corresponding information for 1984 is not yet available.

Animal Experimentation

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the current membership of the Home Office advisory committee on animal experimentation; and if he will list the reasons why each member was appointed.

Mr. Mellor: The current membership of the advisory committee is as follows:

Chairman:
Baroness Warnock of Weeke

Members:
Lord Adrian
Dr. M. Balls
Professor D. Blackman
J. Price
Dr. C. Coid
Professor A. Dayan
Professor G. Dunstan
T. Field-Fisher
Dr. J. Hampson
C. Hollands
Dr. S. Jennett
Lady Lloyd
Dr. B. Newbould
Sir William Paton
N. Snodgrass.

The membership reflects a wide range of disciples necessary for consideration of the scientific and ethical questions referred to the committee. But each member is appointed for the personal contribution he or she is expected to make to discussion, not as a representative of particular interests.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will permit the Home Office inspector who visited the research establishment of the Royal College of Surgeons at Downe, Kent, to give evidence at the forthcoming appeal of the Royal College of Surgeons against its recent conviction for cruelty; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: No inspector has been asked to give evidence. My right hon. and learned Friend would, of course, raise no objection if an inspector was asked.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if a Home Office inspector visited the research establishment of the Royal College of Surgeons at Downe, Kent, on 18 June; if any other official of his Department visited on the same date; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will list the visits his Department's inspectors have made to Buckston Bourne farm in each of the last five years.

Mr. Mellor: In my reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Holland and Boston (Mr. Body) on 12 December 1984 at column *483*, I listed the visits made by the inspector in the five years up to 16 May 1984. Between then and the end of 1984, inspections were carried out on 18 June, 30 August, 29 and 30 October and 17 December. The inspection of 18 June was carried out by the inspector alone; he inspected the experimental animals for which my right hon. and learned Friend has responsibility under the Cruelty to Animals Act 1876, not the breeding colony which is not currently subject to statutory controls.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if Home Office inspectors make it their policy to look at all incident reports relating to establishments they inspect; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: During an inspection, it is the usual practice of inspectors to inquire about the general health of experimental animals and any particular problems which may have arisen since their last visit. They may also ask to seen any relevant records relating to animal health and welfare. I see no need for them to examine every record in every case.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent changes there have been in the personnel in his Department's inspectorate relating to experiments on living animals; for what reasons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Four new inspectors were appointed between October 1983 and February 1984 to fill vacancies. There have been no changes since then.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish the disciplinary code applying to staff of his Department's inspectorate relating to experiments on living animals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Members of the cruelty to animals inspectorate are subject to the same disciplinary procedures as other civil servants. These are set out in the Civil Service pay and conditions of service code, a copy of which is available in the Library of the House.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his policy regarding the conditions in which social primates kept for animal experimentation should be kept in licensed establishments; what conditions he lays down regarding *(a)* cage size and *(b)* meeting their behavioural needs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: It is my right hon. and learned Friend's policy for all experimental animals to be kept under the best possible conditions consistent with the method of the experiment and the characteristics of the species. He requires them to be kept in cages large enough for them to be able to move freely and to see and associate with others of their species if it is practicable and appropriate. Primates, as highly intelligent, wild animals, pose special problems which licensees try to overcome and, particularly in the case of small primates, do overcome with skill and imagination.

The Royal Society is currently devising guidelines on animal accommodation, including that of primates. My right hon. and learned Friend hopes to be able to

incorporate guidelines in a code of practice which he would be empowered to issue under the new legislation planned to replace the Cruelty to Animals Act 1876.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to prohibit individuals and bodies taking in or otherwise obtaining custody of unwanted and abandoned animals from disposing of them directly or indirectly for the purpose of vivisection; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The new legislation which is planned to replace the Cruelty to Animals Act 1876 will as a general rule, require animals used in laboratories to be purpose-bred and will prohibit the use of stray dogs and cats. We do not intend to debar the use of other unwanted animals —for instance, farm animals—in scientific procedures.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether any member of his Department has had discussions with the Royal College of Surgeons about the implications of its conviction for cruelty involving a monkey, Rage; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Yes. The content of discussions between officials of the Department and licensees or responsible authorities under the Cruelty to Animals Act 1876 are confidential to the parties concerned. The Royal College of Surgeons has appealed against the conviction.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if Her Majesty's Government will seek powers to ensure that tests for eye irritancy are carried out using the non-animal alternatives recently developed rather than using conscious rabbits as at present; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: There is not yet any proven non-sentient alternative which can safely be used in place of a live animal. However, before any substance which may cause eye irritation is tested in one eye of a live animal, screening tests involving alternatives such as an isolated eye, or skin are normally carried out. Published guidelines, such as the DHSS guidelines for the testing of chemicals for toxicity, remind researchers of the desirability of *in vitro* tests to ensure that corneal irritants are not applied unnecessarily to animals' eyes. Active research into this area is being carried out in this country and abroad, with a view to identifying further alternatives to these tests.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list in the *Official Report* all those organisations which have made formal representations following the publication of the last White Paper on experimental procedures on living animals.

Mr. Mellor: The major organisations which have submitted comments on the White Paper are as follows:

Universities

Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals of the Universities of the United Kingdom
Aberdeen University
Birmingham University
Cambridge University
Glasgow University
Liverpool University
London University
Guy's Hospital Medical School
Hammersmith Hospital
Royal Postgraduate Medical School
Imperial College of Science and Technology
Middlesex Hospital Medical School
St. Mary's Hospital Medical School
Newcastle upon Tyne University
Surrey University

Scientific and Professional Societies

Association of Veterinary Anaesthetists
Biochemical Society
Biological Council
British Laboratory Animals Veterinary Association
British Psychological Society
British Toxicology Society
British Veterinary Association
Institute of Biology
Laboratory Animals' Science Association
Mammal Society
Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain
Physiological Society
Research Defence Society
Royal College of Pathologists
Royal College of Surgeons of England
Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons
Society for Experimental Biology

Industry and Associated Organisations

Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry
Association of Independent Contract Research Organisations
Beecham Pharmaceuticals
Boots Company plc
British Agrochemicals Association
British Industrial Biological Research Association
Celltech Limited
Chemical Industries Association
Ciba-Geigy Pharmaceuticals Division
Cosmetic, Toiletry and Perfumary Association Ltd.
FBC Ltd.
Fisons plc
Glaxo Group Research Limited
Hazelton Laboratories (Europe) Ltd.
Hoechst UK Ltd.
ICI plc
Miles Laboratory Ltd.
Roche Ltd.
Searle Research and Development
Wellcome Research Laboratory

Animal Welfare Organisations

Animal Aid
British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection
Committee for the Reform of Animal Experimentation
Crusade Against All Cruelty to Animals Ltd.
Farm Animal Welfare Co-ordinating Executive
Flesh and Blood
Fund for the Replacement of Animals in Medical Experiments
National Anti-Vivisection Society Ltd.
Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
Scottish Anti-Vivisection Society
Scottish Society for the Prevention of Vivisection
Universities Federation for Animal Welfare

Others

Agricultural Research Council
British Association for Cancer Research
General Synod of the Church of England
Medical Research Council
Medical Research Council (MRC Radiobiology Unit)
Natural Environment Research Council
Nature Conservancy Council
Pharmaceuticals Economic Development Committee
University Grants Committee

Young Persons

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the current review procedures for young people sentenced to be detained at Her Majesty's pleasure under section 53 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933.

Mr. Mellor: The release of a person sentenced to be detained during Her Majesty's pleasure is subject to the provisions of section 61(1) of the Criminal Justice Act 1967, and my right hon. and learned Friend may authorise the release of such a person if recommended to do so by the Parole Board and after consultation with the Lord Chief Justice and, if available, the trial judge. The review procedures for such cases are the same as those for life sentence prisoners described in reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates), on 30 November 1983 at columns *513-15*.

Parole

Mr. Wrigglesworth asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the procedure of fixing of target dates for parole after early consultation with the Lord Chief Justice is being applied to all life prisoners or only to those convicted of murder.

Mr. Mellor: The procedure applies to all life sentence prisoners.

Dogs (Wirral Park)

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to approve the draft byelaws submitted by Wirral council giving park rangers greater power over dogs and dog owners using Wirral's park.

Mr. Mellor: Wirral council has submitted draft byelaws to regulate its pleasure grounds and open spaces which cover a wide range of matters. The Department wrote to the council on 28 March with a number of comments on its proposals and we shall consider when provisional approval for the byelaws can be granted once the council has replied to these points.

Victims of Crime (Compensation)

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what administrative arrangements are being made for the distribution of leaflets to all victims of crime, who have suffered injury, informing them of the compensation powers of the courts; and whether he has any plans to supplement these arrangements with publicity material to be displayed in such places as hospitals, surgeries and advice centres.

Mr. Mellor: The text of the proposed leaflet and the arrangements for distribution have yet to be settled, but we hope it will be possible for the police to hand copies to victims of crime. My right hon. and learned Friend has no present plans for further publicity material, but this will be considered.

Equal Opportunities Officer

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will now appoint a departmental equal opportunities officer with responsibility for co-ordinating the Civil Service policy of non-discrimination within his Department.

Mr. Brittan: Two heads of personnel management divisions (grade 5) have been designated as equal opportunity officers, responsible for advising on the full scale of equal opportunity matters as they concern both sex and racial discrimination. One officer is concerned with staff in the Prison Department and Prison Department establishments, and the other with staff in the rest of the Home Office.

Dogs

Mr. Maclean asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what representations he has received on the subject of cropping dogs' ears; and if he has proposals to eliminate this practice;

(2) what is his policy with regard to tail docking of dogs; and whether such docking is necessary to prevent damage to the tails of the breeds which are presently docked.

Mr. Mellor: We have received no recent representations about ear-cropping or tail-docking. These operations may be performed only in accordance with the provisions of the Protection of Animals Act 1911 and the Protection of Animals (Anaesthetics) Act 1954, which require that all operations on animals be performed with due care and humanity and, if appropriate, under anaesthetic. In some cases docking of dogs is performed for therapeutic purposes.

The Council of Europe Ad Hoc Committee for the Protection of Animals is currently preparing a draft convention on the protection of pet animals. Among the draft articles is one to prohibit the performance of surgical procedures for the modification of external appearance or other non-curative purposes unless it is considered necessary by a veterinary surgeon. The United Kingdom has supported the inclusion of this Article.

Mr. Maclean asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will set up an investigation into the practice of using dogs with inherited defects to breed puppies which become blind.

Mr. Mellor: We have no present plans to do so.

Mr. Maclean asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to the number of Sharpeis dogs, whether imported or not, which suffer from *(a)* chronic mange resulting in ulceration of the skin, *(b)* umbilical hernias and *(c)* thyroid deficiency symptoms, as a result of deliberate breeding of dogs with inherited defects.

Mr. Mellor: None.

Mr. Eric Alley

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the purpose of Mr. Eric Alley's recent visit to Wales.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Mr. Alley, the Home Office civil defence adviser, is visiting local authorities to discuss their civil defence planning and to advise them on its completion. His recent visits have included a number of Welsh authorities.

British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his reply of 26 March, how many lists of names of hon. Members were removed from the offices of the British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection on 20 March; and if copies were made and retained by the Metropolitan police.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis informs me that a single list was removed and that no copies of it were made.

Styal Prison (Member's Correspondence)

Mr. Neil Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when his noble friend the Minister of State will reply to letters from the hon. Member for Tatton, dated 13 February and 18 March, in which he requested urgent information about Styal prison.

Mr. Mellor: My noble Friend replied to the letters from my hon. Friend today.

Multicultural Advisers

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will set out in the *Offical Report*, for each of the last five years, the expenditure by his Department under section 11 of the Local Government Act 166 with regard to multicultural advisers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: I regret that the information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. All posts supported under section 11 must meet the criteria set out in Home Office circular No. 97/1982, a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Police (Pay)

Mr. Fisher asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the starting level of pay for a graduate entering the police force.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The basic annual pay of all police officers in their first year of service is £8,442 for those who were aged 22 or over and £6,708 for those who were under 22 on joining the service.

"Death Stars"

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received advocating legislation to stop the sale of the kung fu weapon known as Death Stars.

Mr. Giles Shaw [*pursuant to his reply*, 29th March 1985]: These devices have been drawn to my attention by two of my right hon. and hon. Friends and a county council. It is already an offence under the Prevention of Crime Act 1953 to have an offensive weapon in a public place without lawful authority or reasonable excuse; and the definition of "offensive weapon" is sufficiently wide to cover such things as kung fu "Death Stars". The Act provides for a penalty of up to two years imprisonment or an unlimited fine, or both. Controls on such articles are aimed at the point of possession and use rather than at the point of sale, because there are many items sold for legitimate purposes which can be used as, or converted into, weapons.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Famine Relief

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much of the total sum to date made available by Her Majesty's Government for famine relief measures for Africa has been paid by the contingency reserve in the Estimates for 1984-85; what sums have been made available from other sources; and what was the balance in the contingency reserve on 31 March.

Mr. Raison: I expect spending in 1984-85 on famine relief measures for Africa to be funded as follows:

	£ million	£ million
Contingency reserve allocations	17	
Food aid national actions and European development fund allocations	27	
Reallocations from slippage elsewhere in the aid programme	10	
Total from within voted aid funds		54
United Kingdom share of allocations from EC budgetised aid (non-voted)		35
Cost to Ministry of Defence of RAF Hercules operation in Ethiopia*		6
		95

* The extra costs of mounting operation Bushel are currently estimated at up to £1·5 million per month. As an exceptional case, MoD agreed to bear the costs for the first three months of the deployment (to the beginning of February 1985). Since then the costs have been shared equally between MoD and ODA.

There were no funds remaining in the aid programme contingency reserve on 31 March 1985.

El Salvador

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 7 November 1984, *Official Report*, column 4, how much of the £100,000 made available to the Salvadorean Government for emergency civilian supplies under the United Kingdom's aid programme has been used; and if any additional civilian aid or military assistance has been offered.

Mr. Raison: There have been no disbursements from the grant of £100,000, pending a decision by the Government of El Salvador on their precise requirements. Apart from the military training already announced (*Hansard*, 7 November 1984, column 4), the only other British assistance offered has been £200,000 for relief supplies for displaced persons.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Council of Ministers (Majority Voting)

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which provisions of the treaty of Rome and the United Kingdom treaty of Accession to the European Economic Community containing requirements about majority voting in the Council of Ministers are not at present operated in the Council.

Mr. Rifkind: Outside the agricultural and budgetary fields the Council's practice has been, in all but a few isolated instances, to proceed by consensus.

Bophuthatswana

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, pursuant to the answer of 20 March, *Official Report*, column 534, he will

state what limitations there are upon the full autonomy of Bophuthatswana and upon its full freedom of action in respect of external relations.

Mr. Rifkind: It is our judgment, after taking all factors into account, including the circumstances of Bophuthatswana's creation, the agreements then concluded, its fractured territory and its relationship with South Africa, that Bophuthatswana does not meet our criteria for recognition as a independent state.

Namibia

Sir Dudley Smith asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when representatives of the British Government last visited Namibia; whom they met; and what conclusions were reached from the visit.

Mr. Rifkind: Her Majesty's ambassador in South Africa visited Namibia on 9-13 March. He met, inter alia, leaders of the Namibian internal parties, the Administrator-General and representatives of the British business community. The visit enabled him to assess the latest political, economic and social developments in the territory.

Sir Dudley Smith asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Her Majesty's Government will make representations condemning the South West Africa People's Organisation and its President Sam Nujoma for the placing and detonation of a bomb in Ondangwa post office, Northern Namibia, on 31 December 1984 which killed four civilians and for which the President of the South West Africa People's Organisation has claimed responsibility.

Mr. Rifkind: We condemn this incident, just as we condemn all acts of violence in Namibia, whether committed by SWAPO or by the South African security forces or others. SWAPO is well aware of our views. We continue to work for the implementation of the United Nations settlement plan which offers the only prospect of an end to the cycle of violence in Namibia.

Sir Dudley Smith asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government towards the demands of the internal parties of Namibia for the establishment of a written constitution agreed by all Namibian parties to protect minority tribes' rights prior to any United Nations supervised elections.

Mr. Rifkind: The United Nations plan for a Namibia settlement, which alone has been agreed by all the parties, provides for free and fair elections to a constituent assembly which will draw up a constitution for an independent Namibia. Under this constitution the fundamental rights of all Namibians after independence should be protected in accordance with the constitutional principles accepted by all the parties and set out in United Nations Document S/15287 of 12 July 1982. We continue to believe that the United Nations plan provides a basis for a settlement which would meet the legitimate interests of all Namibians.

EC (Ad Hoc Committees)

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list in the *Official Report* the names and status of each of the representatives of Heads of Government of the European Economic Community who are members of each of the ad hoc committees established after the Fontainebleau meetings.

Mr. Rifkind: The members of the Ad Hoc Committee on Institutions (Dooge Committee) were listed in the answer given by my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Renton on 13 March to the right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor). Members of the "People's Europe" Committee are:

Belgium
Mr. Prosper Thuysbaert (Political Director, Ministry of Foreign Affairs)
Denmark
Mr. Mailand Christiansen (Danish MP)
France
Mr. Max Gallo (Member of the European Parliament)
Germany
Mr. Hans Neusel (former State Secretary)
Greece
Mr. Yiannis Kranidiotis (Political Adviser to Minister of EC Affairs)
Ireland
Mr. Eamon O'Tuathail (Assistant Secretary-General, Ministry of Foreign Affairs)
Italy
Mr. Pietro Adonnino (Lawyer and former Christian Democrat MEP) (Chairman)
Luxembourg
Mr. Albert Hansen (Secretary-General of Council of Government)
Netherlands
Mr. Edmund Wellenstein (Diplomat)
United Kingdom
Mr. David Williamson (Cabinet Office)
Commission
Mr. Carlo Ripa di Meana

Decade for Women (Nairobi Conference)

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will ensure that the United Kingdom delegation at the Nairobi conference of the United Nations Decade for Women will include a female representative from the health population division of the Overseas Development Administration.

Mr. Renton: We have no plans to include a representative from the health and population division of the Overseas Development Administration in the United Kingdom delegation. However, I can assure the hon. Member that the United Kingdom delegation will be briefed on population issues likely to be raised at the conference.

Santo Domingo

Mr. Arnold asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects to close Her Majesty's embassy, Santo Domingo; and what type of accommodation he will make available in future for visits by the British ambassador.

Mr. Renton: Her Majesty's embassy in Santo Domingo officially closed on 23 March. We expect that during his periodic visits to Santo Domingo Her Majesty's ambassador will be accommodated in a hotel.

Amnesty International (Exhibition)

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will arrange for an exhibition relating to Amnesty International to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Renton: No, but we have no objection to the holding of such an exhibition.

Equal Opportunities Officer

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will now appoint a departmental equal opportunities officer with responsibility for co-ordinating the Civil service policy of non-discrimination within his Department.

Mr. Renton: Equal opportunities officers, with responsibility for advising on the full scope of equal opportunity matters as they concern race and sex discrimination, were appointed in the FCO in 1984. There are three such officers: one for the diplomatic wing, one for the Overseas Development Administration and one for staff administered from Hanslope park.

Anglo-Irish Encounter Group

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the work of the Anglo-Irish Encounter Group in 1984.

Mr. Renton: As a result of the recommendation of the Anglo-Irish Joint Studies Group (Cmnd. 8414), Encounter was initiated in July 1983 by the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland Governments as an independent non-governmental organisation. Its purpose is to organise periodic conferences and seminars, with a wide range of representation, on economic, social, cultural and other matters of common concern with a view to promoting mutual understanding, useful co-operation and good relations. It held two conferences in 1984.

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give the dates and locations of meetings of the Anglo-Irish Encounter Group since July 1983 and the subjects discussed.

Mr. Renton: Three Encounter conferences have been held since July 1983:

4 April 1984, London—
Theme: improving work prospects in Great Britain and Ireland.

27-28 November 1984, Dublin—
Theme: the promotion amongst the young of a greater respect for religious and cultural diversity.

26-27 March 1985, London—
Theme: Increasing the appreciation of our cultural heritage.

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the chairmen and officials currently working in a temporary capacity on *(a)* the steering committee and *(b)* the co-ordinating committee of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Council; and if he will make a statement on the work of these two committees.

Mr. Renton: The steering committee and co-ordinating committee of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Council are chaired by senior United Kingdom officials and their Republic of Ireland counterparts. Other officials attend meetings of these committees depending on the subjects under discussion. It is not our practice to reveal the names of the officials concerned. The committees have provided valuable opportunities for discussions on matters of mutual interest to both sides.

Pakistan

Dame Judith Hart asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent protest he has made to the President of Pakistan about the abuse of human rights there and, in particular, about the case of Bashiran Begum.

Mr. Renton: We have not recently raised human rights issues with President Zia personally, but he can be in no doubt about the strength of our views concerning violations of human rights wherever they may occur. We have made our views clear to the Pakistan authorities on several occasions in recent months.

We are not familiar with the case of Bashiran Begum, but would welcome further information from the right hon. Lady.

Ambassadors

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the Government's policy with regard to the summoning of ambassadors and in particular how this is applied with regard to *(a)* Israel and *(b)* South Africa.

Mr. Luce: Ambassadors and high commissioners are asked to call at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office whenever this is judged useful.

Non-Proliferation Treaty

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) *Official Report*, 13 March, column 166, whether the forthcoming review conference of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty in September was discussed during his recent visit to Washington; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: The non-proliferation treaty review conference was not discussed during the recent visit by my right hon. and learned Friend to Washington. However, we hold regular consultations with the United States Government about arms control matters, including the non-proliferation treaty. These talks have revealed a close identity of view about the treaty, and a common determination to support it and to strengthen the non-proliferation regime.

WALES

Labour Statistics

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list in the *Official Report* against each constituency in Wales the current level of unemployment.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: This information is available in the Library of the House.

Teachers (Pay)

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a progress report on the current position of negotiations with the teaching unions over pay of their members in Wales.

Mr. John Stradling Thomas: Negotiations on teachers' pay are conducted on an England and Wales basis. We are not involved in the negotiations as the responsibility for teachers' pay rests with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science. I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson) on 19 March, at column 777.

Financial Assistance and Job Creation

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list in the *Official Report* the amount of financial assistance which has been directed through the Welsh Office since 1979, and the number of jobs created since 1979 as a result of such financial assistance, in each constituency in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The main instruments by which my Department provides financial assistance towards job creation are regional selective assistance and, since November 1984, regional development grants under the new scheme.

Information in the form requested is not readily available and could only be provided at disproportionate cost. At present, statistics of regional selective assistance can be provided for all administrative areas in Wales but will not be available for all travel-to-work areas or for parliamentary constituencies until later this year.

Hospital Ward Closures

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many wards are unable to accept patients in each of the health authorities in Wales at the present time; what are the specific reasons for such wards being closed; and how long each individual closure has lasted.

Mr. John Stradling Thomas: There are presently 19 wards closed in hospitals in the Principality, and these are listed together with the reasons and length of time each closure has lasted.

Ward and name of hospital	*Reason for closure*	*Length of closure to date*
Clwyd		
North Wales hospital, Denbigh		
24 bed psychiatric ward	Refurbishment	4 months
Gwynedd		
Garth Angharad psychiatric hospital, Dolgellau (complement now reduced from 19 to 11 beds)	Fire damage	3 months
Powys		
Bronllys hospital		
8 bed mental handicapped ward	Repairs to heating system	1 month
East Dyfed		
St. David's hospital, Carmarthen		
1. 12 bed psychiatric ward	Partly closed due to fire damage	20 months
2. 20 bed psychiatric ward	Major redevelopment scheme in progress	1 year
Pembrokeshire		
Withybush hospital, Haverfordwest		
1. 30 bed trauma and orthopaedic ward	Repairs to floor	1 month
2. 30 bed general surgery ward	Repairs to floor	1 month
South Pembroke hospital	Building structurally unsafe	3 months
12 bed GP medical ward		
West Glamorgan		
Cefn Coed, Swansea	Upgrading work	4 months
23 bed long stay psychiatric ward		
Neath General hospital	Upgrading work	5 months
23 bed orthopaedic		
Mid Glamorgan		
Maesteg General hospital	Staff shortages	12 months
Children's ward		
Parc hospital, Bridgend	Redecorations	12 months
1 ward, mental illness		
South Glamorgan		

Ward and name of hospital	Reason for closure	Length of closure to date
Cardiff Royal infirmary		
14 bed neurology ward	Upgrading	5 months
Rookwood hospital, Cardiff		
Acute rehabilitation—21 beds	Upgrading	1 month
Neal Kent hospital, Barry		
6 bed geriatric ward	Decoration	2 months
Lansdowne hospital, Cardiff		
28 bed psychogeriatric ward	Upgrading	5 months
Gwent		
Tredegar General hospital		
10 bed geriatric ward	Alterations	2 months
St. Woolo's hospital, Newport		
14 bed ophthalmology ward	Alterations	4 months
Royal Gwent hospital, Newport		
15 bed obstetric ward	Alterations	2 months

Pupils (Statistics)

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has to the number of pupils, over the age of 11 plus, not being educated in comprehensive schools; bilingual and otherwise, in each of the local education authorities in Wales; and how many are in schools providing special education commensurate with the pupils' physical and mental state.

Mr. John Stradling Thomas: The total numbers of pupils aged 11 years and over as at 31 August 1983 in schools outside the comprehensive sector in Wales at January 1984 are as follows:

	Number of Pupils*
Clwyd	3,140
Dyfed	4,535
Gwent	1,660
Gwynedd	1,072
Mid Glamorgan	932
Powys	649
South Glamorgan	2,058
West Glamorgan	998

* Pupils aged 11 years and over at primary schools, secondary modern schools, secondary grammar schools, other non-comprehensive secondary schools, special schools and independent schools.

The total numbers of pupils, by age, receiving special education at primary and secondary schools, special schools or units and at independent and non-maintained schools is not collected centrally. Some details of pupils receiving special education are, however, available in "Statistics of Education in Wales" a copy of which is in the Library.

Rhoose Airport

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the representations that the Welsh Office has made at all levels to better the air traffic movements at Cardiff, Rhoose airport and to increase the availability of scheduled services using the airport on a domestic and international scale.

Mr. John Stradling Thomas: The Government's recent approval of a capital expenditure allocation for the lengthening of the runway is a clear demonstration of our commitment to the development of the airport. My Department and I take every opportunity to emphasise the importance of the airport for economic development and tourism in the Principality.

Gamma Cameras

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many district health authorities have accepted the offer of financial assistance to acquire Gamma cameras; and of these how many have so far received payments.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Our Department has not offered special financial assistance to acquire Gamma cameras. There are at present 17 cameras in use in Wales, of which eight were provided by central funding.

Milk Quotas

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales what response he is making to recent representations from the dairy industry for greater milk quota mobility.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd) on 14 March 1985 at column *264* by my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

NCB Enterprises Ltd

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to visit the National Coal Board Enterprise Ltd. offices in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: National Coal Board Enterprises Ltd. operates through the existing National Coal Board South Wales area organisation in Cardiff. I have at present no plans to make a visit.

School Leavers

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the number of school leavers in Wales who have not had permanent jobs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Stradling Thomas: School leavers are classed as unemployed claimants who have never been in employment. At February 1985 the number in Wales was 20,180.

Enterprise Allowance

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many extra enterprise allowance schemes there will be consequent upon the Budget; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Stradling Thomas: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment announced on 12 November that he intended to increase the enterprise allowance scheme by 25 per cent. to make it possible for up to 1,250 people a week nationally to join the scheme. This expansion was confirmed in the recent Budget Statement.

In Wales provision has been made for about 78 places to be available per week for the year 1 April 1985 to 31 March 1986. This figure compares with a figure of about 58 places a week in the year up to 31 March 1985.

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many extra youth training scheme places in Wales there will be consequent upon the Budget; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Stradling Thomas: This information is not yet available. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment has asked the Manpower Services Commission to consider and make recommendations about the detailed implementation of the youth training scheme expansion announced in the Budget and to report by the end of June.

Community Programme

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many extra community programme places there will be in Wales consequent upon the Budget; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Following the Budget Statement announcing that the community programme is to be expanded by 100,000 places, my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Employment has askedthe Manpower Services Commission to consider how these extra places should be allocated. No final decisions have yet been taken.

Inward Investment

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many visits abroad he has undertaken in 1984 and 1985 concerning the industrial development of Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: During 1984 I visited the far east (Japan, Korea) once and the United States of America once, to promote inward investment to Wales.

The economic climate for inward investment to Wales is better than ever but we face growing competition for internationally mobile projects. Over the last few years Wales has been very successful in attracting such projects from a diverse group of industries and countries, and I am determined to maintain this momentum in future.

"Better Schools"

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what part he proposes to take in consultations on the White Paper, "Better Schools", Cmnd. 9469; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Stradling Thomas: I am, of course, fully associated with the consultations being undertaken by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science and I or my representatives will attend these as appropriate. I have already invited the Welsh Joint Education Committee to discuss "Better Schools" at its next meeting on 29 April and I am also writing to other major organisations in Wales inviting them to the Welsh Office to discuss the Government's policies.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give for the month of January the breakdown of the unemployment figures in the Alyn and Deeside area for Shotton, Connah's Quay, Buckley and other townships.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: This information is not available. Data are currently being prepared on a ward basis and these figures will be available in the House of Commons Library in the usual way in due course.

Dairy Farmers

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what measures he will bring forward to alleviate the economic problems of the small dairy producer in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton) on 28 March 1985 by my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Technology Programme

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how much of the funds for developing technology in the universites and polytechnics will be allocated to Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Stradling Thomas: A number of higher education institutions in Wales have submitted bids for support under the programme to increase the output of engineering and technology graduates. An announcement about which bids have been approved for the first phase of the programme to begin in 1985-86 will be made shortly. It is not yet known how many of the bids submitted by Welsh institutions will eventually be accepted.

Low Incomes

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the number of people in Wales earning less than 60 per cent. of the national average wage; and what this number is as a percentage of the working population in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The exact information requested is not available, but according to the new earnings survey for 1984, approximately 16·5 per cent. of

full-time employees on adult rates in Wales were earning less than 60 per cent. of the Welsh figure for average earnings.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the number of people, whether single, married or as part of families, living on incomes of 60 per cent. of the national average or less; and what this number is as a percentage of the total population of Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The information is not available in the form requested, but figures from the 1983 family expenditure survey show that approximately 34 per cent. of Welsh households have a gross normal weekly income of 60 per cent. or less of the Wales average.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will show the rise in earnings of people on 60 per cent., 80 per cent., 100 per cent. and 200 per cent. of the national average wage in Wales for each year since 1979 in constant, 1985, and unit terms, using 1979=100; and if he will compare the rise in average earnings in Wales for each year since 1979 to date with the equivalent figures for *(a)* England and *(b)* the United Kingdom.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The information available is as follows:

Indices of average earnings (1979=100)

	Wales		*England*		*Great Britain*	
	At current prices	*At constant prices*	*At current prices*	*At constant prices*	*At current prices*	*At constant prices*
1979	100	100	100	100	100	100
1980	121	100	123	101	123	101
1981	136	100	140	102	139	102
1982	149	100	153	102	152	102
1983	160	103	166	107	166	107
1984*	170	104	178	109	178	109

* The 1979-83 figures are for men aged 21 and over and women aged 18 and over in full-time employment whose pay was not affected by absence. The 1984 figures are for full-time employees on adult rates whose pay was not affected by absence.

Indices for persons on 60 per cent., 80 per cent. and 200 per cent. of the average wage bill would be identical.

ENERGY

Miners (Dismissals)

6. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Secretary of State for Energy how many miners have been dismissed by the National Coal Board in connection with the 1984-85 strike.

Mr. David Hunt: Questions of dismissal of NCB employees are matters for the National Coal Board.

Coal (Use)

16. **Mr. Dormand** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what proposals he has to promote the increased use of coal in industry.

Mr. Peter Walker: Expanding the industrial use of coal depends above all on the coal industry showing industrial customers that it can offer secure and competitive supplies. My Department supports the board's efforts by providing grants to meet some of the capital costs of conversion from oil or gas to coal.

British National Oil Corporation

18. **Mr. Rowlands** asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether he will make a further statement on the consequences of the abolition of the British National Oil Corporation.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I hope to introduce legislation to abolish BNOC and establish an agency to take on its residual functions at an early opportunity.

26. **Mr. Skeet** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what arrangements he envisages for payments of compensation to management and staff when the British National Oil Corporation is abolished.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: Payment of compensation to management and staff is a matter for the corporation, which will doubtless have regard to the terms of contracts of employment and other relevant factors.

Coal Industry (Investment)

19. **Mr. Hardy** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what was the total investment in 1974 prices in the coal industry in each financial year since 1974.

Mr. David Hunt: Total investment by the NCB for the financial year 1983-84 expressed in 1974 prices was £236 million. This was 63 per cent. higher in real terms than in 1974-75, despite the overtime ban in the coal industry, which reduced investment in 1983-84.

Total investment by the NCB in 1974 prices was as follows:

	*£ million**
1974-75	145
1975-76	175
1976-77	190
1977-78	207
1978-79	254
1979-80	313
1980-81	333
1981-82	306
1982-83	298
1983-84	236

* 1974 prices.

ENERGY

Nuclear Power

20. **Mr. Phillip Oppenheim** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what plans he has for the further development of nuclear power.

Mr. Goodlad: The Government continue to attach importance to the safe and economic development of nuclear power.

22. **Mr. John Mark Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he next plans to meet the chairman of the Central Electricity Generating Board to discuss the future development of nuclear power.

Mr. Goodlad: My right hon. Friend regularly meets the chairman of the Central Electricity Generating Board to discuss matters of common interest.

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will direct the Central Electricity Generating Board that nuclear power stations should be operated economically so as to minimise subsidies from the taxpayers.

Mr. Goodlad: The CEGB's nuclear power stations produce the cheapest electricity available to the grid. The question of subsidies does not arise.

Coal Industry (Manpower Levels)

21. **Mr. Orme** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has received from the National Coal Board regarding guidance given to area directors on manpower levels in the coal industry.

Mr. Peter Walker: I understand that the chairman of the National Coal Board is currently consulting his area directors about how best to rebuild the industry's prospects after the ravages of the strike.

Coal Industry

24. **Mr. Parry** asked the Secretary of State for Energy how many miners who had been dismissed during the mining dispute have now been reinstated following the official ending of the dispute; how many are still seeking reinstatement; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: Questions of dismissal and re-employment of NCB employees are matters for the National Coal Board.

28. **Mr. Batiste** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the future of the coal mining industry.

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Energy if, in the light of the end of the coal strike, he will now initiate a meeting between himself, management and unions to discuss the industry's future; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: The first task has been to bring about a return to normal working in those pits where this is possible. I am pleased to say that good progress is being made to this end. I hope that, following this, there will be a return by the National Union of Mineworkers to full participation in the established processes of the industry so that both sides of the industry can constructively plan for future success in the industry.

I will certainly be available to discuss the results and the financing of any proposals that come out of these consultations.

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if he has any proposals to introduce legislation to replace the Opencast Coal Act 1958;

(2) if he has any proposals to reduce the limitation and restrictions on local mineral authorities (county councils) which have recently been charged with control of all such workings by circular 8/84;

(3) when he intends to introduce the legislation outlined in circular 3/84 which will remove district councils from the list of statutory objections to opencast coal mining applications.

Mr. David Hunt: These matters are under consideration. I cannot make any statement about legislation at present.

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for Energy what proposals he has to divorce the National Coal Board opencast executive from the National Coal Board; and if he has any plans to privatise all opencast workings.

Mr. David Hunt: I have no such proposals at present.

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he intends to implement the Monopolies and Mergers Commission recommendation to free the private sector from all limitations and restrictions as to the size of site and quantity of coal and other associated materials it wishes to extract in opencast operations.

Mr. David Hunt: We are giving very careful consideration to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission recommendation to increase the statutory limit on individual opencast licences from 25,000 tons to 100,000 tonnes.

Miners (Early Retirement)

27. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Secretary of State for Energy how many miners have taken early retirement since the ending of the miner's dispute; how many left during the dispute; and if he will express each figure as a percentage of the current total work force in the industry.

Mr. David Hunt: These are matters for the National Coal Board, and I will ask the chairman to write to my hon. Friend.

Ministerial Visit

29. **Mr. Steen** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement about the visit of the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Wirral, West (Mr. Hunt) to Morr Energy at West Charlton Down on Thursday 14 March.

Mr. David Hunt: During my visit to the south-west I was delighted to visit the Morr Energy premises at the request of my hon. Friend and the company and to view the company's energy efficiency products. I saw the company's development of heat pipe technology and congratulated it on its impressive application of heat recovery technology. I wish the company well.

Plutonium

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make it his policy to consult Parliament before authorising the use of plutonium as a fuel in nuclear power plants.

Mr. Goodlad: Plutonium is already in routine use in the prototype fast reactor at Dounreay and indeed a significant quantity of energy in all reactors derives from plutonium which is produced and consumed within the fuel during normal reactor operation.

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Energy what has happened to the plutonium derived at United Kingdom reprocessing plants from spent nuclear fuel imported from overseas; and if any plutonium exported has been confined to countries which have signed the non-proliferation treaty.

Mr. Goodlad: Some of this material is stored by British Nuclear Fuels plc, some has been exported to its country of origin and some to other countries where there is a requirement for its use. All exports have been for civil use and to countries, with the exception of France, a nuclear weapons state, which are signatories of the non-proliferation treaty. Shipments to France are subject to Euratom safeguards.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the figures on plutonium production in the Central Electricity Generating Board reactors which were supplied to Euratom for the years 1978 to 1984 under the 1977 Tripartite Agreement.

Mr. Goodlad: The tripartite (UK/EURATOM/IAEA) safeguards agreement does not require CEGB plutonium production figures to be reported.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Energy what are the estimated costs per tonne of *(a)* reprocessing and *(b)* storing spent nuclear fuel.

Mr. Goodlad: British Nuclear Fuels plc provided the following information on the storage and reprocessing of oxide fuels in its evidence to the Sizewell inquiry (BNFL/P/1/Exhibit 26).

Cost estimates for a notional 600tU pa reprocessing plant and associated facilities and operations

Plant or Operational Item	*Costs (March 1982 Money Values)* **Capital (£ million)*	*Operating (£ million pa)*
Storage pond (600tU module)	55	2
Fuel dismantler (AGR only)	115	2
Reprocessing plant (including buffer storage for HLW liquid)	860	30
Waste treatment facilities (including storage prior to disposal)	280	10
Waste Disposal		
High level (HLW)	230	5
Intermediate level (ILW)	†40	†3
Low level (LLW)	—	†0·2

* Excludes decommissioning costs which are assumed at 40 per cent. of the initial capital expenditure (in constant money terms).

† Based on information supplied by NIREX.

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Energy if it is the policy of his Department that the reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel is an indispensable part of nuclear power generation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: I refer the hon. Member to the Prime Minister's answer to his question on 18 January 1985 at columns 235-236.

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Energy what is the current annual requirement of the United Kingdom nuclear power industry for reprocessing capacity; and what proportion this represents of total United Kingdom reprocessing capacity.

Mr. Goodlad: British Nuclear Fuels plc can reprocess up to 1,500 tonnes (uranium) per year of spent Magnox fuel. The United Kingdom generating boards' typical requirement for reprocessing this fuel is about 800 to 900 tonnes per year. AGR fuel is currently stored pending reprocessing in the THORP facility.

Nuclear Reprocessing Plants

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Energy if the United Kingdom has supplied any nuclear reprocessing plants to other countries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: None has been supplied.

Coking Coal (Imports)

Mr. Rowlands asked the Secretary of State for Energy what is his latest estimate of the amount of coking coal imported into the United Kingdom; from where and at what average price; and what effect the dollar-sterling exchange rate has had upon the price.

Mr. David Hunt: In January 1985, the last month for which figures are available, nearly 700,000 tonnes of coking coal were imported into the United Kingdom, mainly from suppliers in the USA and Australia, at an average value of around £49 per tonne. The general strengthening of the US dollar against other currencies put downward pressure on dollar prices as well as increasing the sterling price for any given dollar price.

Diesel Fuel

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has as to the current average retail price of diesel fuel in the United Kingdom; and what information he has about any regional variations.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: The most widespread retail price of diesel fuel on 25 March was 197·7p per gallon. I understand that there can be variations of about 5p per gallon on a regional basis.

Paraffin

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has as to the current average retail price of paraffin in the United Kingdom; and what information he has about any regional variations.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: The market for paraffin is small and highly fragmented; I do not have the data to provide an average retail price.

Equal Opportunities Officer

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether he will now appoint a departmental equal opportunities officer with responsibility for co-ordinating the Civil Service policy of non-discrimination within his Department.

Mr. Peter Walker: An officer within the establishment and finance division has been designated equal opportunities officer with responsibility for advising on the full scope of equal opportunity matters as they concern race and sex discrimination.

Fast Breeder Reactors

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to his answer of 11 March, *Official Report*, column 33, on fast breeder reactors, if he will set out the arrangements that have been made with Euratom and the International Atomic Energy Agency for the application of nuclear safeguards on all parts of the European collaborative project on fast breeder reactors.

Mr. Goodlad: All parties to the collaborative project on fast reactors are member states of the European Community and therefore the application of Euratom safeguards on those parts of the project in each state will be carried out in accordance with the provisions of the Euratom treaty.

Additionally, each participant in the project is a party to a safeguards agreement between Euratom, itself and the International Atomic Energy Agency, and safeguards will be applied to the project in each state in accordance with its agreement with the agency.

Cross-Channel Electricity Link

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Energy how the maximum amount of electricity which can be carried by the cross-Channel electricity link compares with the average and peak winter loads of the Central Electricity Generating Board.

Mr. Goodlad: When completed the maximum amount of electricity which could be carried by the cross-Channel link will be 2000 MW. This compares with an average winter peak load of 40,000 MW and a maximum peak load of 45,000 MW.

Gas Pipeline (Northern Ireland)

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for Energy what recent consideration he has given to the possibility of supplying gas to Northern Ireland through a pipeline from the Morecambe bay gas field; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: The British Gas Corporation, as licensee for the development, has proposed from the outset that the Morecambe field should be linked by pipeline to Great Britain; and so provided in its development plan approved in February 1982.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

British Standards

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on Government policy on the future use of British Standards, the kite mark, following the statement by Lord Cockfield regarding inter-state reciprocal acceptance of standards by European Community member states.

Mr. Butcher: The Government policy on the use of standards and certification for regulatory purposes, as set out in the White Paper, "Standards, Quality and International Competitiveness" (Cmnd. 8621), is that regulatory bodies should henceforth express technical requirements by reference to suitable British standards. The White Paper also reaffirmed the United Kingdom's commitment to harmonising standards within the European Community in support of the programme for the elimination of technical barriers to trade under article 100 of the Treaty of Rome. The Government therefore support fully current initiatives under which member states would adopt a new approach to technical harmonisation and standardisation along the lines proposed in the Commission's communication of 31 January 1985 to the European Parliament and to the Council (Cmnd. (85) 19 final).

Capital Goods Exports

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received on the Byatt report on the costs and risks of support for capital goods exports; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon: The Byatt report was a study by Government economists of the issues involved in supporting capital goods exports. Since it was prepared the situation has changed considerably owing to the changes in world interest rates and the new framework for the OECD concensus.

At least 17 written representations have been made to Ministers in this Department and the Treasury since a copy of the Byatt report was placed in the Library of the House in January last year. As well as some from a number of companies, representations have been received from the following organisations:

British Chemical Engineering Contractors Association
British Consultants Bureau
British Water Industries Group
CBI
Constructional Steelwork EDC
Export Group for the Construction Industries
London Chamber of Commerce and Industry
Overseas Projects Board
Process Plant and Heavy Electrical EDCs
Scottish Council for Development and Industry
TUC

Dee Corporation and Booker McConnell

Viscount Cranborne asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he has now studied the report on the proposed merger of Dee Corporation plc and Booker McConnell plc by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission presented to Parliament in January 1985; and when he expects to make a decision.

Mr. Channon: The report concluded that the proposed merger would not be against the public interest. My right hon. Friend therefore has no powers to take any action in respect of that report.

Equal Opportunities Officer

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will now appoint a departmental equal

opportunities officer with responsibility for co-ordinating the Civil Service policy of non-discrimination within his Department.

Mr. Butcher: My Department appointed an equal opportunities officer on 5 January 1984.

"The Wealth of Waste"

Mr. Rost asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he expects to respond to the report of the Trade and Industry Committee entitled "The Wealth of Waste".

Mr. Trippier: The Government's response was sent to the chairman of the committee on 25 March.

Humberside (European Regional Development Fund)

Mr. Hickmet asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry by what criteria Humberside qualified for European regional development fund non-quota sums in December 1984; how much was allocated to Humberside from that source by his Department under the business improvement services scheme; and, of this, how much has been allocated to date specifying the areas in Humberside which have received funds giving the total amount each area received.

Mr. Trippier: The eligible areas and allocations, including assisted areas in Humberside, for the second round of ERDF non-quota measures to aid areas affected by the decline of the steel industry were based on criteria agreed by the European Commission and the United Kingdom Government—job losses and local dependency rates for the steel industry and local unemployment rates. Humberside was allocated £2·2 million under my Department's business improvement services scheme. To date 99 applications to the value of £950,217 have been received from small firms in Humberside. Detailed information for areas in Humberside is not available.

Mr. Hickmet asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether any further tranches of European regional development fund non-quota funds are to be made available to Humberside; what sums will be allocated to Glanford and Scunthorpe from that source by his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Textile Industry (Investment)

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what evidence he has of investment by Governments of other member countries of the EEC in their domestic textile industries under schemes which have not received the approval of the European Commission in each of the years since 1975.

Mr. Trippier: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what consultation he has now had with representatives of the United Kingdom textile industry concerning the decision of the European Commission that the CLOFT scheme for investment in a new technology for small textile firms could not be implemented.

Mr. Trippier: Representatives of the industries covered by the proposed CLOFT scheme have been provided with the full text of the Commission's decision. Arrangements have been made for discussions to take place during the course of this month.

British Aerospace (Government Shareholding)

Mr. Millan asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the orders made under section 7 of the British Aerospace Act 1980 since the coming into force of the Act.

Mr. Butcher: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made The British Aerospace Act 1980 (Government Shareholding) Order 1981—SI 622—on 15 April 1981.

Monopolies and Mergers Commission

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will introduce legislation to make express provision, on the consideration of possible mergers by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, for it to take account of the effects of mergers on the future prospects of the firms concerned, of the implications for the United Kingdom investment programmes of firms taken over by overseas interests, and of the existing and past financial standing of the firm proposing the takeover.

Mr. Channon: Section 84 of the Fair Trading Act 1973 provides that in considering whether a merger may be expected to operate against the public interest, the Commission shall take into account all matters which appear to them to be relevant. My right hon. Friend has no plans for further legislation.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make it his policy that all overseas takeover bids for British firms opposed by the board of the company in question are referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Mr. Channon: My right hon. Friend takes into account all relevant factors in his consideration of mergers, but has announced that decisions on reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission will be made primarily on competitive grounds.

Companies (Statistics)

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the total number of *(a)* registered companies, *(b)* new company incorporations and *(c)* dissolved companies removed from the register, for the calendar year 1984 in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Channon: For England, Wales and Scotland, the information is as follows:

		Number
(a)	Companies registered at end of 1984	1,000,803
(b)	New company incorporations during 1984	97,908
(c)	Disolved companies removed from the Register during 1984	53,516

Company registration in Northern Ireland is under separate Northern Ireland legislation, which is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Tootal Group

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received concerning the possible takeover of the Tootal Group by Entrad.

Mr. Channon: Representations regarding mergers are confidential.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will refer to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission the proposed takeover of the Tootal Group by Entrad.

Mr. Channon: My right hon. Friend will announce his decision as soon as practicable.

EC Regional Aid (France)

Mr. Speller asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has as to which areas of France are entitled to receive aid from EEC regional aid funds; what proportion of the French land mass this represents; what limitations are imposed on the total area by Community obligations; and what similar limitation is imposed on the United Kingdom.

Mr. Trippier: I am not aware of any data of this kind for France. Eligibility for aid from the European regional development fund is usually limited to aided areas established by member states in applying their systems to regional aid. No specifc geographical limits for regional aid are set by the European Community. The manner of the Commission's exercise of its powers under Articles 92 and 93 of the treaty, as they relate to regional policies, remains as set out in its communication to the Council on regional aid systems (*Official Journal* of the European Communities for 3 February 1979 No. C31/9); although part 2 of that communication does, of course, need amendment to take account of the Commission's recent decision to raise no objection to the Government's proposal to amend, and substantially increase, assisted area coverage in the United Kingdom.

Manufacturing Investment

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list, by region, the level of investment in manufacturing industry for the years 1979 to 1984, expressed in 1979 prices.

Mr. Butcher [*pursuant to the reply*, 29 March 1985]: Constant price statistics are not available for investment by region. Figures in the following table are at current prices and relate to investment by manufacturing industry (excluding leased assets) in the standard regions of the United Kingdom. Estimates for 1983 and 1984 are not yet available.

Net capital expenditure in manufacturing industry at current prices*
£ million

Standard regions	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*
Standard regions of England				
North	613·3	492·5	357·7	342·7
Yorkshire and Humberside	625·0	557·2	453·3	442·5
East Midlands	478·3	453·6	397·5	432·1
East Anglia	210·5	198·6	167·0	216·3
South East	1,581·1	1,561·0	1,354·8	1,394·1
South West	377·1	367·2	342·3	359·5
West Midlands	705·3	704·5	532·2	564·4
North West	971·2	994·6	766·3	758·4
England	5,561·9	5,329·2	4,371·2	4,510·0
Wales	472·1	380·3	370·9	337·9
Scotland	589·0	653·7	617·3	542·0
Great Britain	6,623·0	6,363·2	5,359·4	5,389·9
Northern Ireland	127·1	143·7	133·7	123·7
United Kingdom	6,750·1	6,506·9	5,493·1	5,513·6

* Divisions 2-4, Standard Industrial Classificiation Revised 1980.
Source: Annual Census of Production Business Monitor PA 1002.

Multi-fibre Arrangement

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give a breakdown for each of the multi-fibre arrangement categories 1 to 123 of *(a)* the number of items and *(b)* the total value of items in each category which have been imported in each of the last five years for which figures are available from (i) European Economic Community countries and (ii) low-cost countries.

Mr. Channon [*pursuant to the reply*, 28 March 1985]: The information requested is set out in the following table:

1980 Imports

Category		*European Community*		*Low-cost countries*	
		Quantity	*Value £'000*	*Quantity*	*Value £'000*
1	Tonnes	10,726	23,648	14,311	24,458
2	Tonnes	14,546	54,475	49,462	96,117
3	Tonnes	17,807	77,515	10,107	29,479
4	'000 Pieces	6,474	8,853	53,430	55,879
5	'000 Pieces	12,096	33,993	46,469	96,393
6	'000 Pieces	8,754	47,435	34,313	105,729
7	'000 Pieces	1,825	8,598	20,128	35,040
8	'000 Pieces	1,817	8,658	39,224	70,519
9	Tonnes	2,192	11,032	8,270	26,318
10	'000 Pairs	82	467	1,365	5,957
11	'000 Pairs	116	621	3,369	7,296
12	'000 Pairs	426	1,591	1,639	3,238
13	'000 Pieces	6,549	2,675	28,317	6,835
14A	'000 Pieces	16	108	438	1,725
14B	'000 Pieces	88	2,155	415	3,177
15A	'000 Pieces	2	14	128	441
15B	'000 Pieces	1,434	23,188	2,771	14,107
16	'000 Pieces	736	28,156	1,240	16,722
17	'000 Pieces	743	11,418	1,855	11,262
18	Tonnes	172	1,219	1,660	9,031
19	Tonnes	24	292	420	1,787
20	Tonnes	584	2,856	6,576	24,764
21	'000 Pieces	928	5,828	9,204	40,069
22	Tonnes	11,600	31,119	4,958	7,680
23	Tonnes	753	1,712	254	370
24	'000 Pieces	16	61	1,441	1,697
25	'000 Pieces	469	1,166	1,421	2,230
26	'000 Pieces	1,919	18,697	7,853	27,393
27	'000 Pieces	2,055	15,728	4,300	10,190
28	'000 Pieces	415	1,529	1,051	1,786
29	'000 Pieces	277	7,260	1,043	5,996
30A	'000 Pieces	341	1,269	2,242	3,189
30B	Tonnes	64	994	45	381
31	'000 Pieces	2,873	3,737	5,897	3,751
32	Tonnes	19,184	96,661	2,739	8,306
33	Tonnes	965	1,438	1,303	1,575
34	Tonnes	1,108	1,582	33	35
35	Tonnes	10,741	41,617	1,918	9,697
36	Tonnes	1,198	8,189	355	3,003
37	Tonnes	3,798	21,239	1,196	3,884

Category		European Community Quantity	European Community Value £'000	Low-cost countries Quantity	Low-cost countries Value £'000
38A	Tonnes	120	542	1	7
38B	Tonnes	36	288	—	—
39	Tonnes	524	3,200	1,617	5,008
40	Tonnes	328	1,702	374	1,116
41	Tonnes	41,026	74,992	1,996	3,145
42	Tonnes	4,910	7,207	1,154	1,216
43	Tonnes	74	457	110	153
44	Tonnes	31	129	0·3	2
45	Tonnes	—	—	—	—
46	Tonnes	870	2,488	977	3,106
47	Tonnes	3,895	15,897	72	254
48	Tonnes	1,969	8,567	256	1,082
49	Tonnes	243	1,671	71	230
50	Tonnes	7,875	34,715	879	5,071
51	Tonnes	46	48	44	71
52	Tonnes	497	1,594	38	100
53	Tonnes	13	37	39	135
54	Tonnes	497	669	—	—
55	Tonnes	4,831	6,187	1,276	1,110
56	Tonnes	985	4,906	272	989
57	Tonnes	8	16	2	5
58	Tonnes	117	3,361	2,119	31,423
59	Tonnes	50,647	77,151	3,022	6,038
60	Tonnes	6	164	4	91
61	Tonnes	657	3,329	1,413	3,357
62	Tonnes	447	4,863	310	3,729
63	Tonnes	542	4,690	43	157
64	Tonnes	470	2,820	187	650
65	Tonnes	3,115	17,429	1,284	4,793
66	Tonnes	469	1,293	1,520	2,470
67	Tonnes	283	1,892	1,236	3,981
68	Tonnes	26	292	411	2,720
69	'000 Pieces	35	400	432	281
70	'000 Pieces	90,932	16,646	1,445	568
71	Tonnes	194	2,865	694	7,044
72	'000 Pieces	451	1,594	1,261	1,164
73	'000 Pieces	260	1,815	2,285	6,802
74	'000 Pieces	143	2,729	883	4,808
75	'000 Pieces	7	141	217	1,152
76	Tonnes	558	3,997	1,823	7,678
77	'000 Pairs	1,480	416	91	33
78	Tonnes	297	3,695	2,241	11,670
79	'000 Pieces	200	826	295	299
80	Tonnes	292	5,397	1,088	6,821
81	Tonnes	305	5,064	1,726	11,168
82	Tonnes	7	79	184	1,095
83	Tonnes	445	5,960	2,251	20,391
84	Tonnes	344	6,220	73	730
85	'000 Pieces	763	835	64	29
86	'000 Pieces	286	1,502	513	562
87	Tonnes	33	314	517	1,570
88	Tonnes	195	1,330	63	346
89	Tonnes	5	106	13	157
90	Tonnes	3,662	3,388	1,348	1,473
91	Tonnes	2,266	7,835	598	2,029
92	Tonnes	4,608	9,372	9	30
93	Tonnes	197	244	274	581
94	Tonnes	1,196	3,109	152	140
95	Tonnes	2,097	3,341	24	90
96	Tonnes	6,871	14,117	58	137
97	Tonnes	313	1,091	357	799
98	Tonnes	100	264	307	411
99	Tonnes	92	348	4	13
100	Tonnes	6,859	18,391	2,780	3,467
101	Tonnes	91	113	54	63
102	Tonnes	1,325	848	—	—
103	Tonnes	925	2,442	1	2
104	Tonnes	172	771	8	29
105	Tonnes	453	1,452	227	641
106	Tonnes	15	90	112	745
107	Tonnes	71	417	18	79
108	Tonnes	128	942	12	27
109	Tonnes	115	544	21	86
110	Tonnes	20	18	561	958
111	Tonnes	116	284	20	64
112	Tonnes	687	2,325	423	1,167
113	Tonnes	20	64	124	270
114	Tonnes	429	5,272	12	134
115	Tonnes	1,503	3,280	4	10
116	Tonnes	0·2	2	—	—
117	Tonnes	136	758	347	734
118	Tonnes	1	11	18	64
119	Tonnes	103	474	130	471
120	Tonnes	5	20	0·4	2
121	Tonnes	12	15	—	—
122	Tonnes	148	19	17	1
123	Tonnes	127	564	1	9

1981 Imports

Category		European Community Quantity	European Community Value £'000	Low-cost countries Quantity	Low-cost countries Value £'000
1	Tonnes	16,010	32,347	22,546	37,694
2	Tonnes	18,220	72,545	51,731	102,000
3	Tonnes	21,691	93,684	12,076	26,183
4	'000 Pieces	11,010	11,915	58,808	61,779
5	'000 Pieces	15,071	43,966	50,769	121,596
6	'000 Pieces	12,553	65,391	32,926	112,365
7	'000 Pieces	1,889	9,294	23,170	41,398
8	'000 Pieces	1,808	9,509	36,131	63,527
9	Tonnes	2,839	14,756	9,560	31,374
10	'000 Pairs	740	508	11,613	5,031
11	'000 Pairs	934	491	30,238	6,942
12	'000 Pairs	3,705	1,464	21,890	5,081
13	'000 Pieces	11,488	4,407	38,129	10,332
14A	'000 Pieces	31	106	534	2,166
14B	'000 Pieces	141	3,042	506	4,603
15A	'000 Pieces	13	211	138	540
15B	'000 Pieces	1,419	22,472	3,187	19,653
16	'000 Pieces	764	29,076	1,486	20,084
17	'000 Pieces	649	10,224	1,341	10,227
18	Tonnes	133	1,000	1,678	9,743
19	Tonnes	32	550	453	2,044
20	Tonnes	857	4,020	7,432	27,711
21	'000 Pieces	835	6,612	10,202	52,694
22	Tonnes	18,810	49,271	5,069	9,759
23	Tonnes	1,050	3,711	234	296
24	'000 Pieces	78	204	1,776	2,428
25	'000 Pieces	634	1,541	1,652	2,637
26	'000 Pieces	2,453	22,209	10,144	40,664
27	'000 Pieces	2,515	17,230	6,057	16,198
28	'000 Pieces	295	1,227	1,150	2,210
29	'000 Pieces	392	8,817	1,450	8,536
30A	'000 Pieces	482	1,659	2,835	5,160
30B	Tonnes	78	1,425	76	739
31	'000 Pieces	2,765	3,875	5,569	4,001
32	Tonnes	22,226	104,854	3,381	10,782
33	Tonnes	1,907	2,383	1,378	1,464
34	Tonnes	2,203	2,871	8	13
35	Tonnes	11,070	47,542	2,659	16,830
36	Tonnes	1,386	9,837	279	3,011
37	Tonnes	4,465	24,262	975	2,981
38A	Tonnes	155	718	10	38
38B	Tonnes	34	216	1	9
39	Tonnes	496	2,895	1,543	4,834
40	Tonnes	411	1,908	644	1,885
41	Tonnes	48,357	86,724	1,822	3,215
42	Tonnes	4,537	6,794	559	692
43	Tonnes	173	500	38	112
44	Tonnes	18	42	—	—
45	Tonnes	3	13	—	—
46	Tonnes	1,120	3,494	1,598	4,613
47	Tonnes	4,382	16,060	366	940
48	Tonnes	2,773	12,045	193	1,176
49	Tonnes	251	1,539	34	139
50	Tonnes	8,009	34,017	764	4,868
51	Tonnes	192	310	156	279
52	Tonnes	236	807	65	188

U.K. 1982 Imports

	Category	European Community Quantity	European Community Value £'000	Low-cost countries Quantity	Low-cost countries Value £'000
53	Tonnes	10	40	22	75
54	Tonnes	413	622	1	2
55	Tonnes	4,398	5,419	1,399	1,213
56	Tonnes	1,248	6,458	309	1,229
57	Tonnes	15	56	4	19
58	Tonnes	172	4,62[illegible]	2,282	35,635
59	Tonnes	74,596	109,421	4,046	8,122
60	Tonnes	8	410	8	118
61	Tonnes	939	4,256	794	1,758
62	Tonnes	721	6,489	252	3,270
63	Tonnes	522	4,090	67	189
64	Tonnes	545	3,080	302	550
65	Tonnes	4,855	24,607	1,595	6,088
66	Tonnes	893	2,221	1,011	1,658
67	Tonnes	339	1,995	1,736	4,649
68	Tonnes	38	425	640	4,698
69	'000 Pieces	502	464	719	599
70	'000 Pieces	122,284	20,845	2,261	1,307
71	Tonnes	228	3,267	718	7,201
72	'000 Pieces	681	2,027	1,989	2,000
73	'000 Pieces	291	1,592	2,470	7,546
74	'000 Pieces	362	3,387	1,590	8,295
75	'000 Pieces	29	352	365	1,990
76	Tonnes	312	2,411	1,149	4,541
77	'000 Pairs	2,452	791	116	55
78	Tonnes	377	3,909	2,315	14,688
79	'000 Pieces	417	941	476	521
80	Tonnes	307	5,130	1,306	9,190
81	Tonnes	376	6,906	2,271	19,309
82	Tonnes	15	150	199	1,328
83	Tonnes	281	4,714	2,118	18,632
84	Tonnes	409	8,103	279	2,449
85	'000 Pieces	839	843	82	54
86	'000 Pieces	178	1,931	1,007	1,254
87	Tonnes	43	361	612	1,945
88	Tonnes	184	1,550	111	951
89	Tonnes	6	107	38	446
90	Tonnes	4,835	3,787	2,001	1,572
91	Tonnes	1,625	5,996	723	2,339
92	Tonnes	4,307	8,702	—	—
93	Tonnes	285	526	219	484
94	Tonnes	1,918	5,516	12	16
95	Tonnes	2,914	4,886	30	100
96	Tonnes	7,715	16,033	85	240
97	Tonnes	315	1,100	242	564
98	Tonnes	234	715	415	629
99	Tonnes	119	359	1	2
100	Tonnes	8,004	21,972	2,509	3,195
101	Tonnes	109	171	9	17
102	Tonnes	1,636	987	1	2
103	Tonnes	1,074	2,692	7	7
104	Tonnes	230	899	8	41
105	Tonnes	508	2,213	327	945
106	Tonnes	16	107	67	532
107	Tonnes	100	381	9	16
108	Tonnes	203	1,308	0·4	6
109	Tonnes	154	906	17	95
110	Tonnes	10	16	370	717
111	Tonnes	93	233	42	84
112	Tonnes	357	2,118	249	1,214
113	Tonnes	32	109	252	638
114	Tonnes	426	5,103	10	83
115	Tonnes	1,152	2,783	7	20
116	Tonnes	1	3	—	—
117	Tonnes	272	1,165	344	737
118	Tonnes	15	63	1	9
119	Tonnes	111	610	115	458
120	Tonnes	11	73	1	3
121	Tonnes	2	14	—	—
122	Tonnes	105	12	—	—
123	Tonnes	126	697	2	12

	Category	European Community Quantity	European Community Value £'000	Low-cost countries Quantity	Low-cost countries Value £'000
1	Tonnes	15,562	33,077	15,295	24,205
2	Tonnes	21,505	93,243	52,479	115,718
3	Tonnes	23,187	112,825	12,935	46,855
4	'000 Pieces	12,892	15,139	54,636	59,637
5	'000 Pieces	16,827	53,724	46,456	125,730
6	'000 Pieces	11,220	62,033	31,550	111,257
7	'000 Pieces	2,454	12,950	25,131	51,512
8	'000 Pieces	1,928	11,132	43,844	82,585
9	Tonnes	2,245	11,704	9,929	34,580
10	'000 Pairs	671	610	9,567	5,027
11	'000 Pairs	604	472	36,850	8,644
12	'000 Pairs	6,965	2,717	24,864	6,489
13	'000 Pieces	7,546	3,813	35,991	9,963
14A	'000 Pieces	19	111	251	1,166
14B	'000 Pieces	137	3,418	488	4,383
15A	'000 Pieces	17	227	105	426
15B	'000 Pieces	1,369	24,286	2,313	15,710
16	'000 Pieces	716	29,995	1,249	18,661
17	'000 Pieces	607	12,440	1,110	9,892
18	Tonnes	167	1,310	1,612	10,394
19	Tonnes	11	115	362	1,759
20	Tonnes	1,041	5,706	8,698	35,722
21	'000 Pieces	398	7,943	9,315	54,402
22	Tonnes	22,521	61,420	3,324	6,920
23	Tonnes	865	2,649	531	891
24	'000 Pieces	130	284	1,695	2,330
25	'000 Pieces	552	1,275	1,663	2,731
26	'000 Pieces	2,844	26,898	7,835	30,396
27	'000 Pieces	2,846	22,509	5,260	15,968
28	'000 Pieces	298	1,434	1,302	2,140
29	'000 Pieces	406	9,540	1,301	9,162
30A	'000 Pieces	504	1,827	2,721	5,855
30B	Tonnes	66	1,226	62	695
31	'000 Pieces	4,133	5,781	6,825	5,356
32	Tonnes	20,482	99,600	3,316	9,991
33	Tonnes	2,267	3,410	1,930	2,132
34	Tonnes	1,615	2,167	49	55
35	Tonnes	9,087	45,994	3,498	19,452
36	Tonnes	1,665	10,830	246	2,540
37	Tonnes	5,874	35,219	1,243	3,618
38A	Tonnes	145	744	37	141
38B	Tonnes	22	178	1	4
39	Tonnes	601	3,250	1,367	5,222
40	Tonnes	555	2,414	709	2,276
41	Tonnes	61,059	119,336	3,459	6,936
42	Tonnes	7,919	14,435	287	460
43	Tonnes	192	732	112	224
44	Tonnes	10	39	—	—
45	Tonnes	3	31	—	—
46	Tonnes	1,999	6,804	1,023	3,333
47	Tonnes	4,539	17,241	488	1,296
48	Tonnes	3,028	16,401	186	1,362
49	Tonnes	229	1,654	52	194
50	Tonnes	7,953	38,291	622	4,132
51	Tonnes	638	1,342	12	23
52	Tonnes	353	1,229	78	251
53	Tonnes	47	181	15	36
54	Tonnes	97	160	6	10
55	Tonnes	4,001	5,573	1,986	1,944
56	Tonnes	966	5,327	547	1,937
57	Tonnes	35	140	1	4
58	Tonnes	229	7,583	2,159	33,085
59	Tonnes	83,471	124,061	2,951	5,833
60	Tonnes	6	212	4	88
61	Tonnes	1,288	6,102	748	2,004
62	Tonnes	781	7,773	231	4,191
63	Tonnes	460	3,732	12	46
64	Tonnes	753	4,140	136	586
65	Tonnes	3,744	21,327	1,727	6,861
66	Tonnes	1,015	2,738	661	1,174
67	Tonnes	333	2,813	1,147	4,143
68	Tonnes	108	1,128	587	4,490
69	'000 Pieces	1,585	947	325	339

Category		European Community Quantity	European Community Value £'000	Low-cost countries Quantity	Low-cost countries Value £'000
70	'000 Pieces	123,256	20,525	2,938	1,560
71	Tonnes	214	3,095	800	8,133
72	'000 Pieces	1,034	2,462	1,917	2,018
73	'000 Pieces	555	2,983	1,837	6,915
74	'000 Pieces	352	3,523	1,224	6,557
75	'000 Pieces	35	352	291	1,318
76	Tonnes	317	2,591	1,394	6,211
77	'000 Pairs	1,404	547	359	51
78	Tonnes	384	4,104	2,192	15,659
79	'000 Pieces	452	1,421	273	374
80	Tonnes	353	7,122	1,256	9,886
81	Tonnes	393	9,344	2,298	22,152
82	Tonnes	11	182	175	1,314
83	Tonnes	300	4,513	2,014	17,989
84	Tonnes	442	8,284	356	3,099
85	'000 Pieces	1,236	1,202	59	41
86	'000 Pieces	225	2,453	1,102	1,558
87	Tonnes	67	564	526	1,946
88	Tonnes	190	1,880	111	849
89	Tonnes	10	152	50	579
90	Tonnes	4,863	4,626	2,058	1,930
91	Tonnes	1,744	6,504	517	1,605
92	Tonnes	3,856	8,682	0·4	2
93	Tonnes	319	533	305	608
94	Tonnes	2,087	6,575	39	103
95	Tonnes	3,262	6,080	19	78
96	Tonnes	9,506	21,795	50	157
97	Tonnes	319	1,052	238	650
98	Tonnes	236	777	462	674
99	Tonnes	121	383	—	—
100	Tonnes	7,791	26,180	2,491	3,348
101	Tonnes	226	305	7	19
102	Tonnes	1,601	1,032	2	2
103	Tonnes	1,036	3,027	8	19
104	Tonnes	353	1,291	4	19
105	Tonnes	543	3,200	318	1,040
106	Tonnes	23	142	57	513
107	Tonnes	173	627	4	10
108	Tonnes	289	1,846	3	15
109	Tonnes	305	1,387	15	106
110	Tonnes	30	61	458	944
111	Tonnes	112	415	17	64
112	Tonnes	315	2,463	332	1,524
113	Tonnes	31	119	263	639
114	Tonnes	526	6,995	11	97
115	Tonnes	1,035	2,924	14	31
116	Tonnes	12	13	—	—
117	Tonnes	268	1,360	240	511
118	Tonnes	3	19	2	10
119	Tonnes	135	724	134	504
120	Tonnes	8	30	4	11
121	Tonnes	17	19	—	—
122	Tonnes	67	7	—	—
123	Tonnes	162	886	9	33

U.K. 1983 Imports

Category		European Community Quantity	European Community Value £'000	Low-cost countries Quantity	Low-cost countries Value £'000
1	Tonnes	21,087	48,942	18,073	34,135
2	Tonnes	28,655	128,326	56,779	135,294
3	Tonnes	30,151	148,889	15,730	57,620
4	'000 Pieces	13,597	16,960	52,513	60,388
5	'000 Pieces	15,083	62,491	44,255	123,581
6	'000 Pieces	11,202	67,773	34,475	124,739
7	'000 Pieces	2,381	15,332	22,550	47,296
8	'000 Pieces	2,304	13,512	41,088	79,861
9	Tonnes	1,768	10,426	9,443	33,339
10	'000 Pairs	891	565	7,574	4,243
11	'000 Pairs	773	536	40,914	10,530
12	'000 Pairs	11,172	4,176	30,728	8,129
13	'000 Pieces	7,289	4,131	43,792	17,387
14A	'000 Pieces	5	54	180	826
14B	'000 Pieces	123	3,357	437	5,024
15A	'000 Pieces	6	102	61	273
15B	'000 Pieces	1,423	26,586	2,242	17,742
16	'000 Pieces	777	33,355	1,437	20,025
17	'000 Pieces	599	13,030	1,280	11,871
18	Tonnes	112	1,182	1,445	8,658
19	Tonnes	24	207	352	2,031
20	Tonnes	654	4,531	8,733	36,031
21	'000 Pieces	903	8,670	7,842	44,783
22	Tonnes	25,966	73,654	4,221	9,483
23	Tonnes	912	2,678	508	946
24	'000 Pieces	70	192	1,502	2,125
25	'000 Pieces	521	1,534	1,754	3,263
26	'000 Pieces	3,403	38,317	7,292	29,796
27	'000 Pieces	2,826	26,426	5,535	17,459
28	'000 Pieces	495	2,194	1,961	4,569
29	'000 Pieces	409	10,791	1,604	11,370
30A	'000 Pieces	457	1,838	2,540	5,702
30B	Tonnes	338	1,867	65	680
31	'000 Pieces	4,085	5,597	7,166	6,429
32	Tonnes	20,956	110,807	4,695	14,064
33	Tonnes	1,948	2,734	1,793	1,932
34	Tonnes	592	848	75	108
35	Tonnes	11,874	63,346	4,010	22,047
36	Tonnes	2,185	14,654	278	2,170
37	Tonnes	6,049	34,065	1,875	4,711
38A	Tonnes	234	1,201	37	135
38B	Tonnes	33	344	4	26
39	Tonnes	541	3,591	1,704	6,701
40	Tonnes	529	3,512	855	2,715
41	Tonnes	72,598	145,356	5,132	9,204
42	Tonnes	7,650	15,264	1,316	2,090
43	Tonnes	82	497	63	209
44	Tonnes	16	195	—	—
45	Tonnes	6	72	—	—
46	Tonnes	3,562	12,278	1,473	4,736
47	Tonnes	4,009	18,225	651	1,608
48	Tonnes	3,479	19,984	398	2,679
49	Tonnes	477	3,098	18	81
50	Tonnes	10,231	50,634	702	4,770
51	Tonnes	905	2,101	91	152
52	Tonnes	586	2,770	96	328
53	Tonnes	32	140	14	31
54	Tonnes	701	1,275	57	59
55	Tonnes	4,460	7,133	1,821	1,714
56	Tonnes	1,101	6,238	676	2,298
57	Tonnes	36	129	1	5
58	Tonnes	160	5,397	2,231	38,579
59	Tonnes	101,481	149,063	4,396	9,306
60	Tonnes	6	237	5	75
61	Tonnes	1,721	8,449	976	2,456
62	Tonnes	866	9,156	266	3,749
63	Tonnes	643	5,755	19	79
64	Tonnes	1,205	6,387	79	464
65	Tonnes	4,390	25,883	1,989	7,427
66	Tonnes	849	2,696	471	1,078
67	Tonnes	675	4,794	940	3,278
68	Tonnes	102	1,236	621	4,425
69	'000 Pieces	869	733	192	175
70	'000 Pieces	124,399	22,147	2,148	1,260
71	Tonnes	195	3,281	845	8,373
72	'000 Pieces	1,243	3,940	2,494	2,812
73	'000 Pieces	785	5,613	2,751	10,347
74	'000 Pieces	350	4,308	1,247	5,113
75	'000 Pieces	56	512	215	1,026
76	Tonnes	442	4,063	1,028	4,557
77	'000 Pieces	517	361	105	50
78	Tonnes	489	6,400	1,791	12,979
79	'000 Pieces	339	1,441	254	339
80	Tonnes	411	5,853	990	9,171
81	Tonnes	531	13,989	2,264	22,332
82	Tonnes	6	104	152	1,143
83	Tonnes	398	6,701	2,659	24,262
84	Tonnes	388	7,814	171	1,716
85	'000 Pieces	1,533	1,804	269	241

	Category	European Community Quantity	European Community Value £'000	Low-cost countries Quantity	Low-cost countries Value £'000
86	'000 Pieces	249	2,420	997	1,835
87	Tonnes	68	580	539	1,838
88	Tonnes	225	2,296	181	630
89	Tonnes	17	312	67	901
90	Tonnes	4,789	5,499	2,631	2,115
91	Tonnes	1,454	6,724	572	2,016
92	Tonnes	4,371	10,802	23	42
93	Tonnes	194	369	597	1,057
94	Tonnes	2,076	7,817	6	33
95	Tonnes	4,192	8,145	52	150
96	Tonnes	11,706	27,934	58	137
97	Tonnes	301	1,083	237	661
98	Tonnes	247	808	446	704
99	Tonnes	162	483	6	24
100	Tonnes	8,911	32,316	2,903	4,074
101	Tonnes	231	361	24	32
102	Tonnes	1,834	1,224	—	—
103	Tonnes	1,209	4,146	13	30
104	Tonnes	330	1,616	43	61
105	Tonnes	507	3,079	328	920
106	Tonnes	9	73	61	458
107	Tonnes	191	688	3	16
108	Tonnes	316	2,654	5	31
109	Tonnes	392	1,848	13	75
110	Tonnes	52	182	648	1,384
111	Tonnes	208	846	20	60
112	Tonnes	403	2,758	323	2,082
113	Tonnes	73	282	411	965
114	Tonnes	469	7,304	2	40
115	Tonnes	1,503	4,505	10	31
116	Tonnes	15	84	—	—
117	Tonnes	308	2,008	214	488
118	Tonnes	6	48	—	—
119	Tonnes	119	646	94	419
120	Tonnes	5	29	—	—
121	Tonnes	—	—	—	—
122	Tonnes	—	—	—	—
123	Tonnes	24	190	1	11

1984 Imports

	Category	European Community Quantity	European Community Value £'000	Low-cost countries Quantity	Low-cost countries Value £'000
1	Tonnes	25,926	70,728	18,169	39,814
2	Tonnes	33,873	163,724	60,374	164,652
3	Tonnes	37,128	173,200	15,932	67,787
4	'000 Pieces	16,662	22,857	52,252	83,915
5	'000 Pieces	17,444	90,406	42,644	155,707
6	'000 Pieces	10,672	72,545	37,595	159,486
7	'000 Pieces	3,002	21,955	21,240	53,497
8	'000 Pieces	3,658	18,444	49,825	118,326
9	Tonnes	2,058	13,347	9,184	39,511
10	'000 Pieces	872	621	7,252	4,790
11	'000 Pieces	1,385	791	49,507	13,327
12	'000 Pieces	5,436	3,414	36,391	9,579
13	'000 Pieces	11,888	5,534	48,337	17,889
14A	'000 Pieces	11	101	278	1,584
14B	'000 Pieces	108	3,311	404	5,064
15A	'000 Pieces	6	92	30	89
15B	'000 Pieces	1,521	31,385	2,726	22,904
16	'000 Pieces	871	37,882	1,649	23,140
17	'000 Pieces	662	14,822	1,809	15,273
18	Tonnes	131	1,417	1,511	10,685
19	Tonnes	42	429	313	1,966
20	Tonnes	722	5,539	8,730	40,062
21	'000 Pieces	914	10,467	10,438	71,876
22	Tonnes	25,167	77,274	8,408	20,228
23	Tonnes	1,262	4,488	663	1,039
24	'000 Pieces	120	355	1,699	2,669
25	'000 Pieces	701	2,469	2,012	3,813
26	'000 Pieces	3,911	48,133	8,307	35,451
27	'000 Pieces	3,165	32,467	5,373	19,142
28	'000 Pieces	506	2,370	1,305	3,863
29	'000 Pieces	505	12,792	1,790	14,289
30A	'000 Pieces	531	2,376	2,957	7,082
30B	Tonnes	176	2,645	72	949
31	'000 Pieces	4,228	6,693	7,978	8,157
32	Tonnes	20,232	113,371	3,356	12,007
33	Tonnes	3,309	7,020	2,459	3,180
34	Tonnes	521	932	49	66
35	Tonnes	12,836	78,575	4,947	28,936
36	Tonnes	3,142	19,938	157	1,254
37	Tonnes	5,649	31,179	2,170	6,131
38A	Tonnes	315	1,412	39	137
38B	Tonnes	41	299	1	1
39	Tonnes	585	3,810	1,784	7,948
40	Tonnes	467	3,451	862	2,917
41	Tonnes	69,236	141,193	3,137	6,308
42	Tonnes	7,089	13,977	810	1,295
43	Tonnes	108	642	480	813
44	Tonnes	21	168	0	(£463)
45	Tonnes	7	121	0	0
46	Tonnes	3,776	14,792	1,813	8,173
47	Tonnes	4,057	21,102	644	1,679
48	Tonnes	3,757	25,513	608	4,511
49	Tonnes	488	3,779	32	207
50	Tonnes	10,499	63,019	739	6,015
51	Tonnes	807	1,805	10	30
52	Tonnes	880	4,298	224	1,013
53	Tonnes	51	257	23	51
54	Tonnes	419	862	232	168
55	Tonnes	3,721	6,519	1,532	1,672
56	Tonnes	1,389	6,572	2,192	1,780
57	Tonnes	42	141	32	123
58	Tonnes	199	7,313	2,296	48,648
59	Tonnes	121,873	176,025	3,853	9,977
60	Tonnes	7	177	5	86
61	Tonnes	1,693	9,124	915	2,703
62	Tonnes	827	9,452	247	2,877
63	Tonnes	575	5,511	9	41
64	Tonnes	1,402	8,234	52	372
65	Tonnes	4,919	30,420	2,173	8,322
66	Tonnes	696	2,312	476	1,060
67	Tonnes	794	6,164	1,109	4,752
68	Tonnes	87	1,194	785	7,036
69	'000 Pieces	764	537	490	378
70	'000 Pieces	140,462	25,234	6,863	1,915
71	Tonnes	243	4,190	1,544	15,002
72	'000 Pieces	1,304	4,587	3,490	4,093
73	'000 Pieces	867	7,566	3,030	12,521
74	'000 Pieces	637	4,737	1,656	6,401
75	'000 Pieces	51	449	266	850
76	Tonnes	556	5,424	1,345	6,749
77	'000 Pieces	435	320	131	105
78	Tonnes	599	10,596	1,945	16,273
79	'000 Pieces	572	1,782	429	549
80	Tonnes	333	7,795	1,242	13,382
81	Tonnes	547	14,258	3,276	37,639
82	Tonnes	16	139	293	3,081
83	Tonnes	478	9,001	2,906	30,348
84	Tonnes	443	9,122	179	1,894
85	'000 Pieces	1,462	1,981	150	94
86	'000 Pieces	165	2,247	1,602	3,049
87	Tonnes	108	654	640	2,818
88	Tonnes	316	3,013	153	1,087
89	Tonnes	27	482	53	660
90	Tonnes	5,038	6,855	2,844	2,707
91	Tonnes	1,477	6,518	460	1,949
92	Tonnes	4,516	11,483	2	6
93	Tonnes	137	251	463	1,039
94	Tonnes	2,911	10,685	16	42
95	Tonnes	4,901	9,717	100	198
96	Tonnes	15,211	39,951	58	224
97	Tonnes	342	999	303	920
98	Tonnes	209	659	469	787
99	Tonnes	198	581	4	15
100	Tonnes	9,197	35,839	2,953	4,772
101	Tonnes	219	435	41	55

Category		European Community Quantity	Value £'000	Low-cost countries Quantity	Value £'000
102	Tonnes	2,007	1,455	25	24
103	Tonnes	1,106	3,835	4	8
104	Tonnes	386	2,012	11	26
105	Tonnes	596	3,456	349	1,073
106	Tonnes	22	151	55	433
107	Tonnes	196	660	1	3
108	Tonnes	301	2,184	12	34
109	Tonnes	319	1,678	67	525
110	Tonnes	7	15	459	978
111	Tonnes	217	680	39	98
112	Tonnes	360	2,621	378	2,459
113	Tonnes	59	263	503	1,525
114	Tonnes	544	9,333	4	49
115	Tonnes	2,085	7,114	48	390
116	Tonnes	118	535	0	0
117	Tonnes	448	2,716	192	471
118	Tonnes	1	10	5	35
119	Tonnes	128	689	100	504
120	Tonnes	3	35	0	0
121	Tonnes	0	0	0	0
122	Tonnes	8	1	7	2
123	Tonnes	11	113	1	11

TRANSPORT

Equal Opportunities Officer

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will now appoint a departmental equal opportunities officer with responsibility for co-ordinating the Civil Service policy of non-discrimination within his Department.

Mr. Ridley: Such an officer was designated for my Department in November 1984.

Sinclair C5

Mr. David Young asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, in view of legal actions against and injuries to drivers of the Sinclair C5, he will now introduce legislation to seek to ensure that injuries to third parties are covered by compulsory insurance.

Mr. Ridley: No.

Transport Policy

Mrs. Peacock asked the Secretary of State for Transport to what extent in formulating Her Majesty's Government's transport policy he takes employment needs and tourism potential of an area into account.

Mr. Ridley: The interests of the passenger are my prime consideration. Trains and buses should be free to go when and where their passengers want to go; and airports and airlines should be free to meet the demands of the passengers, whether in pursuit of tourism or employment.

ENVIRONMENT

Planning Appeals

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the average time taken for planning appeals to be dealt with for each of the last six years, whether by way of written representation or by a public inquiry; and whether or not the decision was made by an inspector or by himself.

Mr. Macfarlane: Median times for deciding planning appeals between 1979 and 1984 were as follows:

	Determined by Secretary of State		Determined by Inspectors		
	Inquiries	Written Representations	Inquiries	Written Representations	Informal Hearings
1979	49	38	27	23	—
1980	44	37	27	26	—
1981	44	32	26	18	—
1982	46	33	27	17	—
1983	48	39	26	19	20
1984	53	42	28	22	25

Notes:
1. Median, and not average times are used in the Department's appeal statistics.
2. Times are in weeks.
3. Informal hearings were introduced in July 1983.

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans and proposals he has for speeding up the time taken to determine planning appeals.

Mr. Macfarlane: Appeals intake is now some 20 per cent. above 1983 levels. I nevertheless intend to cut processing times by appointing more planning inspectors and making the most effective use of them, accelerating procedures and speeding up the decision-making process.

SCOTLAND

Grudie-Tarradale Hydro-electric Scheme

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement detailing the reasons for his rejection of the proposed Grudie-Tarradale hydro-electric scheme.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The Secretary of State considers that the scheme cannot be accommodated within the board's capital expenditure programme over the next few years. In the circumstances, the board has announced that it has decided to withdraw the scheme from its immediate plans with the intention of resubmitting it later when there is a prospect of room being found for it within the investment programme authorised by the Government. The Secretary of State has accordingly taken no decision on the merits of the scheme and on the objections made to it.

The North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board has made it clear that if and when the proposals are resubmitted it will observe the full procedural requirements, which will provide a renewed opportunity for any members of the public who wish to do so to make formal objections. In the

circumstances, the Secretary of State proposes to take no further action on the objections which were made to the scheme as originally submitted.

Contraceptive Advice

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent advice he has given to Scottish general practitioners about contraceptive advice for girls aged under 16 years.

Mr. John MacKay: None.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Fishing Industry

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has made any representations about the implications for the Northern Ireland fishing industry arising from Spain's application for accession to the Treaty of Rome; to whom these representations were made; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Boyson: No; the Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland is fully involved, along with the other Fisheries Departments, in assessing the implications of Spanish accession for the fishing industry and in formulating advice for ministers participating in the European Community enlargement negotiations. Representatives of the Northern Ireland fishing industry are being kept informed of the progress of negotiations.

Community Enterprise Scheme

Mr. A. Cecil Walker asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will consider extending from one year to two years the maximum period of employment for each individual employed under the community enterprise scheme.

Dr. Boyson: The action for community employment (ACE) scheme aims to assist the long-term unemployed regain their "employment" skills through a period of temporary employment. One year is regarded as a suitable time in which this may be achieved. Under existing arrangements, the Department of Economic Development may extend the period of employment of a key ACE worker on whom other ACE posts depend; but a general extension to two years would substantially reduce the number of people who could benefit from the scheme without enhancing the permanent employment prospects of ACE workers.

Mr. A. Cecil Walker asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will consider, in the case of recognised charities which sponsor community enterprise schemes, funding such sponsors at 100 per cent.

Dr. Boyson: Since its inception in 1981, registered charities have been significant contributors to the action for community employment (ACE) scheme. In common with other ACE sponsors, they have in general accepted the principle of 90 per cent. funding.

These funding arrangments ensure a degree of commitment on the part of each sponsor and enable the maximum number of long-term unemployed to participate in the scheme in any one year. Accordingly, I have no plans to alter the funding arrangements.

Overseas Students (Fees)

Mr. Kilfedder asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the present position in regard to university fees charged to overseas students, including those from the Republic of Eire in attendance at Queens and Ulster universities; and whether any changes are envisaged for the future.

Mr. Scott: The level of tuition fees in universities is a matter for the authorities of each institution. However, grant paid by the Department of Education for Northern Ireland to Queen's University and the University of Ulster is based on the assumptions that

(a) home students and students from other European Community countries (including the Republic of Ireland) will be charged fees at the level recommended to universities in Great Britain by the Secretary of State for Education and Science; and

(b) other overseas students will be charged fees which will at least cover the marginal costs attributable to them and which will vary from course to course.

The policy on overseas students' fees is reviewed annually by the Department of Education for Northern Ireland in the light of student enrolments.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of long-term youth unemployed in each year since 1979 to the latest date;

(2) what assessment he has made of the impact of the Budget on reducing unemployment in the Province;

(3) what plans he has to reduce unemployment in the Province; and if he will make a statement;

(4) what is the level of unemployment in the Province at the latest date; and what were the figures for June 1979.

Dr. Boyson: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Firearms Repairers (Castlereagh)

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many persons within Castlereagh borough are licensed to repair firearms.

Mr. Scott: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Contracts

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many contracts advertised during the 1983-84 financial years, were cancelled after tenders were received; and if he will list them;

(2) how many contracts advertised during the present financial year were cancelled after tenders had been received; and if he will list them.

Dr. Boyson [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 March 1985, c. 34]: The information is as follows:

Financial Year 1983-84

Six contracts were cancelled. They were:

1. Repairs and alterations to loading/unloading bay at Larne harbour.
2. Part internal redecoration, Crown buildings, Coleraine.
3. Temporary building at Ballynafeigh Royal Ulster Constabulary station.
4. Alterations to kitchen, Limavady Royal Ulster Constabulary station.
5. Laying of carpet, Churchill house, Belfast.

6. Supply of black plastic bags for use in all Government Departments.

Financial Year 1984-85 (to date)

Three contracts were cancelled. They were:

1. Landscaping of phase III, Poleglass.
2. Mastic asphalt patching.
3. Computer numerically controlled turning centre for use in a Government training centre.

Orlit Houses

Mr. Clifford Forsythe asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the current position regarding the repair and upkeep of Orlit houses currently in Housing Executive ownership.

Mr. Chris Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 March 1985, c. *34*]: I am informed by the chairman of the Housing Executive that assessments of the structural condition of Orlit dwellings have now been completed. The minimum life expectancy is estimated at five to 10 years while the majority of Orlits have a life expectancy of 10 to 15 or 15 to 30 years. Proposals for replacements or improvement as appropriate are being drawn up by the Housing Executive in consultations with tenants and public representatives. In the meantime a response maintenance service is being provided for all the Housing Executive's groups of Orlit properties.

Strabane (Housing)

Rev. William McCrea asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many Southern Irish army soldiers are living in Northern Ireland Housing Executive houses in the Strabane area.

Mr. Chris Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 March 1985, c. *35*]: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. The chairman has indicated that precise information is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Ancillary Workers (Bursaries)

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he takes to ensure that bursaries available for the training of social workers, radiographers, occupational therapists, chiropodists and dental students, from funds provided by his Department, are taken up; and if he will take steps to ensure that there is no shortfall in the intake of students for these courses next year.

Mr. Chris Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 28 March 1985, c. *301*]: Social work and dental students receive mandatory awards for degree courses from the five education and library boards in Northern Ireland. Bursaries for students undertaking diploma courses in radiography, occupational therapy, chiropody and social work are awarded by the Department of Health and Social Services to ensure that the supply of suitably qualified persons matches the demand of the health and personal social services in Northern Ireland.

St. Patrick's Day Parades (Control)

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland which foreign countries made representations about the use of the Public Order Act 1891 to control parades on Saint Patrick's Day 1985; what response he has made to such representations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: I have been asked to reply.

The Irish Government made representations about the control of a St. Patrick's Day parade in Portadown. Her Majesty's embassy in Dublin has explained that the control of parades is primarily a matter for the operational judgment of the Royal Ulster Constabulary.

EMPLOYMENT

Factories Inspectorate (Case Load)

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Employment what was the ratio of staff to live case load in the Factories Inspectorate for each of the last five years; and what it is now.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Factory Inspectorate does not operate on a case load basis. The inspectorate's current programme is described in paragraphs 141-152 of the Health and Safety Commission's Plan of Work 1985-1986. A copy is in the Library.

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give, from the survey of youth training scheme leavers reported to the last meeting of the youth training board, the number and proportion of mode A managing agents, mode B1 sponsors, and mode B2 sponsors who subcontract no, some and all work experience placements to other employers and providers.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Information based on the Manpower Services Commission's 1984 survey of youth training scheme providers is as follows.

	Mode A		*Mode B1*		*Mode B2*	
	Per cent.	**Number of schemes*	*Per cent.*	**Number of schemes*	*Per cent.*	**Number of schemes*
Agent/sponsor provides all work-based training	52	2,193	24	252	7	36
Some work-based training sub-contracted	20	844	58	610	30	154
All work-based training sub-contracted	26	1,097	17	179	61	313
Not stated	2	84	1	11	2	10
Total	100	4,218	100	1,052	100	513

* Results from the 1984 providers survey applied to the count of schemes obtained from the October 1983 census of schemes.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give, from the survey of youth training scheme providers reported to the last meeting of the Manpower Services Commission's youth training board, the number and proportion of mode A, mode B1, and mode B2 schemes that accept *(a)* all applicants, *(b)* more than three quarters if all applicants, *(c)* more than half of all applicants and *(d)* more than a quarter of all applicants, respectively.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The information is not available in the precise form requested. Information based on the Manpower Services Commission's 1984 survey of youth training scheme providers is as follows:

Percentage of applicants accepted	*Mode A*		*Mode B1*		*Mode B2*	
	Per cent.	**Number of schemes*	*Per cent.*	**Number of schemes*	*Per cent.*	**Number of schemes*
Up to 20 per cent	12	506	0	0	5	26
21—50 per cent.	21	886	6	63	10	51
51—99 per cent.	31	1,308	30	316	45	231
All accepted until full (100 per cent.)	28	1,181	60	631	32	164
Don't know other answer	8	337	4	42	8	41
Total	100	4,218	100	1,052	100	513

* Results from the 1984 providers survey, applied to the count of schemes obtained from the October 1983 census of schemes.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Employment on what factors he bases his estimation that once the second year of training announced in the Budget in respect of youth training scheme is operational all school leavers under the age of 18 years will have access to a job, training or further education.

Mr. Peter Morrison [*pursuant to his reply*, 29 March 1985]: Our aim, once the extended youth training scheme is fully in operation, is to be able to offer places on it to all 16- and 17-year olds who are not in either education or a job.

School Leavers

Mr. Lawler asked the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has as to how many people leaving school in the year 1983-84 obtained jobs within six months of leaving school; and how many obtained jobs after spending some time on a youth training course.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Comprehensive information of the type requested is being gathered in the special studies I referred to in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) on 18 February, at columns *347-8*. Information is also being obtained from surveys of young people leaving the youth training scheme, but results so far available from these surveys relate principally to young people who left school before the year 1983-84.

Youth Training

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many people who have been on youth training or youth opportunity schemes have found work after training in each of the last five years in the Greater London area; and what percentage this represents of those who have been on such schemes.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Valid information on the destination of leavers is not available at regional level for young people who took part in the youth opportunities programme. It is intended that by about June 1985 regional information will be available on a regular basis for youth training scheme leavers.

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will take steps to encourage young people of Asian and West Indian origin to apply for places on mode A youth training schemes.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The Manpower Services Commission actively pursues an equal opportunities policy and encourages the participation of all eligible youngsters in mode A schemes wherever possible.

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many, and what percentage, of young people on youth training schemes, mode A, in the years for which records are available were of *(a)* West Indian and *(b)* Asian origin.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The available information is as follows.

Ethnic group	*Number of entrants*	*Percentage of total entrants*
1. *September 1983 to March 1984:*		
Afro-Caribbean	4,663	2·04
Asian	2,742	1·20
2. *April 1984 to February 1985:*		
Afro-Caribbean	4,611	1·66
Asian	3,410	1·22

Mr. Beith asked the Secretary of State for Employment what is the average annual cost of a youth training scheme training place, modes A and B.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The latest estimated cost for 1984-85 of a full year entrant on the youth training scheme is:-

	£
Mode A	2,050
Mode B1	3,800
Mode B2	2,300
Weighted average	2,400

These figures exclude the cost of unfilled places, vacated places, travel costs, lodging allowances, etc.

Average Wage

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for Employment what is the average wage for full-time *(a)* males and *(b)* females in the east midlands; and what are the comparable figures (i) nationally and (ii) in the south-east.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The latest information relates to full-time employees on adult rates working a full week in April 1984. Figures of average gross weekly earnings for such employees in each region of Great Britain, and in Great Britain as a whole, are published for males in table 110 and for females in table 113 of new earnings survey 1984, part E. A copy is in the Library.

Low-paid Workers

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of low-paid workers receiving less than £100 per week in the east midlands in 1983 were women.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The new earnings survey for April 1983 indicated that for those adult full-time employees whose gross weekly earings for a full week were less than £100, about two-thirds were women.

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of female manual employees in the east midlands earned less than £100 per week at the latest available date.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The latest information relates to full-time adult female manual employees working a full week in April 1984 and is published in table 111 of new earnings survey 1984, Part E. A copy is in the Library.

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of *(a)* male and *(b)* female workers earned less than £100 per week in the east midlands in the following industries at the latest available date: (i) textiles, (ii) clothing and (iii) hotel and catering.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The information requested is not available.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many jobs have been lost in *(a)* the metal manufacturing, *(b)* the engineering, *(c)* the textile and *(d)* the mining industries in Derbyshire since May 1979.

Mr. Alan Clark: Information about job gains and job losses is not available from the Department's statistics.

Net changes in employment can be given but, for areas smaller than regions, only for those dates when censuses of employment are taken. The latest available information for the county of Derbyshire is from the June 1978 and the following September 1981 census of employment and is as follows:

Orders of the Standard Industrial Classification 1968		*Net changes in the numbers of employees in employment June 1978 to September 1981 (thousands)*
VI	Metal manufacture	−3·0
VII	Mechanical engineering	+2·1
VIII	Instrument engineering	−0·7
IX	Electrical engineering	−1·3
XIII	Textiles	−7·7
II$_0$	Mining and quarrying	+1·2

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many people are currently registered as unemployed, expressed as a percentage of the total of those estimated to be employed and self-employed.

Mr. Alan Clark: In February 1985 there were 3,323,700 claimants unemployed in the United Kingdom. The published unemployment rate of 13.7 per cent. expresses this figure as a percentage of the estimated number of employees in employment (21,158,500) plus the unemployed (3,029,700) in June 1984. The self-employed (2,494,000 at the same date) are not included in the denominator for the reasons given in my reply to my hon. Friend of 14 January at column *334*.

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give, for each quarter since 1979, an index of output per person in the labour force, namely, employed and unemployed, for the whole economy, for manufacturing industries and for non-manufacturing industries.

Mr. Alan Clark: Quarterly estimates of output per person in the working population—that is employees in employment, self employed, HM forces and unemployed—for the United Kingdom are shown as index values with 1980 as 100.

	Index	*Value*
1979		
	Q1	101·4
	Q2	105·1
	Q3	103·6
	Q4	104·0
1980		
	Q1	102·7
	Q2	100·7
	Q3	99·1
	Q4	97·6
1981		
	Q1	97·5
	Q2	97·8
	Q3	98·8
	Q4	99·2
1982		
	Q1	99·5
	Q2	100·5
	Q3	101·2
	Q4	101·6
1983		
	Q1	102·5
	Q2	102·9
	Q3	104·7
	Q4	105·0
1984		
	Q1	104·8
	Q2	104·2
	Q3	104·7

Separate indices are not available for manufacturing and non-manufacturing industries as the numbers unemployed are not classified by industry.

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the rise in unemployment in the west midlands from April 1983 to the latest available date.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following information is in the library. Unemployment in the west midlands fell by 9,900, seasonally adjusted, between April 1983 and February 1985. However the provisions of the 1983 Budget meant an estimated 17,100 men no longer had to sign on, to receive supplementary benefit or national insurance credits after April 1983.

Community Programme

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Employment what is the weekly cost to the Manpower Services Commission of each place on the community programme; what is the breakdown between payments to staff and participants; and what proposals there are to increase such payments.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The 1985 Public Expenditure White Paper (Cmnd. 9428) estimates the gross cost to the Department of Employment in the previous year of a participant in the community programme as some £4,290 per year. The administrative costs of a place on the programme to the Manpower Services Commission are estimated at some £76 on the same basis. There are no current proposals to increase the average wage limit applying on the community programme although most programme participants will benefit financially from the changes in employees' National insurance contributions and personal tax allowances announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his Budget.

Mr. Lawler asked the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of the participants in the community programme nationally and in west Yorkshire are of *(a)* Asian origin, *(b)* west Indian origin and *(c)* white.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Community programme entrants are not classified by ethnic origin, but sample surveys taken at six monthly intervals indicate that between 4 per cent. and 9 per cent. of programme participants are from ethnic minorities.

Equal Opportunities Officer

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will now appoint a departmental equal opportunities officer with responsibility for co-ordinating the Civil Service policy of non-discrimination within his Department.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Officers within the personnel divisions of all parts of the Department of Employment group have been designated as equal opportunity officers. They have responsibility for advising on the full scope of equal opportunity matters concerning race and sex discrimination.

Wages Councils

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Employment what are the estimated costs for operating the wages councils and associated activities for 1985-86.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The estimated cost of administrating wages councils, including the cost of the wages inspectorate, for the 1985-86 financial year is around £4·3 million.

Professional and Executive Register

Mr. Neil Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he now intends to take steps to turn the job finding activities of the Professional and Executive Register over to the private sector.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Youth Training and Community Programme

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Employment what new specific vocational opportunities he intends to introduce into the youth training scheme; and what initiatives he plans to promote, to extend the involvement of the private sector and charities in the community programme.

Mr. Peter Morrison [*pursuant to his reply*, 29 March 1985]: We have asked the Manpower Services Commission to make detailed recommendations for an extended youth training scheme, including its design and content, after consultations with interested parties. We have also invited the commission to investigate immediately ways in which the community programme may be developed in relation to the private sector and charities and we are awaiting their response. £10 million may be available for experiments in this area.

Youth Unemployment

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Employment whether discussions have taken place below his Department and the Manpower Services Commission over financial responsibility for unemployed 16 and 17-year-olds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison [*pursuant to his reply*, 29 March 1985] No such discussions have taken place.

SOCIAL SERVICES

EC (Health Services)

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what action his Department has taken or plans to take to increase co-operation in research, joint facilities and harmonisation of systems between health services in European Community member states; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The Department plays a significant part in the third concerted action programme of medical and public health research (1982-1986) under which the community provides funds for the co-ordination of research funded from national sources. The programme which comprises thirty three projects, one of which is entirely devoted to health services research, is supervised

by four Standing Committees. The United Kingdom assists in the preparation of protocols for these activities and takes a major part in the consideration of all health service research projects.

Increased harmonisation of the health systems of member states of the Community is not one of our objectives. However, last November my right hon. and learned Friend met with our colleagues from the other member states in Brussels for an informal exchange of views and information on a number of health matters, including the control of health care costs, and action against drug misuse, smoking and communicable diseases. Another such meeting is scheduled to take place in Venice in May.

Leukaemia (Severnside)

Mr. Marland asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any evidence of any direct link between outbreaks of leukaemia on Severnside and the nuclear power stations on the banks of the Severn estuary.

Mr. John Patten: We have no such evidence.

Home Helps

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has as to the charges to individuals made by each local authority social services department in England for their home help services.

Mr. John Patten: Very few representations directly related to charges have been received by the Department over the last three months. These have been referred to the local authority providing the service, whose responsibility it is to set the charge and to reduce or waive it if the circumstances of the person concerned require this.

Mr. and Mrs. Z. Ahmed (Member's Correspondence)

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to give an answer to the hon. Member for Stretford to his letter of 29 January in connection with Mr. and Mrs. Z Ahmed of 48 Brantingham road, Manchester.

Mr. Whitney: I wrote to the hon. Member on 29 March.

Retirement Age

Mr. Batiste asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what would be the cost of reducing the retirement age for men to 64 years.

Mr. Whitney: The latest available estimates of the cost of reducing pension age are contained in the third report from the Social Services Committee on the "Age of Retirement" (HC 26: 1982). These estimates indicate that the cost of reducing the pension age for men to 64 would be £400 million at 1981-82 benefit levels.

Queen Elizabeth Medical Centre, Birmingham

Miss Boothroyd asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will give the number of patients, in each of the last three years, who have been admitted to Queen Elizabeth medical centre in Birmingham for open heart surgery, and who have subsequently had their operation postponed and have been discharged because of lack of intensive care facilities; and what, in each of the last three years, was *(a)* the shortest, *(b)* the longest and *(c)* the average time, expressed in hours, between their discharge and the originaly scheduled time of their operation;

(2) if he will give the number of *(a)* National Health Service and *(b)* private beds that have been available in the intensive care unit at the Queen Elizabeth medical centre in Birmingham for open heart surgery patients for each of the last five years; whether he is satisfied with intensive care facilities at the centre; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: We do not collect this sort of detailed local information centrally. The provision of intensive care facilities is a matter for the health authority concerned. I understand, however, that work on a development at the Queen Elizabeth hospital which will include 20 intensive therapy beds is planned to start in 1986.

In Vitro Fertilisations

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many in vitro fertilisations have been carried out in each of the past three years; and how many, in each year, were carried out by the National Health Service.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We do not hold this information centrally. The following National Health Service hospitals have confirmed that they have in vitro fertilisation programmes:

The Hammersmith Hospital, London
Chelsea Hospital for Women, London
Royal Free Hospital, London
St. Bartholomew's Hospital, London
King's College Hospital, London
St. Mary's Central, Manchester
Southmead Hospital, Bristol
Bristol Royal Infirmary
Birmingham Maternity Hospital
Jessop Hospital for Women, Sheffield

Miners (Unemployment Benefit)

Mr. Evans asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many people who voluntary resigned from the employment of the National Coal Board during the course of the 1984-85 miners' strike were subsequently refused unemployment benefit; and if he will list the numbers involved by region;

(2) how many people who voluntarily resigned from the employment of the National Coal Board during the course of the 1984-85 miners' strike are still being refused unemployment benefit; and if he will list the numbers involved by region.

Mr. Newton: This information is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Evans asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will explain the basis on which claimants who resigned from the employment of the National Coal Board during the course of the 1984-85 miners' strike are still being refused unemployment benefit.

Mr. Newton: A person who loses his employment as a result of a stoppage of work due to a trade dispute at his place of employment is disqualified for receiving

unemployment benefit unless he can show that he is not participating in or directly interested in the dispute. Such disqualification continues for as long as the stoppage of work continues, unless he finds genuine work elsewhere in his normal occupation or becomes regularly engaged in some other occupation.

A miner subject to disqualification before he resigned, therefore, remains disqualified for receiving unemployment benefit until the stoppage of work ends. It is for the independent adjudicating authorities to decide whether the stoppage has ended in the light of the caselaw and of the situation at each individual place of employment.

Community Hospital, Peterlee

Mr. Dormand asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the progress being made on the provision of a community hospital in Peterlee.

Mr. John Patten: The decision as to which hospital development, should be included in the regional capital programme is a matter for the Northern regional health authority in the light of its service priorities and the resources available.

Industrial Diseases (Regulations)

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to introduce regulations and an amended death certificate in respect of the Industrial Diseases (Notification) Act.

Mr. John Patten: It is planned to introduce the new certificate of cause of death on 1 June 1985.

Children (Supervision Code)

Mr. Batiste asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has any proposals for legislation or a code of conduct concerning the minimum age at which a child can be left unsupervised.

Mr. John Patten: No. Wilful neglect of a child aged under 16 by a person aged 16 or over with responsibility for the child is already an offence in certain circumstances (section 1 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933). Under the Children and Young Persons Act 1969 there is a duty on local authorities to investigate reports that children are at risk—such as young children being left alone.

Resettlement Units

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what agreements have been reached in the Camberwell replacement scheme to provide alternative, suitable accommodation for the varying needs of the resettlement unit residents, with particular reference to the provision of emergency access hostels.

Mr. Whitney: Up to 27 March 1984 the Department has agreed revenue funding for 20 voluntary organisations to provide 659 bedspaces under the Camberwell replacement scheme. This provision offers varying levels and models of care which can be broadly categorised as 135 bedspaces for residents requiring high care and 524 bedspaces for residents requiring low to medium care.

We consider that both the London boroughs and voluntary organisations have a role to play on the provision of direct access beds and discussions are taking place towards that end. In addition, 80 direct access beds will be provided in the other London resettlement units.

Food (Irradiation)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement about the implications for consumers of the process of irradiating food adopted by some food producers.

Mr. John Patten: In the United Kingdom, regulations prohibit the production, importation and sale of irradiated foods for human consumption, except for patients requiring sterile diets. The advisory committee on irradiated and novel foods is currently preparing a report for Health and Agriculture Ministers on the safety and wholesomeness of irradiated foods, and we expect to publish it in due course.

Miss Briscoe

Mr. Beith asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to be in a position to reply to correspondence from the hon. Member for Berwick upon Tweed dated 7 November 1984 about Miss Briscoe.

Mr. Newton: I regret the delay and I have now replied to the hon. Member.

Prescription Charges (Exemptions)

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received about his Department's leaflet P11 and the calculations for low income exemption from prescription charges; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Since 1 January this year we have received two letters from hon. and right hon. Members concerning the leaflet P11 and the calculation required for low income exemption from prescription charges, and none from the public. We believe the present arrangements are satisfactory.

Departmental Office, Glasgow

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects that his Department's new Maryhill office at Gairbraid avenue will be fully operational; and what arrangements he has on hand for the disposal of the former planned site at Tamshill street.

Mr. Whitney: The new Glasgow (Maryhill) ILO is expected to be ready for operations by the end of 1985. The site at Tamshill street is being disposed of by the Property Services Agency.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will consider extending the current automatic exemption from dental and optical charges for those aged under 19 years but still in full-time education to include automatic exemption from prescription charges.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We have no plans to extend automatic exemption from prescription charges to young people aged 16 to 19 still in full-time education.

Above the age of 16 young people move to the general system of exemption. Young people aged 16 or over are therefore able to apply in their own right for exemption

from prescription charges on low income grounds whether or not they are in full-time education and irrespective of their parents' circumstances. Many young people qualify for free prescriptions in this way.

Neonatal Units

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what instructions he has given to health authorities on sub-regional provision of neonatal intensive care, in the light of the third report of the maternity services advisory committee;

(2) whether he has instructed health authorities to regard as minimum standards the ratios for midwifery and nursing staffing of neonatal units recommended in paragraph 8.7 of the third report of the maternity services advisory committee.

Mr. John Patten: We have welcomed the maternity services advisory committee's third report and have asked health authorities to decide, in the light of its advice, what action can and should be taken at regional and district levels to improve the provision of maternity and neonatal services, including provision for neonatal intensive care. We expect authorities to take the committee's advice into account when planning, monitoring and reviewing services and staffing levels.

Mrs. Doris Woodhead

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will now review the case of Mrs. Doris Woodhead in the light of Commissioner Goodman's decision of 16 October 1984 (Case No. 49(7)), so that she receives increments on her pension and thereafter at the levels of interest in force at the time; and if he will make a statement;

(2) when Mrs. Doris Woodhead of 25 Saunders way, West Charlton, Kingsbridge, Devon, will receive payment of the award made by Commissioner Goodman on 16 October 1984 at the Croydon and district local tribunal (Case No. 49(7)); what is the reason for the delay; if interest will be paid on the sum outstanding; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: A payment for the appropriate amount will be sent to Mrs. Woodhead on Monday 1 April and I will be writing to my hon. Friend shortly.

Bradford District Health Authority

Mr. Lawler asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the change in real terms for the Bradford district health authority between 1978 and 1983 in the *(a)* number of inpatient cases treated by hospitals, *(b)* number of day cases treated by hospitals, *(c)* number of outpatient attendances dealt with by hospitals, *(d)* spending on health services and *(e)* number of doctors and nurses.

Mr. John Patten: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Dental Charges

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much was collected in 1984-85 in National Health Service dental charges for crowns, for dentures and for other treatment, listed separately, for England; and how much is expected to be collected under the same headings in 1985-86.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply when the 1985-86 figures become available.

Committee on Gynaecological Cytology

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether, in formulating its recommendations in 1981 and subsequently, the committee on gynaecological cytology was advised or instructed that it should not require more resources to be deployed.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The committee on gynaecological cytology is composed of independent experts who have always been free to make whatever recommendations they believe appropriate.

Children at Risk

Mr. Dickens asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether, in the light of the evidence presented in the case of the death of Jasmine Beckford, he is satisfied with the training and standards of those employed by local authorities to undertake the supervision of cases involving children at risk; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: This case demonstrates the difficulties social work staff face and emphasises the need for good training and the development of skills in supervision. The Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work (CCETSW) keeps the scope and content of social work training programmes under review. In addition there are opportunities for qualified staff to attend post qualifying courses approved by CCETSW on child care to promote the development of child care knowledge and skill. There are also training opportunities provided locally and by organisations such as the National Children's Bureau and the British Association for the Study and Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect.

Single Payments (Furniture)

Mr. Chope asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will now make available to the House the report of the Social Security Policy Inspectorate on the single payments for furniture.

Mr. Newton: We have today arranged for copies of the report to be available for hon. Members in the Vote Office and also for copies to be placed in the Library.

Because the rules on single payments for furniture, in particular those relating to the availability and suitability of alternative furnished accommodation, had proved difficult to operate, the Social Security Policy Inspectorate was asked to study the criteria for making such payments to unemployed claimants. It was asked in particular to report on the circumstances in which claims were being paid and refused; how the adjudication authorities were interpreting the provisions; what effect the decisions had on claimants and to what extent awards of large single payments were or were not apparently justified.

The inspectors found that the staff had difficulty in operating and explaining the provisions, in particular in establishing the reasons for the move and whether claimants should be expected to remain in their previous accommodation; since the fieldwork was carried out the

chief adjudication officer has, following a decision of a tribunal of social security commissioners, issued revised guidance to local adjudication officers which has helped to resolve the most difficult areas of interpretation.

The report concludes that it is difficult to establish and apply fair and consistent tests to decide who should receive payments for essential furniture on moving into unfurnished accommodation. Of particular note, the inspectors found that large single payments for furniture tend to go to young single people and people previously living with parents or other relatives; 60 per cent. of the payments were made to claimants who, in the inspectors' view, could reasonably have been expected to remain in their existing accommodation; most of them who received a payment would have still taken the tenancy even if payment had been refused; in only two cases did the inspectors consider that the single payment had not been properly spent.

Publication of this report should assist the Social Security Advisory Committee in its consideration of the Supplementary Benefit (Single Payments) Regulations 1984. The Government will consider the rules governing single payments for furniture further in the light of the committee's report but does not intend to make changes before publication of the Government's proposals for the future of the supplementary benefit scheme although some changes may be needed before a full-scale overhaul of the scheme is implemented.

We have sent copies of the report to the Social Security Advisory Committee. In view of the widespread interest in this matter, we have decided to publish the report and copies are available to the public (price £3.20) from the Department's leaflets unit at Canons Park.

Tranquillisers

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list those bodies funded by his Department which are engaged in combating the side effects of tranquillisers, indicating the extent of such funding; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 March 1985, c. *255-6*]: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) on 11 February at columns *77-8*.

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will establish training courses for general practitioners on the problems of the long-term use of tranquillisers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 March 1985, c. *255-6*]: Doctors have many sources of information on the uses of tranquillisers including drug data sheets, the British National Formulary and the Open University course topics in drug therapy, which was funded by this Department. Programmes of continuing education for general medical practitioners are administered and provided by regional postgraduate deans from allocations made by the Department. The content of those courses is for the professional and educational bodies concerned and doctors themselves to determine.

Claimants (Residential Care)

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what action his Department has taken to ensure that benefit paid to claimants resident in old persons' homes is used for the purposes for which it is granted; and if he will make a statement on his Department's actions in ensuring the protection of the financial interests of such claimants.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 29 March 1985]: A person — usually a relative or friend — can be appointed to deal with a person's benefit when that person cannot deal with his or her own affairs. But where a claimant lives in an old persons' home and a relative or friend cannot be appointed, a responsible person at the home is asked to act. Such appointment may be revoked whenever benefit is not administered in a satisfactory manner.

The Residential Care Homes Regulations, 1984, require the person registered to run such a home to keep a record of all money or other valuables deposited for safekeeping by residents showing when the deposit was made and when any sum or other valuable was returned to a resident or used at his request on his behalf, and the purpose for which it is used.

Mentally Ill Patients, Salford

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if, pursuant to the answer of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary, the hon. Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Mr. Patten) on 12 March concerning mentally ill patients in Salford, he will make a statement on the representations made to him by the Salford city council and the Salford health authority; what assessment he made of the problems they drew to his attention and with particular reference to Prestwich hospital, and on the response he made.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke [*pursuant to the reply*, 19 March 1985, c. *452*]: We are not aware of any direct representations from either body. The hon. Member has told me of his concern about Prestwich hospital and health services in Salford generally. I have today written to him.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Standing Order No. 2

31. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Lord Privy Seal what is his policy regarding the use of the provisions of Standing Order No. 2.

Mr. Biffen: I have no proposals to use this Standing Order for the re-introduction of morning sittings.

Departmental Legislation

Mr. Galley asked the Lord Privy Seal how many Acts of Parliament have been promoted and how many statutory instruments made by Departments, for which he answers, or predecessor Departments covering his areas of responsibility, in each of the last 20 years.

Mr. Biffen: Her Majesty's Stationery Office publishes annually "Lists of Statutory Instruments" and "Tables and Indices to Public and General Acts and General Synod Measures". Both of these are currently up to date to the end of 1983.

Given the change to the machinery of government over the last 20 years, apportionment of the Acts or statutory instruments to the areas of present ministerial responsibility could be done only at disproportionate cost.

Refreshment Department

Dr. Marek asked the Lord Privy Seal how much European Economic Community intervention butter was bought by the House of Commons Refreshment Department in each of the last four months; and what percentage this represents of the total amount of butter bought.

Mr. Biffen: European Economic Community intervention butter was not bought by the House of Commons Refreshment Department until 10 January, as the Department's suppliers were unable to obtain it before that date. Figures for purchases of intervention butter since 10 January are as follows:

	lb's	*Per cent. of total bought*
10 January—31 January	660	90
1 February—28 February	1,300	90
1 March—25 March	1,000	87

The remaining butter (overall average 11 per cent.) was purchased as butter pats (foil wrapped); European Economic Community intervention butter is not available in this form.

Commission Staff (Overtime)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, how many people employed by the Commission are eligible for overtime; how many actually worked overtime in the most recent week for which figures are available; and how many additional staff would be required if there was no overtime worked.

Mr. Beith: I will write to the hon. Gentleman.

CIVIL SERVICE

Work Transfer

35. **Mr. Soley** asked the Minister for the Civil Service what discussions he has had with local authorities concerning the transfer of work from the Civil Service to local authorities.

Mr. Hayhoe: None.

Data Processing

Mr. Warren asked the Minister for the Civil Service why Government-sponsored and approved training courses in computer technology are not acceptable qualifications for entry into data processing jobs in the Civil Service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: No formal qualifications are needed for entry to the grade of data processor, which carries out the day-to-day operation of computers in the Civil Service. Promotion from this grade is possible via the clerical officer or senior data processor grades to the grade of Executive Officer, responsible for most of the programming and systems analysis work. An officer so promoted may, subject to passing a programming aptitude test and to the availability of vacancies, be assigned to these duties.

To enter directly the grade of executive officer, however, a candidate must meet the minimum academic requirement of five GCE passes, including two at advanced level, or offer an equivalent or higher qualification. Successive reviews of automatic data processing in the Civil Service have concluded that computer programming and systems analysis should continue to be undertaken by executive grades in the administration group, and that such staff should be capable of performing a range of executive duties much broader than specialised computer work. Furthermore, the executive officer grade is the main source from which the more senior and intellectually demanding management posts of the future will be filled. It is important, therefore, that the direct entry standards applied to those who wish to work with computers should be the same as those applied to executive officers generally.

ENERGY

Cross-Channel Electricity Link

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will place in the Library the protocol agreement signed by the Central Electricity Generating Board and Electricité de France in 1981 regarding the cross-Channel electricity link.

Mr. Goodlad: No. The protocol is a commercial agreement between the electricity utilities of this country and France.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Fuel (VAT)

37. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the implications for energy policy of the reasoned opinion of the EEC Commission on the levying of value added tax on fuel including gas and electricity.

Mr. Hayhoe: At present the reasoned opinion has no implications for energy policy. The Commission has alleged that, when supplied to businesses, the United Kingdom's zero rating of fuel and power is contrary to the provisions of the sixth VAT directive. As I told my hon. Friend on 22 November 1984 at column *270*, the Government has rejected the Commission's view, and the Commission must now decide in the light of our response whether to put the matter to the European Court.

Tips (Taxation)

Mr. Merchant asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the Inland Revenue practice in relation to the tax treatment of tips and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: In law, tips are part of an employee's taxable income in the same way as his other earnings. In some businesses tips can form a substantial part of an employee's take-home pay. Unfortunately not all employees return details of the tips they receive. In these circumstances inspectors of taxes may have to make an estimate of the tips earned on the basis of the facts available to ensure that the correct amount of tax is paid. Any employee who disagrees with the estimate may, however, appeal in the usual way. If agreement on the correct figure cannot be reached, the matter may be considered at an informal meeting before the independent general commissioners.

Before making an estimate for tips, inspectors of taxes are, however, instructed to establish first who is and who is not in a position to receive them. Wherever possible, they are asked to negotiate agreed figures with the employees concerned, or with their representatives. In the case of postmen's tips, some tax offices did not follow all the instructions of the Inland Revenue's head office. The Inland Revenue apologises for this and has reminded the offices concerned of the need to establish the facts with local post office management and staff.

In the many instances where correct procedures have been followed, however, substantial amounts of tips have subsequently been returned. A recent exercise over a period of about a year was conducted by tax offices in one of the 14 tax regions in relation to the hotel and catering industry. In a review of employees at 500 or so establishments, amounts averaging from £750 to £1,500 per annum per employee depending on the size of the establishment were agreed upon once the facts had been established, yielding additional revenue for one year alone of some £650,000. The negotiations leading to these agreements involved discussions wth individual employees in many cases; or with their representatives where large numbers were employed at a particular establishment. The lowest average agreed tips per full-time employee at any one of the establishments involved was £750 per annum; and some individuals at the larger, well-known establishments agreed they received tips of up to £7,500 per annum.

Such investigations are carried out by the Inland Revenue as part of its duties to counter evasion wherever it may occur.

Manufacturing (Production and Employment)

Mr. Pike asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the effect of his Budget on production and employment prospects in the manufacturing industries.

Mr. Peter Rees: The forecast published in the FSBR, which takes account of the measures announced in the Budget, envisages growth of 2·5 per cent. in manufacturing output in 1985. Employment in manufacturing will benefit from the Government's supply side policies, including the measures announced in the Budget.

Energy Industries (Financing Limits)

Mr. Rowlands asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate has has now made of the external financing limits of the National Coal Board and the electricity industries of England and Wales for 1985-86 and 1986-87 in arriving at the planning totals announced in the Budget.

Mr. Peter Rees: It is too soon to forecast the external financing requirements of the National Coal Board and the electricity supply industry in 1985-86 and 1986-87, but the figures are under review. Any net increase over existing provision included in Cmnd. 9428 for 1985-86 would be a charge to the reserve of £5 billion which my right hon. Friend the Chancellor announced in his Budget Statement. The 1986-87 figures will be considered during the 1985 Public Expenditure Survey.

Departmental Achievements

Mr. Pawsey asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list his Department's principal achievements since 1979.

Mr. Peter Rees: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor described the Government's economic achievements since 1979 in answer to a similar question in May 1984, at column *437*.

The Government have maintained the policies, set out in the medium term financial strategy, aimed at reducing inflation and creating the conditions for continued growth in output and employment. Inflation in 1984 was around 5 per cent. for the second successive year, the first time this has happened since the late 1960s. Output grew by a further 2·5 per cent. to reach a record level, despite the impact of the coal strike.

The Budget contained proposals to improve the supply performance of the economy and so promote output and employment. These included further real increases in income tax thresholds, a restructuring of the national insurance contributions paid by employers, employees and the self-employed, and a further expansion of the Government's employment and training measures. There was also further progress on tax reform.

We have continued to return public sector enterprises to the private sector, with the successful privatisation of Enterprise Oil and British Telecom, creating over 1 million new shareholders, and furthering the Government's policies for the spread of wealth and ownership.

The United Kingdom is about to enter the fifth year of continuous growth. After some temporary rise up to the middle of the year, inflation is forecast to fall back to 5 per cent. by the year end. Output is forecast to rise by a further 3·5 per cent., in 1985.

Exchange Rate

Mr. Gould asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing, for each month since the United Kingdom joined the European monetary system, what effect the change in the exchange rate for the pound sterling had on the value of the European currency unit against other currencies and in terms of its value with the pound sterling.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The table give exchange rates for the United States dollar and sterling against the ecu as standardly defined, and against the ecu minus its sterling currency component, monthly* from March 1979:

	$/ECU		*£/ECU*	
Date	*Including £*	*Excluding £†*	*Including £*	*Excluding £‡*
1979				
March	1·352	1·169	0·654	0·565
April	1·333	1·151	0·648	0·559
May	1·331	1·148	0·644	0·556
June	1·320	1·128	0·609	0·520
July	1·382	1·180	0·606	0·517
August	1·385	1·186	0·615	0·527
September	1·428	1·234	0·650	0·562
October	1·375	1·191	0·662	0·574
November	1·428	1·322	0·650	0·565
December	1·438	1·241	0·647	0·558
1980				
January	1·434	1·233	0·632	0·544

Date	$/ECU		£/ECU	
	Including £	Excluding £†	Including £	Excluding £‡
February	1·412	1·210	0·620	0·531
March	1·303	1·111	0·601	0·513
April	1·391	1·190	0·523	0·525
May	1·410	1·204	0·605	0·517
June	1·430	1·210	0·605	0·517
July	1·417	1·210	0·606	0·518
August	1·411	1·199	0·590	0·501
September	1·400	1·189	0·586	0·498
October	1·347	1·131	0·552	0·464
November	1·326	1·117	0·562	0·473
December	1·310	1·099	0·548	0·461
1981				
January	1·230	1·019	0·518	0·427
February	1·194	0·999	0·542	0·453
March	1·210	1·011	0·540	0·450
April	1·148	0·959	0·535	0·448
May	1·094	0·911	0·528	0·440
June	1·055	0·883	0·544	0·454
July	1·023	0·859	0·554	0·463
August	1·022	0·859	0·554	0·468
September	1·067	0·908	0·589	0·504
October	1·084	0·921	0·587	0·499
November	1·115	0·941	0·565	0·478
December	1·180	1·011	0·568	0·530
1982				
January	1·059	0·892	0·562	0·474
February	1·017	0·856	0·559	0·471
March	0·995	0·837	0·558	0·470
April	1·022	0·864	0·570	0·483
May	1·018	0·859	0·568	0·480
June	0·960	0·806	0·552	0·464
July	0·961	0·807	0·553	0·464
August	0·943	0·791	0·549	0·460
September	0·931	0·781	0·550	0·461
October	0·918	0·770	0·548	0·460
November	0·934	0·791	0·578	0·491
December	0·968	0·825	0·600	0·511
1983				
January	0·938	0·803	0·612	0·524
February	0·944	0·809	0·620	0·532
March	0·924	0·793	0·625	0·536
April	0·921	0·783	0·590	0·501
May	0·906	0·764	0·563	0·475
June	0·892	0·757	0·583	0·495
July	0·862	0·727	0·567	0·478
August	0·843	0·711	0·565	0·476
September	0·859	0·727	0·575	0·486
October	0·859	0·727	0·575	0·486
November	0·838	0·708	0·573	0·483
December	0·827	0·699	0·571	0·482
1984				
January	0·801	0·677	0·571	0·482
February	0·860	0·728	0·578	0·489
March	0·860	0·732	0·598	0·507
April	0·829	0·705	0·590	0·505
May	0·819	0·696	0·592	0·502
June	0·804	0·684	0·594	0·506
July	0·773	0·657	0·592	0·503
August	0·775	0·660	0·592	0·507
September	0·739	0·629	0·593	0·504
October	0·736	0·629	0·604	0·517
November	0·722	0·617	0·601	0·514
December	0·709	0·607	0·610	0·525
1985				
January	0·704	0·605	0·623	0·537
February	0·667	0·572	0·614	0·529
March	0·711	0·603	0·583	0·489

Notes:

* All figures are end-month, except for March 1985, where the figures refer to 27 March.

† $/ECU (excluding £) = ($/ECU) − ($/£ × amount of £ in ECU basket). Prior to the change in the ECU's definition on 17 September 1984, the currency amount of sterling in the ECU was £0·0885; since then it has been £0·0878.

‡ £/ECU (excluding £) = (£/$) × ($/ECU (excluding £)).

Mr. Gould asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the effect on output and employment of each one percentage change in the real exchange rate between sterling and the deutschmark.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Reliable quantitative estimates are not available. The effect will depend on the reason for the change in the exchange rate, on what is happening to other exchange rates, and on assumptions about other developments in the economy.

Public Sector Borrowing Requirement

Mr. Sims asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the components of the public sector borrowing requirement; and what criteria he uses in determining what should qualify for inclusion within the public sector borrowing requirement.

Mr. Peter Rees: The components are net borrowing by central Government, local authorities and public corporations. The essential criterion is that the borrowing be by a public sector body. For further details, see articles in the August 1980 and February 1984 issues of *Economic Trends*.

Charities (VAT)

Sir Peter Emery asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will take steps to arrange for information on the total amount of value added tax paid by charitable organisations to be collected.

Mr. Hayhoe: As most of the value added tax paid by charities arises on their purchases of taxable goods and services, information about the total amount of tax borne by charities is not available from existing official records and could only be collected at disproportionate cost which I do not consider justified. The collection of such information would also place a heavy and undesirable administrative burden on the charities themselves.

Equal Opportunities Officer

Mr. Janner asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will now appoint a departmental equal opportunities officer with responsibility for co-ordinating the Civil Service policy of non-discrimination within his Department.

Mr. Hayhoe: In the Treasury an officer within the personnel division has been designated as equal opportunity officer with responsibility for advising on the full scope of equal opportunity matters as they concern race and sex discrimination.

Departmental Legislation

Mr. Galley asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many Acts of Parliament have been promoted and how many statutory instruments made by his Department, or predecessor Departments covering his areas of responsibility, in each of the last 20 years.

Mr. Hayhoe: Her Majesty's Stationery Office publishes annually "Lists of Statutory Instruments"' and

"Tables and Indices to Public and General Acts and General Synod Measures". Both of these are currently up to date to the end of 1983.

Given the changes to the machinery of government over the last 20 years, apportionment of the Acts or statutory instruments to the areas of present ministerial responsibility could be done only at disproportionate cost.

Civil Service (Graduates)

Mr. Fisher asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the starting level of pay for a graduate entering the Civil Service as an *(a)* administrative trainee and *(b)* executive officer.

Mr. Hayhoe: Executive officers enter the first three points of the scale shown below according to age:

	£
Age 18	4,728
Age 19	5,234
Age 20 and over	6,017
	6,596
	7,142
	7,701
	8,492

Administration trainees normally enter at the minimum of the scale following, but on the recommendation of the selection board those with relevant experience or qualifications above the minimum required may enter at any higher point on the scale.

Administration trainee:
£6,596
£7,142
£7,701
£8,492

Company Cars

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what was was the revenue raised by the taxation as a benefit of company cars in each of the past 10 years; and if he will estimate the likely yield for 1985-86;

(2) if he will consider raising the threshold to £10,000 for the taxation of company cars; and if he will estimate the ensuing change in annual revenue.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 28 March 1985]: Estimates of the yield accruing each year since 1977-78 (when the scale charges were introduced as the basis of taxation) from taxing the benefit of company cars available for private use are shown as follows. I regret that information for earlier years is not readily available.

	£ million
1977-78	60
1978-79	65
1979-80	70
1980-81	85
1981-82	115
1982-83	*140
1983-84	*†275
1984-85	†‡330
1985-86	†‡385

* Revised
† Includes yield from taxation of car fuel benefit
‡ Provisional

I have noted my hon. Friend's suggestion for an increase to £10,000 in the earnings threshold, below which this benefit is not taxed on employees. Such an increase, applied to car and car fuel benefit would cost about £40 million in a full year at 1985-86 levels.

Revaluation

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer on how many occasions during the last 20 years a revaluation has taken place; and on how many occasions the results of a revaluation have been implemented.

Mr. Peter Rees [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 March 1985, c. *101*.]: All general revaluations (both domestic and non-domestic in the United Kingdom in the last 20 years have been implemented from their respective operative dates, which have been:

In England and Wales—1 April 1973.
In Northern Ireland—1 April 1976.
In Scotland—Whitsunday 1966, Whitsunday 1971, 1 April 1978.

Youth Training

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer on what basis he has concluded that the difference between net costs and gross costs in the introduction of the second year of youth training is £60 million in 1986-87 and £150 million in 1987-88.

Mr. Peter Rees [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 March 1985, c. *101*.]: The Budget Statement explained that the additional expenditure on the youth training scheme will be partly offset by savings in social security payments and by the ending of the young workers scheme. The difference between net and gross costs for 1986-87 implicit in the statement was £80 million.

Tax Exemption

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many people in Scotland will now be exempt from tax as a result of his Budget Statement.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 March 1985, c. *100*]: Of the 800,000 people who would have paid tax in 1985-86 if personal allowances had not been raised in the Budget about 75,000 live in Scotland.

Gross Domestic Product

Mr. Fatchett asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list regional gross domestic product per head, expressed as a percentage of the United Kingdom average for each year since 1978.

Mr. Peter Rees [*pursuant to his reply*, 29 March 1985]: Estimates were published, for each year from 1974 to 1983, in table 1 (page 89) of the appendix to the article "Regional Accounts 1983" in the November 1984 issue of *Economic Trends* (No. 373).

Inland Revenue Staff (Vacancies)

Mr. Wrigglesworth asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many vacancies exist in the Inland Revenue by region and by grade at present and for each month over the past two years.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 28 March 1985]: There are nearly 1,200 Inland Revenue offices throughout the United Kingdom. Vacancies occur in these offices for

a variety of reasons as people retire, resign, are promoted or are transferred. Most of these vacancies are filled on a local or regional basis and so detailed information about individual vacancies is not collated centrally and could not be obtained without incurring disproportionate cost. Staff in post as at 1 March 1985 totalled 69,589 out of an overall complement of 69,724.

Development Land Tax Office, Middlesbrough

Mr. Wrigglesworth asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the grades of the 80 staff in the Middlesbrough development land tax office whose jobs will be lost as a result of the tax being abolished.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 28 March 1985]: The grades of staff at present in the development land tax office at Middlesbrough are as follows:

Senior principal, principal, senior executive officer, higher executive officer, executive officer, clerical officer, clerical assistant, personal secretary, senior superintendent, typist, telephonist.

Valuation Offices (Development Land Tax)

Mr. Wrigglesworth asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer at which valuation offices fewer staff will be needed as a result of the abolition of development land tax; and by how many at each.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 28 March 1985]: The abolition of development land tax will reduce the work load nationally in the valuation office network by the equivalent of 120 units of work. But DLT forms only a small part of the work load of the valuation office. The ultimate effect of the abolition on individual valuation offices will depend on any other increases and reductions within the total work load of the valuation office.

Civil Service (Development Land Tax)

Mr. Wrigglesworth asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give an undertaking that there will be no Civil Service redundancies arising from the abolition of development land tax.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 28 March 1985]: Every effort will be made to avoid compulsory redundancies. The intention is to offer the staff in the DLT office vacancies in other Government offices. Vacancies for the clerical staff will be sought in offices within daily travelling distance. Posts for the more senior staff may only be available in other parts of the country.

DEFENCE

Falkland Islands

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the expected frequency of civil commercial flights excluding those chartered by his Department to the Falklands; and how many have been approved.

Mr. Renton: I have been asked to reply.

I understand that there are no current applications to operate such flights to the Falklands. I would also refer the hon. Member to the replies I gave to the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) on 30 January at column *202*.

Castor Programme

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he anticipates making an announcement about the Castor programme.

Mr. Butler: My predecessor said in his reply to the hon. Member on 22 May 1984 at column *430* that a decision on Castor would be announced during 1985. That remains the position.

Mooring Buoys, Loch Linnhe

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the function of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation mooring buoys in Loch Linnhe, near Ballachulish.

Mr. Stanley: There are no NATO mooring buoys in Loch Linnhe. The five buoys located there, which the Royal Maritime Auxiliary Service maintains, are owned by the Department of Transport.

Territorial Army

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of Territorial Army units in Scotland is assigned to *(a)* a home defence rôle, *(b)* reinforcement of the British Army of the Rhine and *(c)* other North Atlantic Treaty Organisation reinforcement forces; and if he will provide a list of the units in each category.

Mr. Lee: It is not our practice to give details of plans for wartime operational deployments.

Royal Observer Corps Communications Centre, Connel

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether the replacement of cable communications by satellites will lead to the closure of the Royal Observer Corps communications centre at Connel, or of any similar installations in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Lee: No.

Mr. Peter Levene

Mr. Denzil Davies asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he was aware of the dispute between his Department and United Scientific Instruments regarding the purchase of cannon pods for Phantom fighter aircraft when he appointed Mr. Peter Levene as his personal adviser.

Mr. Butler: No.

United Scientific Instruments

Mr. Denzil Davies asked the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of the purchase price in respect of the purchase by his Department of cannon pods for Phantom fighter aircraft has now been paid to United Scientific Instruments.

Mr. Butler: About 95 per cent.

Trident

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many indirect jobs he expects the Trident procurement programme to provide throughout the whole of the programme in the United Kingdom;

(2) how many direct jobs he expects the Trident procurement programme to provide throughout the whole of the programme in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Butler: The British Trident programme is expected to create, on average, approximately 9,000 job opportunities directly and 7,000 indirectly throughout the period of procurement. The number of job opportunities will run at about 17,000 direct and 13,000 indirect during the peak years.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the reply of 26 March, *Official Report*, column *202*, to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood), (1) where he envisages that the extra 17,000 jobs that he expects from the Trident programme during its peak years will be created; and in which constituencies and firms;

(2) where he envisages that the extra 13,000 indirect jobs that he expects from the Trident programme during its peak years will be created; and in which constituencies and firms.

Mr. Butler: Estimates of the British job opportunities which Trident might generate are derived from generalised statistical data. It is not possible to break these estimates down in terms of geographical area, firms or constituencies.

Private Companies (Contracts and Tenders)

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make public the contract terms and tenders by which sales and work done for his Department by private companies are awarded.

Mr. Butler: The principal contract conditions used in Government contracts for the supply of equipment or services, and specified in the invitation to tender, are drawn from "GC Stores/1 — Standard Conditions of Government Contracts for Stores Purchases" (published by HMSO) and are supplemented by additional conditions appropriate to the particular purchase.

Lightning Aircraft Sales

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence what help has been given by his Department to British Aerospace for the sale of Lightning aircraft to Austria; and whether the contract has been awarded to British Aerospace.

Mr. Butler: The Ministry of Defence has given British Aerospace all the assistance normally provided to British companies in their efforts to sell equipment overseas. In addition, considerable help has been given to the Company by the British Embassy in Vienna.

I understand that the contract has not yet been awarded but that the Austrian National Defence Council has recommended the purchase of Draken aircraft from Sweden. I further understand that this decision has yet to be ratified by the Austrian Cabinet.

RAF Basic Trainer

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make public the negotiation, tenders and contracts for the various interested parties leading to the awarding to Shorts, Belfast of the contract for the Jet Provost replacement.

Mr. Butler: No. It is not the practice to release such information, which is commercially confidential.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether the final price offered by British Aerospace for the Jet Provost replacement trainer was less than that offered by Shorts, Belfast.

Mr. Butler: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) at column 1001 following my right hon. Friend's statement on 21 March.

Major Christopher Scott

Mrs Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether Major Christopher Scott is employed by his Department or is receiving payments other than the normal pension.

Mr. Lee: There is only one Major C Scott, who is on the officer's retired list and who is in receipt of the normal retired pay appropriate to his rank and length of service. He is not employed by the Ministry of Defence and is not in receipt of any other emoluments from the Ministry of Defence.

Falkland Islands

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the expected frequency of flights to the Falklands chartered by his Department from British Airways and other airlines.

Mr. Stanley: As I said to the hon. Member in my written answer on 26 March at columns 187-8 we currently expect two or three flights a week to Mount Pleasant airport. The extent to which these flights will be made by RAF or by chartered aircraft has still to be determined. In addition we currently expect some two flights a week to Port Stanley airport by RAF Hercules.

Armed Services (Pay)

Mr. Fisher asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the starting level of pay for a graduate entering each of the armed services.

Mr. Lee: The starting pay for graduates entering the armed forces as officers can range from £6,986 to £20,174 per annum. The actual rate which is paid will depend on the officer's specialisation and whether or not he has any relevant postgraduate experience to offer in addition to his degree qualifications. Most graduates enter in the rank of second lieutenant or equivalent, depending on the Service. These ranks attract the minimum rate of pay. At the other extreme, experienced doctors and dentists can receive the maximum figure on entry as a major or equivalent. It is not practical to list the various permutations between these extremes.

The same criteria apply in general to female graduates but their rates of pay are slightly lower since they receive X-factor of 7½ per cent. compared with 10 per cent. for males.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 2 April 1985

WALES

Community Nursing Services

Mr. Hubbard-Miles asked the Secretary of State for Wales whether he is satisfied with the existing provision of community nursing services in Wales; and whether he has any plans to consider their future role and development.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The community nursing profession (which include midwives, health visitors, community psychiatric, district and school nurses) help to provide a wide range of services in health care outside hospitals in Wales. The dedication and competence of nurses working in the community is of a very high order and I believe that the overall standards of the services they provide are properly well regarded.

In recognition of their contribution to health care it is important that from time to time attention should be given to the future development of existing community nursing services and to their roles and functions. It is some years since community nursing provision was considered in a substantial way and in the interim there have been a number of developments affecting service delivery and practice. I have therefore decided to establish a review of community nursing services in Wales. Its terms of reference will be to:

(a) examine changes in the pattern of demand for community nursing services;
(b) identify the future functions of the community nursing services;
(c) suggest priorities for future developments in order to meet service needs;
(d) offer recommendations on the future professional role and the relationships of community nurses;
(e) outline the implications of such developments, especially with regard to education and training.

The review will be an independent one: the accent will be upon providing those working in and responsible for managing community nursing services with the guidance they need to ensure that skills and manpower are deployed to secure the best forms of care from the resources made available. I shall ask that its work will be completed within a two-year period. It will need to work in the closest co-operation with all those professional and other groups that have an interest in sustaining and developing effective service delivery in community nursing. Mrs. Noreen Edwards, the chairman of Gwynedd health authority, has accepted my invitation to chair the review, which will number about eight to 10 people. I shall announce a full list of members for the review team once arrangements for appointments, including consultation with interested bodies, have been completed.

Pneumoconiosis Research Unit (Closure)

Sir Raymond Gower asked the Secretary of State for Wales what measures he proposes to take to safeguard the health services provided by the Medical Research Council's pneumoconiosis research unit following its closure later in the current year.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Our officials have recently completed negotiations with the South Glamorgan health authority and I am pleased to announce that my right hon. Friend has agreed to provide funds to ensure the continued operation of all impatient and outpatient health services following the unit's closure on the Llandough hospital site.

ENVIRONMENT

Owner-Occupation

Mr. Evennett asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans to introduce further measures aimed at increasing owner-occupation; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: We will continue with our successful policies to enable as many people as possible to own their own homes. Since 1979, the number of owner-occupiers in Great Britain has increased by more than 1½ million. Local authorities, new towns and housing associations have sold 800,000 dwellings, including nearly 750,000 to sitting tenants. The right-to-buy provisions of the 1980 Housing Act were extended by the 1984 Housing and Building Control Act and we are keeping the working of the Acts under review. On taxation, the increases we have made in the amount eligible for mortgage interest tax relief and the stamp duty limits mean that the majority of first-time buyers continue to obtain tax relief on the full amount of the mortgage and now pay no stamp duty on the purchase of their first home. We have published for consultation proposals to strengthen building societies' powers. We are considering the proposals of the Farrand committee on conveyancing and other ways of making home purchase easier and cheaper; the Administration of Justice Bill will end the solicitors' conveyancing monopoly by providing for licensed conveyancers to provide these services, so increasing competition without loss of protection for consumers.

Housing (Bradford)

Mr. Lawler asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the percentage increase in house improvements in Bradford for 1984 or the latest year for which figures are available.

Sir George Young: The total of grant-aided renovations of housing associations' and private owners' dwellings in the first nine months, was 22 per cent. lower in 1984 than in 1983. The authority has not yet made any return of renovations of its own housing during 1984.

Planning Approvals

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he is considering implementing a statutory timetable for dealing with planning approvals and in particular those appeals dealt with by written representations.

Mr. Macfarlane: I have no proposals at present for introducing a statutory timetable for dealing with planning appeals, but I am concerned to improve processing times by administrative action.

Enforcement Notice Appeals

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has reviewed the effect on appeals of his power to impose a timetable in respect of enforcement notice appeals.

Mr. Macfarlane: My right hon. Friend is satisfied, from the experience gained since January 1982 of exercising his discretionary powers in section 88(6) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971, that both parties to enforcement notice appeals now co-operate more readily in the appeals process because they recognise that failure to do so may result in dismissal of an appeal or quashing of an enforcement notice. My right hon. Friend's discretionary powers have only been used on 26 occasions in processing more than 12,000 enforcement appeals since January 1982, which appears to confirm the value of these powers as an effective sanction in the special circumstances of enforcement appeals.

Housing Improvement

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment on what date he intends to publish the 1983 distribution of grant inquiry.

Sir George Young: We hope to publish a summary of the conclusions of the 1983 distribution of grant inquiry as part of the forthcoming consultation document on private sector housing improvement policy. The full DGI results will be published in due course.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will indicate, for each of the years 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983 and 1984, the percentage distribution of renovation grants awarded in England by socio-economic group as used for census purposes.

Sir George Young: The only available information about the socio-economic group of recipients was collected as part of the distribution of grant inquiry. The results of this sample survey will be published in due course.

Dr. Twinn asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the report, prepared for his Department by the School for Advanced Urban Studies, on agency services for housing improvement and repair.

Mr. Gow: The report "Review of Home Improvement Agencies" is being published today by the Department of the Environment. Copies are being placed in the Library. The report is the result of a research project carried out for the Department by Bristol university's school for advanced urban studies. We are considering the report's conclusions as part of the review of housing improvement policy which is at present under way.

Unsatisfactory Housing

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of each socio-economic group was living in unsatisfactory housing in each of the years 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, and 1984.

Sir George Young: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Youth Training (Lambeth)

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will disregard for rate penalty purposes expenditure undertaken by Lambeth borough council providing support and materials for mode B youth training schemes in Lambeth.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to him on 15 March, at column 306.

Departmental Legislation

Mr. Galley asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many Acts of Parliament have been promoted and how many statutory instruments made by his Department, or predecessor Departments covering his areas of responsibility, in each of the last 20 years.

Mr. Patrick Jenkin: Her Majesty Stationery Office publishes annually "Lists of Statutory Instruments" and "Tables and Indices to Public and General Acts and General Synod Measures". Both of these are currently up to date to the end of 1983.

Given the changes to the machinery of Government over the last 20 years, apportionment of the Acts of Statutory Instruments to the areas of present ministerial responsibility, if practicable, could be done only at disproportionate cost.

Football Hooliganism

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent representations he has received concerning football hooliganism and how it should be controlled; and if he will list them.

Mr. Macfarlane: Since the publication last August of my Department's consultation document — "Football Spectator Violence: Report of an Official Working Group" —I have met 17 representative organisations to discuss measures for dealing with the problem; of these the following organisations have also submitted written comments:

The Football Association
The Football League
The Football Trust
The Football Grounds Improvement Trust
The Magistrates' Association
The Association of Chief Police Officers
The Superintendents' Association
The Police Federation
The Association of County Councils
The Association of Metropolitan Authorities
The Association of District Councils
The Scottish Football Association
The Scottish Football League
The Professional Footballers' Association
The Football League Executive Staffs' Association

I have also received a large number of letters from other organisations and individuals, many of these having written following the recent serious incidents of violence.

Derelict Land Grant

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how much has been spent by his Department on derelict land grant in each of the last five years; and if he will break this down by region.

Mr. Macfarlane: Details of expenditure on derelict land reclamation in the five years 1979-80 to 1983-84 the last year for which information is available, are as follows:

Local Authority Sector

£ million

Region	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*		*1983-84*
				Main Programme	*Supporting Programme*	
Northern	6·54	7·14	5·26	5·31	4·99	8·75
North West	6·20	8·24	11·87	13·04	12·51	21·61
Merseyside						9·22
Yorkshire and Humberside	2·70	3·29	3·06	2·50	0·77	2·62
West Midlands	3·51	3·60	3·61	6·17	3·50	12·01
East Midlands	1·58	3·44	2·28	5·33	1·87	7·10
South West	0·40	0·68	0·33	0·34	1·11	0·93
London	0·73	3·52	3·14	1·96	0·93	3·96
South East	0·71	0·11	0·13	0·08	0·43	0·10
Eastern						0·14
Total Local Authority Sector	22·37	30·02	29·68	34·73	25·61	66·44
				60·34		
Non-Local Authority Sector	—	—	0·02	0·76	—	1·75
				0·76		
TOTAL	22·37	30·02	29·70	61·10		68·19

Note: Figures show outturn expenditure

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many acres of land have been restored to constructive use in each of the last five years through derelict land grant; if he will specify the use in each case; and if he can estimate *(a)* the annual rate increase created thereby and *(b)* the number of jobs resulting from the restoration.

Mr. Macfarlane: In these years approval was given for the reclamation and recycling of over 20,000 acres of derelict land, for a wide number of uses, as follows:

Acres

End use	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*
Public open space	2,430	2,364	2,006	1,885	1,699
Agriculture	902	496	1,067	548	447
Residential	52	35	32	227	267
Industry and commerce	136	329	185	879	2,203
Mixed or other development	165	101	158	919	684
Totals	3,685	3,325	3,448	4,458	5,300

Information about the annual rate increases and employment created by this programme is not available, but the Government have increasingly given priority to those projects that will lead to the regeneration of derelict land for development by the private sector, particularly in urban areas.

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how much private investment has been generated in each of the last five years as a result of the use of derelict land grant.

Mr. Macfarlane: Information is available only for category A schemes. Since its introduction in 1982-83, projects totalling some £68 million have been approved, with associated early private investment of over £480 million, a ratio of 1:7. Details are as follows:

£ million

	Approved costs	*Private sector investment*
1982-83	9	32
1983-84	26	200
1984-85	18	138
1985-86	15	110
Total	68	480

In addition, category B and non-local authority projects are increasingly leading to private sector development on the reclaimed land.

Property Services Agency

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many Property Services Agency staff are employed at United States military facilities in the United Kingdom.

Sir George Young: At 1 March 1985, 638 PSA non-industrial staff and 898 PSA industrial staff were

employed on work for the United States forces. Of those, 401 non-industrial staff and all the industrial staff worked at United States military facilities.

Scotland *v.* England Football Match

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if the Minister with responsibility for sport will publish his correspondence with the English Football Association over the transfer of the forthcoming Scotland *v.* England football match from London to Glasgow.

Mr. Macfarlane: I first wrote to the Football Association on 10 January expressing the concern of the Government and the transport authorities about the timing of the England *v.* Scotland football match on bank holiday Saturday 25 May. I asked whether it would be feasible to change the date of the match.

I wrote again on 22 March. My letter also dealt with other matters. The relevant paragraph read:

"I must also make a further formal request to you to change the date of the England *v.* Scotland match currently scheduled for Bank Holiday Saturday 25 May. The Government is extremely concerned that the current timing of this fixture increases the risk of disorder and this is something which the Prime Minister is also likely to raise with you."

Departmental Hospitality

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the total cost of ministerial hospitality in his Department in the years 1983-84 and 1984-85 to date.

Sir George Young [*pursuant to his reply*, 28 March 1985, c. *332*]: The total cost of Environment Ministers hospitality during 1983-84 was £5,756 and in 1984-85 £11,758. Expenditure for 1983-84 was abnormally low because of a long interruption of ministerial programmes of engagements caused by the general election, and expenditure for 1984-85 was increased by expenditure incurred in hosting the meeting of the Environment Ministers of the summit countries.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment which grades of civil servants in his Department are allowed to have official supplies of alcohol in their offices; how much has been spent by his Department in each year since 1979-1980 on such items.

Mr. Macfarlane [*pursuant to his reply*, 28 March 1985, c. *332*]: The figures given for expenditure on drinks cabinets of DOE officials were inaccurate in two respects. These should have read £160 for 1982-83 and £297 for 1983-84.

Ancient Monuments

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the Central Electricity Generating Board has been involved in, or conducted any research into the effects of SO_2 and NO_x emissions on ancient monuments other than that mentioned in his reply to the hon. Member, 19 March, *Official Report*, column *422*.

Mr. Goodlad: I have been asked to reply.

I am advised that, prior to the formation of CEGB, questions on the effect on St. Paul's cathedral of chimney emissions of SO_2 and NO_x were raised when Bankside power station in Southwark was proposed in the mid-1940s. Partly as a result of this concern, Bankside was equipped with a flue gas desulphurisation system. In the early 1970s the cathedral authorities were still concerned about possible effects from Bankside power station and CEGB co-operated in a study which showed that the station was not the major source of pollution at the cathedral. A similar study took place in Peterborough in 1960 where the CEGB, in co-operation with the cathedral authorities, made a study which showed that sources other than the power station—including the cathedral's own heating system—were the mot significant contributors to the pollution.

As part of a long continuing study of the effects of air pollution on current materials of structural importance (including metals, concrete and paint systems) the CEGB included specimens of stone of the type widely used in ancient monuments in a two-year exposure programme that is now nearing completion. This aspect of the study was carried out in consultation with the Building Research Establishment and the Department of Environment. Further studies on stone are under consideration.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Famine Relief

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a further progress report upon famine relief in Ethiopia and the Sudan with special reference to the British and European Economic Community contributions, respectively.

Mr. Raison: In Ethiopia and the Sudan millions of people are still at risk. Food and other relief supplies are getting through but distribution and other problems remain. The lates FAO calculations are that in each case pledges of food aid to Ethiopia and the Sudan for 1985 total more than 1 million tonnes, but about 300,000 tonnes for each is still needed. The European Community and its member states are committed to deliver at least 170,000 tonnes of grain to each country during 1985, In addition, the Community is providing cash grants amounting to about £25 million for Ethiopia and £11·6 million for Sudan, mainly for food purchases. This year Britain is providing 10,000 tonnes of wheat to Ethiopia and 50,000 tonnes to Sudan as part of our national contribution to the Community total.

PRIME MINISTER

Cable Systems (Report)

Q60. **Mr. Gale** asked the Prime Minister if she has now had the opportunity to study the report on the reassessment of cable systems, prepared by the Information Technology Advisory Panel; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I received the Information Technology Advisory Panel's report "Cable Systems: A Re-assessment" last month.

I am considering the report with colleagues and will report as soon as possible.

National Health Service (Accounts)

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Prime Minister what action she intends to take to ensure that losses, theft and fraud in the National Health Service are duly recorded and properly accounted for in the National Health Service accounts for 1984-85.

The Prime Minister: I am aware of my hon. Friend's interest in this matter, and I entirely agree that there should be a full and proper account for the use of public money and property. I understand that changes have been introduced, with effect from 1 April 1984 in the form of the NHS accounts with the intention of ensuring that all identified losses, including discrepancies and unexplained issues of equipment and property, are recorded in the accounts.

Pay (Teachers and Policemen)

Mr. Allan Roberts asked the Prime Minister if she will publish in the *Official Report* the average pay of *(a)* a teacher, and *(b)* a policeman, at the age of 25 years in January 1980 and in January 1985.

The Prime Minister: It is estimated that the average earnings (including allowances) of full-time teachers aged 25 in maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools in England and Wales were about £4,500 in January 1980 and £7,250 in January 1985. Information on average earnings by age is not available for police officers, but a constable with five years' service would have been on a basic salary of £5,334 in January 1980 and £9,234 in January 1985.

Mr. Allan Roberts asked the Prime Minister what, in real terms have been the average pay increases of *(a)* policemen and *(b)* teachers, since May 1979.

The Prime Minister: The cumulative increase arising from annual pay settlements between May 1979 and April 1984 amounted to 69·9 per cent. for school teachers and 86·4 per cent. for police officers. Over the period April 1979 to April 1984 average gross earnings, as measured by the New Earnings Survey, have risen by 84 per cent. for teachers and for 105 per cent. for policemen. Between May 1979 and April 1984 the retail prices index rose by 62 per cent. and the tax and price index by 60·2 per cent. since April 1984 police officers have had a settlement of 5·1 per cent. from September 1984. Teachers have been offered an increase of 4 per cent. from 1 April 1985.

Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Council

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Prime Minister if she will list the Departments which have been represented at meetings of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Council or its committees since November 1981; and if she will list the dates and locations of such meetings and the sections of the relevant Departments from which those officials came.

The Prime Minister: Cmnd. 9094 and my reply to the hon. Member's question on 1 April, at columns 413-4, give information on ministerial meetings held within the framework of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Council. The Departments most involved in the many meetings that have taken place at official level under the auspices of the Council have been the Cabinet Office, the Northern Ireland Office, and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Nuclear Testing

Mr. Hoyle asked the Prime Minister if, in the light of the evidence arising from the Australian Royal Commission into nuclear tests, she will seek to institute a Royal Commission fully to investigate all aspects, other than weapon design, of the events relating to and including the series of tests carried out between 3 October 1952 and 23 September 1958.

The Prime Minister: I have nothing to add to the statements made by my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement in reply to a question from the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang) on 22 November 1984, at column 225, and in the debate on 19 December 1984, at column 397.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Prime Minister if she will explain the nature of the triggering device to which she referred in her answer of 19 March, *Official Report*, columns 779-80, and of any contamination it was expected to produce.

The Prime Minister: I would like to stress once again that these matters were considered and the Wick site rejected over 30 years ago.

The device to which I referred in my answer of 19 March, at columns 779-80, is known as an initiator.

Its purpose was to produce neutrons to initiate the chain reaction which generates a nuclear explosion. Since only the initiator was being tested and it contained no fissile material there could never have been a nuclear explosion. The only source of contamination from the initiator was beryllium and radioactive polonium. The experiment was designed so as to avoid any environmental hazard, but was not proceeded with in the UK because the site was judged to be unsuitable and because conditions in Australia offered a greater certainty of achieving this.

Scotland-England Football Match

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on her discussions with the English Football Association over the transfer of the forthcoming Scotland-England football match from London to Glasgow.

The Prime Minister: There have been no such discussions. My hon. Friend the Minister with responsibility for Sport, wrote to the Football Association asking it to reconsider the timing of the match.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Prime Minister what arrangements will be made for compensating football supporters for the hotel and travel deposits and costs already incurred prior to the transfer at the request of Her Majesty's Government of the forthcoming Scotland-England football match from London to Glasgow.

The Prime Minister: None.

Engagements

Mr. Pike asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 2 April.

Mr. John Mark Taylor asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 2 April.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I hope to attend a dinner given by Her Majesty the Queen.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Badgers

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether, pending the conclusions of Professor Dunnet's review team, the official slaughter of badgers has ceased.

Mrs. Fenner: No. Any reconsideration of my Department's policy for dealing with badgers infected with bovine tuberculosis in areas where they constitute a threat to cattle must await the conclusions of Professor Dunnet's review team.

Dogs

Mr. Maclean asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any proposals to seek powers to prevent the entry of dogs into the United Kingdom on grounds of cruelty in addition to disease.

Mrs. Fenner: No.

Mr. Maclean asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list his powers to control the import of Sharpeis dogs which suffer from inherited defects.

Mrs. Fenner: We have no power to prevent the import of dogs other than for the purpose of controlling the spread of animal disease.

Sheepmeat

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food further to his answer of 15 March, *Official Report*, column 318-19, concerning the prices and consumption of sheepmeat, whether he will give figures for the price paid to farmers on a dressed carcase of other meat weight basis together with corresponding figures for 1970.

Mr. MacGregor: The prices paid to farmers on a dressed carcase basis were given in answer to the question on 15 March. The corresponding figure for 1970 was £373 per tonne in the United Kingdom.

Live Animals (Export)

Mr. Hunter asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is Her Majesty's Government's interpretation of a reasonable time with regard to 4*(d)* of directive 77/489/EEC relating to the export of live animals.

Mrs. Fenner: Part 4*(d)* of the Annex to Directive 77/489/EEC reads as follows:—

"During transport animals shall be offered water and appropriate food at suitable intervals. Animals shall not be left more than 24 hours without being fed and watered. This period may, however, be extended if the journey to the destination where the animals are unloaded can be completed within a reasonable period."

The requirement reflects international veterinary opinion. It is intended to ensure that animals are not caused suffering either by unduly lengthy deprivation of food and water or by the disruption of being unloaded in circumstances where it would be better for their welfare if they were taken straight on to their destination.

Our implementing legislation requires all food animals to be offered appropriate food and water during their statutory pre-export rest period in approved premises near the port of export. After export it is for those authorities in the member states of transit or destination, and ultimately for the courts in the countries, to determine whether the directive's feeding and watering requirements have been met in a given case. They will need to consider the needs of the species concerned, the climatic conditions and the transport conditions of the consignment concerned.

Mr. Hunter asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has studied the complaint submitted to the European Commission by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals about the workings of current regulations controlling the export of live animals; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Fenner: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Hancock) on 21 March 1985 at column *572*.

Uneconomic Farms

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans the Government have to bring forward proposals to facilitate the closing down of uneconomic farms.

Mr. Jopling: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Teachers

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many additional teachers would be required in maintained schools in England and Wales to ensure that no classes have more than 30 pupils.

Mr. Dunn: In January 1984 average class sizes in England were 25·0 pupils for primary schools and 20·9 pupils for secondary schools; at the same time 20 per cent. of primary classes and 8 per cent. of secondary classes contained more than 30 pupils. Corresponding figures for Wales are not available. It is not possible to estimate with any confidence how many additional teachers would be required to eliminate classes with more than 30 pupils as this would depend crucially on the extent to which local education authorities and headteachers gave priority to reductions in class sizes over other calls on the time of teachers. Whilst my right hon. Friend recognises that there are still some classes which are too large to permit adequate attention to the needs of individuals, he believes that in general the fall in class sizes has reached a point where more non-contact time for teachers who currently have little, and more flexible teaching arrangements, should have priority over further decreases in the size of regular teaching groups.

School Books and Equipment (Expenditure)

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what has been the trend since 1979 in expenditure in real terms on books and equipment per pupil in maintained schools.

Mr. Dunn: The trend in real terms in the average expenditure per pupil in maintained primary and secondary schools on books and equipment is as follows:

	£	*Index*
1979-80	28·9	*100
1980-81	27·3	94
1981-82	27·8	96
1982-83	29·9	103
1983-84	31·0	107

* 100=the base.

The expenditure in real terms has been calculated using the deflator for gross domestic product at market prices.

Departmental Legislation

Mr. Galley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many Acts of Parliament have been promoted and how many statutory instruments made by his Department, or predecessor Departments covering his areas of responsibility, in each of the last 20 years.

Sir Keith Joseph: The information requested is given in the table.

Number of:

Year	*(i) Acts of Parliament*	*(ii) Statutory Instruments*
1965	2	21
1966	—	19
1967	1	13
1968	2	21
1969	—	23
1970	2	25
1971	1	26
1972	2	20
1973	2	26
1974	1	30
1975	1	43
1976	3	23
1977	—	25
1978	1	27
1979	2	22
1980	1	31
1981	1	35
1982	—	30
1983	2	31
1984	1	26

Skilled Graduates

Mr. Alexander asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he is satisfied with the communication links between British universities and industry in order to ensure that the universities provide enough graduates with the skills required by industry.

Sir Keith Joseph: The Government have encouraged and has provided support for the establishment of closer links between industry and all levels of education. However, there remains scope for both sides to make such links a more effective channel for information on industry's manpower requirements.

In recent years the Government has taken a number of initiatives to increase graduate places in shortage areas.

Speech and Language Problems

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many children are attending special classes, units or schools because of speech and language problems; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: The statutory categorisation of pupils according to their major handicaps ceased with the implementation of the Education Act 1981. It is not therefore possible to answer the question in this form.

Teachers (Superannuation Fund)

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government regarding the investment of the capital sum of the teachers' superannuation fund;

(2) what is the annual rate of return and the cash surplus on the teachers' superannuation fund for each of the last three years for which figures are available; and what steps are taken to optimise the investment;

(3) who is responsible for the investment policy of the teachers' superannuation fund; if he will list them; and if he will make a statement;

(4) what use is made of surpluses arising on the teachers' superannuation fund; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: There is no teachers superannuation fund and consequently no capital sum is invested. Under the Superannuation Act 1972 teachers' and employers' superannuation contributions are paid into the Consolidated Fund and benefits are paid out of moneys voted by Parliament. An account is maintained of receipts and payments under the Teachers Superannuation Regulations 1976 (as amended) or under previous provisions. Under the regulations the balance in the account and any excess of receipts over payments in any accounting period are deemed to have been invested in Government securities and interest added accordingly to the account. These notional investments are selected by my right hon. Friend after consultation with the Government Actuary.

I have arranged for copies of the three most recently available teachers superannuation accounts to be placed in the Library.

Pupil-Teacher Ratio

Mr. Madel asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many teachers local education authorities in England employed in January; and what is his estimate of the pupil to teacher ratio.

Sir Keith Joseph: In January 1985 local education authorities in England employed the full-time equivalent of 405,300 teachers for service in nursery, primary and secondary schools. On the basis of estimated pupil numbers I would expect the overall ratio of pupils to teachers to lie between 17·7:1 and 17·8:1; this represents a continuation of the improvements achieved in recent years.

EMPLOYMENT

Young Persons (Holloway)

12. **Mr. Corbyn** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what are the numbers of 16 to 24-year-olds in the Holloway employment area who have been unemployed for more than one year.

Mr. Alan Clark: On 10 January 1985, the number of claimants in the Holloway jobcentre area under 25 years of age who had been unemployed for over one year was 1,241.

Health and Safety Commission (Plan of Work)

13. **Mr. Litherland** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received from the trade unions regarding the proposals contained in the Health and Safety Commission plan of work for 1985-86.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: None.

35. **Mr. Tony Lloyd** asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to meet the chairman of the Health and Safety Commission to discuss the commission's plan of work 1985-86 and onwards.

45. **Mr. Dixon** asked the Secretary of State for Employment when he next expects to meet the chairman of the Health and Safety Commission to discuss its plan of work for the next two years.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: My right hon. Friend has approved the plan of work as a broad statement of the Health and Safety Commission's intentions for 1985-86. We meet the chairman from time to time to discuss many aspects of the commission's current and future work.

38. **Mr. Evans** asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he has received the Health and Safety Commission's plan of work 1985-86 and onwards; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: My right hon. Friend has approved the commission's plan of work as a broad statement of the Commission's intentions for 1985-86. I am aware of the ideas put forward by the commission in the plan for the development of the Health and Safety Executive's work beyond that period. I hope that these will stimulate debate.

Skillcentres

14. **Mr. Allen McKay** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what further representations he has received on the proposed closure of skillcentres.

36. **Mr. Weetch** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what recent representations he has received on the proposed closure of skillcentres.

Mr. Peter Morrison: My right hon. Friend and I have received around 260 letters on the subject since the proposals for the reorganisation of the skillcentre network were announced on 28 November. We have also met eight delegations.

65. **Mr. Maxton** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what consultations he has had with the Manpower Services Commission since January on the future of skillcentres.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Following careful consideration of the Commission's views which were detailed in the chairman's letter of 24 January, my right hon. Friend wrote to the chairman on 21 February asking the Commission to implement the skillcentre training agency's operating plans for 1985-86 and 1986-87. At its meeting on 28 February the Commission noted my right hon. Friend's request that no skillcentre closure should take place until alternative provision had been identified, and the chairman wrote again on 7 March to explain how this request would be met.

Factory Inspectors

15. **Mr. Haynes** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received about the number of factory inspectors in post.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn) earlier today.

58. **Mr. Gordon Brown** asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many factory inspectors are currently in post; and how many were in post in May 1979.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: At 1 March 1985 there were 823 factory inspectors in post. The figure for 1 May was 953.

Miss Boothroyd asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the number of factory inspectors in post in the west midlands area of the Health and Safety Executive and those in training in each of the last five years.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The numbers are as follows:

Numbers of inspectors in post

	General factory inspectors	*Specialist inspectors*	*Total*
March 1981	44(7)	19(0)	63(7)
March 1982	39(3)	20(0)	59(3)
March 1983	38(0)	17(0)	55(0)
March 1984	35(0)	16(0)	51(0)
March 1985	32(2)	16(0)	48(2)

Specialist inspectors of the Midlands Field Consultative Group are based in the west midlands area but also operate in the east midlands, the marches and the north midlands areas.

The numbers in training are given in brackets.

GCHQ

16. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will refer the latest industrial problems at the Hawklaw and Cheltenham Government communications headquarters to the International Labour Organisation.

Mr. Tom King: I know of no such industrial problems at GCHQ or Hawklaw.

Wages Councils

17. **Mr. Ray Powell** asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will now make a statement on the future of wages councils.

24. **Mr. Loyden** asked the Secretary of State for Employment when he expects to make a statement on the future of wages councils.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: My right hon. Friend published a consultative paper on wages councils on 21 March. This invites comments by 31 May. Decisions will be taken when responses to the document have been considered.

Miss Boothroyd asked the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will assess the likely impact of the abolition of wages councils on the levels of unemployment.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: As we make clear in the consultative paper on wages councils published on 21 March, concern about the effect of the councils on jobs is the most important single factor in our consideration of their future. As part of this consideration we are studying all available research on this subject. The major relevant studies are listed in my reply to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) on 21 February 1985, at column *516*.

Budget (Job Creation)

18. **Mr. Stephen Ross** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what effect he expects the Budget to have on the total number of unemployed.

21. **Mr. Prescott** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what effect the Budget measures will have on the levels of unemployment in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tom King: The Budget contains a wide-ranging set of measures to help generate employment and tackle unemployment. These include the expansion of the youth training scheme and the community programme, as well as substantial reform of the structure of national insurance contributions and raising the tax thresholds. These will help create the conditions for substantial numbers of new jobs without risking higher inflation. By 1986-87 our employment and training measures together will be providing help for 1 million people.

Labour Statistics

19. **Mr. O'Brien** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what is the current number of people unemployed.

Mr. Alan Clark: On the 14 February 1985, the number of unemployed claimants in the United Kingdom was 3,324,000.

22. **Mr. Pike** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what is the current number of people under 25 years of age unemployed; and what was the corresponding total for May 1979.

Mr. Alan Clark: On 10 January 1985, the number of unemployed claimants in the United Kingdom under 25 years of age was 1,286,000. The corresponding figure for April 1979 relating to registrants at jobcentres and careers offices was 451,000. A figure for May 1979 is not available.

23. **Mr. Yeo** asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement about the total of unemployment in Suffolk.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Government are committed to maintaining their economic policies which are directed at holding down inflation and public borrowing, while encouraging greater enterprise, flexibility and competitiveness in industry and the labour market. This is the only way to generate lasting jobs in Suffolk and elsewhere. In the meantime we are continuing to help the unemployed through our special employment and training measures. For example, the youth training scheme and the community programme, both of which are to be expanded, are currently helping over 3,700 people in Suffolk.

32. **Mr. Campbell-Savours** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what are the present numbers of people who have been unemployed for more than one year; and what was the comparable figure for May 1979.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following table gives the number of claimants in the United Kingdom who have been unemployed for over one year in January 1985, and the figure for registered unemployed in April 1979 (not available for May). It also gives the figures on both bases for October 1982.

The comparison is affected by the change in the basis of the unemployment count in October 1982, and by the 1983 Budget provisions which mean that some men, mainly aged 60 years and over, no longer need to sign on in order to receive supplementary benefit or national insurance credits. The information is also available in the Library.

Unemployed for over one year—United Kingdom

	Numbers
Registered unemployed	
April 1979	366,711
October 1982	1,169,558
Unemployed claimants	
October 1982	989,306
January 1985	1,316,017

34. **Mr. Fisher** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what are the current numbers of people who have been unemployed for over one year.

Mr. Alan Clark: On 10 January 1985, the latest date for which an analysis of unemployment by duration is available, a total of 1,316,017 claimants had been unemployed for over one year in the United Kingdom.

39. **Mr. Beith** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what was the rate of unemployment at the latest available date in the travel-to-work area of which Amble forms part.

Mr. Alan Clark: On 14 February 1985, the rate of unemployment in the Alnwick and Amble travel-to-work area was 18 per cent.

43. **Mr. Hardy** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what is the current number of unemployed persons.

44. **Mr. Skinner** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what are the latest figures for unemployment; and if he will make a statement.

57. **Mr. Flannery** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what is the latest number of unemployed people in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Alan Clark: On 14 February 1985, the number of unemployed claimants in the United Kingdom was 3,323,676.

61. **Mr. Soley** asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many people are currently unemployed over the age of 40, 45 and 50 years, respectively.

Mr. Alan Clark: On 10 January 1985, the latest date for which an analysis of unemployment by age is available, there were 1,011,536 unemployed claimants aged over 40 years in the United Kingdom. Of these 795,298 were aged over 45 years and 588,378 aged over 50.

67. **Mr. Lofthouse** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what is the number of people unemployed; and what were the corresponding figures for March 1984 and May 1979.

Mr. Alan Clark: On 14 February 1985, the number of unemployed claimants in the United Kingdom was 3,323,676. The corresponding number in March 1984 was 3,142,775 and in May 1979 was estimated to have been 1,218,900. The comparison is affected by the Budget provisions which mean that some men, mainly aged 60 and over, no longer need sign on in order to receive supplementary benefit or national insurance credits. The estimated effect of these measures, which accumulated between April and August 1983, is 161,800.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Employment what are the employment rates for each region of the United Kingdom from 1980 to date; and if he will express such figures as a percentage of the national average.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The following tables give the available information.

Table 1 gives, regionally and for the dates specified, the civilian employed labour force (employees in employment plus the self-employed) expressed as a percentage of the civilian working population (civilian employed labour force plus the unemployed). Her Majesty's Forces, which are normally included in both the employed labour force and working population figures, are not analysed regionally.

Table 2 gives each of the regional figures in table 1 as a percentage of the United Kingdom figure.

Table 1 Civilian Employed Labour Force as percentage of Civilian Working Population

	June each year				
	1980	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
South East	96·6	93·9	92·6	91·9	91·8
East Anglia	95·8	93·0	91·9	91·3	91·6
South West	95·0	92·6	91·4	90·8	90·8
West Midlands	94·2	88·8	86·9	85·8	86·4
East Midlands	94·9	91·5	90·5	89·7	89·4
Yorkshire and Humberside	93·8	89·9	88·4	87·5	87·5
North West	9·6	88·8	87·0	85·9	86·0
North	90·5	86·9	85·2	83·8	83·5
Wales	92·5	88·4	86·9	86·3	86·5
Scotland	91·8	88·9	87·6	86·6	86·5
Northern Ireland	89·3	85·0	83·5	82·3	81·5
United Kingdom	94·3	90·9	89·5	88·6	88·6

Table 2 Region figures in Table 1 as percentages of United Kingdom rate

	June each year				
	1980	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
South East	102·4	103·3	103·5	103·7	103·6
East Anglia	101·6	102·3	102·7	103·0	103·4
South West	100·7	101·9	102·1	102·5	102·5
West Midlands	99·9	97·7	97·1	96·8	97·5
East Midlands	100·6	100·7	101·1	101·2	100·9
Yorkshire and Humberside	99·5	98·9	98·8	98·8	98·8
North West	98·2	97·7	97·2	97·0	97·1
North	96·0	95·6	95·2	94·6	94·2
Wales	98·1	97·2	97·1	97·4	97·6
Scotland	97·3	97·8	97·9	97·7	97·6
Northern Ireland	94·7	93·5	93·3	92·9	92·0
United Kingdom	100·0	100·0	100·0	100·0	100·0

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list, for each of the six categories of employment with the lowest average wages and the six with the highest, as defined in the *New Earnings Survey*, their average rates of unemployment in each year since 1979 to the latest available date.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I regret that information is not available on unemployment rates for the detailed categories of employment distinguished in the analyses of average earnings in the reports of the "New Earnings Survey".

Youth Training

20. **Mr. Meadowcroft** asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many small and medium sized companies are currently involved in providing work experience places for the youth training scheme; and what is the percentage of recruitment into full-time employment from such placements.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The information is not available in the precise form requested. Some 82,000 establishments with under 25 employees and a further 16,000 establishments with between 25-99 employees participate in the youth training scheme.

Latest results from the regular follow-up survey of leavers show that 68 per cent. of young people who left employer-led schemes last July went into full-time employment, over half with the employer who ran the scheme or provided work-based experience for it.

This compares with a figure of 38 per cent. who left mode B schemes.

27. **Mr. Allan Roberts** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of the 330,000 participants in the youth training scheme he expects to find on-going full-time employment as a result of their participation; and on what evidence he bases his estimate.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The Manpower Services Commission conducts regular monthly surveys of young people who leave the youth training scheme. Questionnaires are sent to a 15 per cent. sample of leavers some three months after they have left the scheme. The most recent results relate to young people who left the scheme in July 1984 and show that over 60 per cent. went into full-time employment and around two thirds went into work or other full-time education or training.

Miss Boothroyd asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many and what percentage of school leavers have been on youth training or youth opportunity schemes for each of the last five years for which records

are available; whether he will break these figures down into the following areas: *(a)* west midlands, *(b)* east midlands, *(c)* Scotland, *(d)* Northern Ireland, *(e)* north, *(f)* north-west, *(g)* Yorkshire and Humberside, *(h)* East Anglia, *(i)* south-east, *(j)* Wales and *(k)* south-west; and of these, how many trainees were (i) offered jobs with sponsors, (ii) found work, (iii) registered for employment and (iv) found places on other schemes on completion of their periods of training.

Mr. Peter Morrison [*pursuant to his reply*, 26 March 1985, c. *37-38*]: Information in the precise form requested is not available. Table 1 shows for Great Britain the number and percentage of 16 to 18-year-olds on the youth opportunities programme-youth training scheme in the January of each year from 1980 to 1984.

Table 2 shows, as far as information is available, the destinations of leavers from the schemes.

TABLE 1

Number of 16 to 18-year-olds on youth opportunities programme-youth training scheme
January 1980 to January 1984

	16-year-olds		*17 to 18-year-olds*	
	Numbers 000s	*Numbers as percentage of all 16-year-olds*	*Numbers 000s*	*Numbers as percentage of all 17 to 18-year-olds*
1980	52	6	28	2
1981	96	10	52	3
1982	129	14	69	4
1983	170	19	91	5
1984	227	25	30	2

Age as at 31 August in preceding year.

TABLE 2

Destination of youth opportunities programme-youth training scheme trainees

	Youth opportunities programme				*Youth training scheme*	
	*1979-80**	*1980-81**	*1981-82**	*1982-83**	*June 1984†*	*July 1984†*
On another scheme	8	8	8	9	4	5
Job with same employer	22	20	21	18	21	30
Job with different employer	30	24	25	27	35	31
Part-time employment	‖	‖	‖	‖	1	1
Unemployed	34	40	39	37	35	28
Full-time college course‡	2	3	2	3	2	3
Other	4	4	5	6	3	2

* Those starting their scheme in that year.
† Those leaving their schemes in that month (surveyed five to six months later).
‡ For years 1979-80 to 1982-83, this includes some trainees who may have returned to school.
‖ No separate analysis of part-time employment carried out.

Sunderland

25. **Mr. Boyes** asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many people have been unemployed for more than 156 weeks in the borough of Sunderland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: On 10 January 1985, the latest date for which an analysis of unemployment by duration is available, a total of 5,914 claimants had been unemployed for over 156 weeks in the area covered by the Sunderland, Washington and Houghton-le-Spring jobcentres which closely corresponds to the borough of Sunderland.

Aerospace and Allied Industries

26. **Mr. William Ross** asked the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will make a statement concerning future employment prospects in the aerospace and allied industries.

Mr. Alan Clark: Orders for both civil and military aircraft are increasing and there is long-term potential worldwide for expansion. Employment prospects in the aerospace industry in this country will depend on the ability of our companies to compete in national and international markets, and on further collaboration with companies in other countries such as that between Short Brothers of Belfast and Embraer of Brazil. This partnership has just been awarded the contract for the RAF trainer aircraft—a project which could result in over 1,100 jobs, more than half of them in Northern Ireland.

Job Release Scheme

28. **Mr. Robert Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the future of the job release scheme.

Mr. Alan Clark: I refer the hon. Gentleman to my reply to the hon. Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Woodall) earlier today.

Craft and Industrial Premises

29. **Mr. Janner** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what steps have been taken to ensure that all craft and industrial premises are registered with the Factory Inspectorate.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: In the factory inspectorate's annual work programme 3 per cent. of inspectors' time is used to find unregistered factories. In the year 1985-86 their target is to inspect 20,000 such premises.

In those areas where inspectors anticipate a large turnover of factory occupiers and the setting up of new premises, they undertake local initiatives in order to seek out and to inspect them.

Many first-time employers are ignorant of the legal requirement under the Factories Act to register their premises and the Health and Safety Executive, together with the CBI small firms unit, is preparing a leaflet to give publicity to this duty.

Whenever possible, information about premises is exchanged between the factory inspectorate and local authorities.

Community Programme

30. **Mr. Kennedy** asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the continuation of the community programme in the Highlands and Islands.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) on 25 March at column *38*.

37. **Mr. Wallace** asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many places the Manpower Services Commission will provide on community programmes during 1985-86.

54. **Mr. Eggar** asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the future structure of the community programme.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I refer the hon. Member and my hon. Friend to my right hon. Friend's reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Hirst) earlier today.

51. **Mr. Latham** asked the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will make a statement on the current progress of the community programme.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I refer to my right hon. Friend's remarks about the community programme at column 1024 during the debate on Budget resolutions and the economic situation on 21 March.

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Employment why staff on the community programme are employed on short-term contracts.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Participation on the community programme helps to improve the employment prospects of people who have been unemployed for some time. A maximum period of twelve months is considered the most effective use of available resources although managers, supervisors and key workers may be kept on for longer if suitable unemployed replacement workers are not available.

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if he can provide, following the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Budget statement, figures for the estimated increases in the number of places available under the community programme in the Manpower Services Commission Highland area board region;

(2) what the estimated net effect of the changes announced in the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Budget statement with regard to the community programme will be on the current projected decreases in the number of places available within the Manpower Services Commission Highland area board region.

Mr. Peter Morrison: We are expanding the community programme by 100,000 places to a new national target of 230,000 places. This enables extra provision in all areas, including those which had previously expected reductions by October 1986. My right hon. Friend has asked the Manpower Services Commission for its views as soon as possible on the allocation of available places.

Visual Display Units

31. **Mrs. Clwyd** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what steps his Department is taking to investigate the hazards to people working on unprotected visual display units.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to her on 25 March at column *98*.

Job Sharing Scheme

33. **Mr. Ashdown** asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many people took advantage of the job sharing scheme in 1984.

Mr. Alan Clark: There were 289 successful applications under the job splitting scheme in 1984, creating 578 part-time jobs.

Businesses (Employee Involvement)

40. **Mr. Baldry** asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the initiative the Government are taking to encourage employee involvement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Government believe that genuine employee involvement can be introduced in each organisation only on a voluntary basis by management in conjunction with the employees and their representatives. In this way the arrangements made can truly reflect their particular needs and circumstances. There is ample evidence of the growh of such voluntary arrangements. The Government take every opportunity to encourage it further.

Health and Safety Commission (Plan of Work)

41. **Mr. Eastham** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received about the Health and Safety Commission's report, "Plan of Work 1985-86 and Onwards."

Mr. Peter Bottomley: None. The report was published on 12 March.

Young Persons (Twickenham)

42. **Mr. Jessel** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of young people in Twickenham are employed.

Mr. Alan Clark: The most recent information available for the Twickenham parliamentary constituency is from the 1981 census of population, as follows:

Age Group	*Persons employed as percentage of all residents in the age group*
16-19 years	46 per cent.
20-24 years	74 per cent.
16-24 years	61 per cent.

Young Persons (Health and Safety)

46. **Mr. Michael Martin** asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to remove young people from the protection of existing health and safety and race relations legislation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Government have no plans to remove young people from the protection of existing health and safety and race relations legislation. However, I have asked the Health and Safety Commission to review the value in present day conditions of the notification to the careers service of young people working in factories. I await their advice.

Businesses (Employee Involvement)

47. **Mr. Penhaligon** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to encourage employers to involve employees in the running of their companies.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Government are firmly committed to the principle of employers informing and consulting employees about matters which affect them. We take every suitable opportunity to encourage the voluntary adoption and development of arrangements appropriate to individual companies' circumstances. The establishment of genuine employee involvement arrangements does not affect management's responsibility for making business and organisational decisions.

Young Persons (St. Helens)

48. **Mr. Bermingham** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what he intends to do about the level of youth unemployment in St. Helens.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Our economic policies are designed to provide the conditions under which industry and commerce in St. Helens and elsewhere can create sustainable jobs for young people and others. We are ensuring through our expansion of the youth training scheme and other measures that young people have constructive and worthwhile opportunities to help equip themselves for employment.

European Commission (Job Creation)

49. **Mr. Foulkes** asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the European Commission's proposals to reduce unemployment within the member states through increased spending on infrastructure.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The most promising aspect of the programme of the commission for employment in member states is the commission's intention to take determined action in 1985 on the creation of a genuine internal market.

Job Creation

50. **Mr. Amess** asked the Secretary of State for Employment in what ways local authorities can contribute to his Department's efforts to alleviate unemployment and to create jobs.

Mr. Alan Clark: Local authorities play a significant role in several of this Department's employment and training measures and their contribution to the success of these schemes is appreciated. More generally, by judicious use of their powers local authorities can help to encourage economic activity appropriate to their areas, and thus help to generate employment opportunities.

Unemployment Level

52. **Mr. Andrew MacKay** asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the current level of unemployment.

Mr. Alan Clark: On 14 February 1985, the number of unemployed claimants in the United Kingdom was 3,324,000 which represents an unemployment rate of 13·7 per cent.

Unemployed Over 50s

53. **Mr. Fatchett** asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will provide the latest available total of those over the age of 50 years who are registered as unemployed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: On 10 January 1985, the latest date for which an analysis of unemployment by age is available, the number of unemployed claimants over the age of 50 years in the United Kingdom was 588,378.

Trades Union Congress

55. **Mr. Madel** asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he plans to meet the general secretary of the Trades Union Congress to discuss the effects of the Budget statement of 19 March on job opportunities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: My right hon. Friend is always ready to meet the general secretary of the Trades Union Congress to discuss matters of common interest.

As far as the effect of the Budget statement on job opportunities is concerned, I refer my hon. Friend to my right hon. Friend's reply to the hon. Members for Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross) and Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) earlier today.

Enterprise Allowance Scheme

56. **Mr. Batiste** asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many people in the Yorkshire and Humberside region are currently on the enterprise allowance scheme.

Mr. Alan Clark: On the 14 March 1985, 3,717 people were receiving the enterprise allowance in the Yorkshire and Humberside region.

Young Persons (Merseyside)

59. **Mr. Wareing** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to combat youth unemployment on Merseyside.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Our economic policies are designed to provide the conditions under which industry and commerce on Merseyside and elsewhere can create sustainable jobs for young people and others. We are ensuring through our expansion of the youth training scheme and other measures that young people have constructive and worthwhile opportunities to help equip themselves for employment.

Youth Training Scheme

60. **Mr. Geraint Howells** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has for extending and developing the youth training scheme.

Mr. Peter Morrison: From April 1986 the youth training scheme is to be extended so that it provides 2 years' training for 16-year-old school leavers and 1 years' training for 17-year-old leavers, and leading to recognised vocational qualifications. This will be a further major step forward in improving young people's employability and job prospects.

Young Persons (Training)

62. **Mr. Leighton** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what is the Government's policy on the training of the young; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: We aim through training to prepare young people for the world of work, to make them more employable, and to help provide a work force capable of meeting industry's needs.

The key element in this policy, the youth training scheme, has given the chance of a year's broad-based foundation to some 700,000 young people since 1983, and some 60 per cent. of trainees have found a job afterwards. Now we shall build on that achievement, offering from April 1986 two years' training to 16-year-old school leavers and one year to 17-year-old leavers. The extended scheme will provide training in specific occupational skills, with a recognised qualification at the end. It should also prove a significant step in the reform and modernisation of skill training in Britain.

Unemployment (Demographic Factors)

63. **Mr. Leigh** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what recent studies his Department has made about the effect of changing demographic factors in the composition of the potential labour force on the level of unemployment.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Department's estimates and projections of the labour force, taking account of changing demographic and other factors, are published from time to time: most recently in *Employment Gazette* in February and August 1984. The size and composition of the labour force are among the many influences on the level of unemployment: my Department has made no recent study of these specific influences.

Young Persons (Rother Valley)

64. **Mr. Barron** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what he intends to do about the level of youth unemployment in the Rother Valley.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Our economic policies are designed to provide the conditions under which industry and commerce in the Rother Valley and elsewhere can create sustainable jobs for young people and others. We are ensuring through our expansion of the youth training scheme and other measures that young people have constructive and worthwhile opportunities for employment.

Industrial Training

66. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what was the total expenditure on industrial training in 1983-84 and 1984-85; and what proportion of this was accounted for by the public sector.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Comprehensive and detailed information about expenditure on training and vocational education especially by employers, is not available. A tentative estimate for 1982-83 (the latest available) indicates that total expenditure was of the order of £6 billion, just over half of which was met by the public sector. I should emphasise however that this figure should be regarded as no more than a guide to orders of magnitude.

Low Pay

68. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what recent representations he has received concerning low pay.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We have received some letters from hon. Members and others, including one from the hon. Member himself.

Departmental Legislation

Mr. Galley asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many Acts of Parliament have been promoted and how many statutory instruments made by his Department, or predecessor Departments covering his areas of responsibility, in each of the last 20 years.

Mr. Alan Clark: The figures requested are as follows:

Dates	*Statutory instruments*	*Acts of Parliament*
1965	83	2
1966	46	1
1967	49	—
1968	131	1
1969	78	2
1970	106	1
1971	85	1
1972	89	3
1973	116	2
1974	164	2
1975	129	2
1976	52	2
1977	68	2
1978	48	2
1979	59	2
1980	72	1
1981	58	1
1982	61	2
1983	43	—
1984	39	1

Closed Shop

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has as to how many companies have now held or are due to hold ballots relating to a closed shop situation as a result of recent legislation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Press reports indicate that so far some 80 closed shop ballots have been held, mostly covering very small groups of employees. This means that the great majority of the 4 million or so employees covered by closed shops are now free to decide for themselves whether they wish to remain union members. I welcome this restoration of freedom of choice. In addition a number of major employers have ended their closed shops or given a commitment that no-one will be dismissed for non-union membership. Of course, the Employment Act 1982

imposes no specific obligation on employers to hold secret ballots on the continuation of closed shop agreements. If no ballot is held, the effect is exactly the same as if a ballot is held and the required majority is not achieved, and dismissal for non-membership of a trade union if automatically unfair.

Earnings

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will produce a table showing the average gross weekly earnings for full-time male employees for each region of the United Kingdom from 1980 to date; and if he will express such figures as a percentage of the national average.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Details of the average gross weekly earnings of full-time adult male employees working a full week in each region of Great Britain and for Great Britain as a whole (in relation to which each region can be expressed as a percentage) are published in Table 110 of the reports of the "New Earnings Survey" for 1980 to 1984 inclusive. Copies are in the Library.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list, for each of the six categories of employment with the lowest average wages and the six with the highest, as defined in the "New Earnings Survey," the rate, expressed in percentage terms, at which those wages increased, year-on-year, for each year since 1979 to date; and what has been their total increase in that period.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Information on the level of average weekly earnings and on annual changes for male and female employees in various categories such as negotiating group, occupation, industry, age, region and so on is published in the reports of the annual "New Earnings Survey". Copies of these reports for the years 1979 to 1984 inclusive are in the Library.

Professional and Executive Register

Mr. Neil Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he now intends to take steps to turn the job-finding activities of the professional and executive register over to the private sector.

Mr. Peter Morrison [*pursuant to his reply*, 1 April 1985]: There are no plans for the moment to change the basis of operation of the service, but its future is being kept under review.

SCOTLAND

Curricular Development (Teachers' Boycott)

Mrs. McCurley asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what arrangements he will make in the light of the teachers' boycott of curricular development in relation to the interests of pupils who are following standard grade courses introduced in August 1984.

Mr. Younger: I have decided, following advice from the Scottish Examination Board and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, that ordinary grade examinations in English, mathematics and arithmetic should be available as an option in 1986 for pupils whom it is not realistic to expect to be assessed on the basis of standard grade. In making this decision, I have also consulted the Headteachers' Association of Scotland and representatives of the independent schools sector in Scotland. Only through making this alternative available as an emergency arrangement for those who need it can fair opportunities for national certification in 1986 in these key subjects be offered to pupils who are being affected by the teachers' boycott of the curricular development work required for standard grade and of the associated assessment procedures.

The standard grade courses and assessments in English, mathematics, science and social and vocational skills will continue. Where there will be a choice, I would expect schools to decide in the interests of their pupils which form of examination to present them for. I would, however, expect all schools where satisfactory progress has been made in developing the new courses to offer standard grade and not to offer the option of ordinary grade. The Government remain fully committed to the development and full implementation of standard grade courses, which will lead to more effective and relevant teaching for pupils of all abilities. Standard grade has been recognised by the universities for their general entrance requirements and is supported by the employers' organisations. Moreover, from 1986 awards given on the Scottish Certificate of Education will show both standard grade and ordinary grade awards on the basis of the same numerical scale one to seven.

I firmly believe that it will be in pupils' best interests to continue with standard grade wherever possible. The new teaching methods involved will leave young people, including those going on to university, with as good a grasp of the subject matter as O-grades and a much greater ability to tackle complex problems and to apply what they have learnt. The Scottish Examination Board, in consultation with the Consultative Committee on the Curriculum and the Government, is pressing ahead with the preparation of higher and post higher courses which will follow on from the appropriate standard grade courses and in doing so is taking full account of the views of the Scottish Universities Council on Entrance on the core elements which the universities require to be covered in the syllabus. Highers in their present form will however be retained for those pupils whose schools find it necessary to revert to O-grade.

I recognise that this decision will not resolve all the difficulties arising from the teachers' boycott. Schools which decide to opt for ordinary grade will have to make a rapid transition; but I believe that there is sufficient common ground between the courses to make this practicable in the time available. I am afraid, however, that no alternative can be provided for pupils studying science or social and vocational skills at standard grade because these subjects have no ordinary grade equivalent. Nor is an alternative available for pupils for whom ordinary grade courses are not suitable. I would expect schools to continue to teach these pupils at standard grade as best they can. I also call upon teachers to return to the central task of curriculum development before further damage is inflicted on their pupils.

Cancer Screening

Mr. James Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he is satisfied with cancer screening facilities in Scotland; and how many computer-based call and recall schemes exist in Scotland, by area health authority.

Mr. John MacKay: The guidance issued to health boards in 1978 on the cervical cytology screening service is still valid and does not call for any changes. However, in view of recent public concern the Scottish Home and Health Department has asked health boards for detailed information on the service in each area, including the extent to which patient records are held on computer and the manner in which patients are recalled for screening.

Forestry Commission

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total acreage of forest estates which have been sold by the Forestry Commission over the last 12 months; and what is the estimated value of these estates.

Mr. John MacKay: Forestry land sales by the Forestry Commission in the 12 months to 21 March 1985—the latest date for which figures are available—amounted to 19,200 hectares at a total sale price of £17 million.

Art Galleries (Maintenance Costs)

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the respective costs of maintenance of the buildings occupied by the National Gallery of Scotland, the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, the Scottish National Portrait Gallery and the Royal Scottish Academy.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Output Statistics

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the increase in output per head in non-manufacturing since the second quarter of 1983; how this compares with manufacturing; and what is the reason for any difference.

Mr. Peter Rees: Between the second quarter of 1983 and the third quarter of 1984 output per head increased by 7½ per cent. in manufacturing industries and remained constant in non-manufacturing industries. Distortions to non-manufacturing productivity in 1984 because of the coal strike make strict comparison of these figures difficult. Recorded productivity outside manufacturing tends to change more slowly, partly because of the way output is measured in some of the activities concerned.

Take-away Food

Mr. McTaggart asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent representations he has received from the Hot Take-away Action Group about the level of value added tax on hot take-away food; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Barney Hayhoe: A number of hon. and right hon. Members have recently forwarded to Treasury Ministers a letter from the Hot Take-Away Action Group which includes the suggestion that the rate of VAT on hot take-away food should be reduced.

Budget (Job Creation)

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether the tax changes announced in the Budget are expected to affect the number of women in part-time employment.

Mr. Peter Rees: The measures announced in the Budget will improve job prospects generally, including part-time employment of women.

Money Supply

Mr. Gould asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing the figures for each constituent part of sterling M3 for each year since 1978.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The *Official Report* is not a statistical abstract. The information requested can be found in table 11·2 of *Financial Statistics*.

Public Sector Pension Funds (Investment Policy)

Mr. Steen asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government regarding investment policy on public sector pension funds and the level of return on capital invested.

Mr. Hayhoe: Of the main public services only the local government superannuation scheme is funded. Government policy is to allow fund managers freedom to make their own decisions subject to certain limitations to safeguard the interests of prudent investment. Not more than 10 per cent. of the fund can be in unlisted securities, not more than 5 per cent. can be invested in any one concern, not more than 10 per cent. can be deposited with any one bank, and not more than 10 per cent. may be lent. The administrators are also required to take account of the need for diversification of investment, to have regard to the suitability of any investment proposals, and must seek expert financial advice at reasonable intervals.

The median rate of return for local government superannuation scheme funds in England and Wales for a time-weighted five-year period from 1979 to 1984 is 18·6 per cent.

In the nationalised industries, pension funds are the responsibility of the industry and pension fund trustees, and the Government have no responsibility for their operation.

Domestic Credit

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* figures showing his estimate of the expansion of domestic credit in each of the years 1982 to 1984.

Mr. Ian Stewart: As I have indicated to the hon. Member, figures on domestic credit expansion can be derived from tables 6·1 and 11·5 of *Financial Statistics*.

Norway (Double Taxation Convention)

Mr. Forman asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether agreement has yet been reached on a new comprehensive double taxation convention with the Government of Norway; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: The Inland Revenue has concluded negotiations with officials of the Norwegian Ministry of Finance and the text of a revised comprehensive convention has been approved by the respective Governments. I hope it will be possible to arrange for the convention to be signed at an early date, to be followed by publication of the text as a schedule to a draft Order in Council. However, under the rules in Norway which apply to the availability of certain Government documents, the text of the draft convention will be made available in Norway before it has been signed by the Governments of the United Kingdom and Norway. In these particular circumstances I have authorised the Inland Revenue also to make available now the text of the draft convention, and I am arranging for copies of the document and the relevant Inland Revenue press release to be placed in the Library of the House.

Public Expenditure

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will publish a table comparable to chart 1.5 of Cmnd. 9428 showing percentage change in programmes between 1978-79 and 1987-88 but separating out the programmes for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland;

(2) by how much the public expenditure planning total has risen or is planned to rise *(a)* as a whole, *(b)* in Scotland and *(c)* in the defence programme from 1978-79 to 1987-88.

Mr. Peter Rees [*pursuant to his replies*, 21 March 1985, c. *604*]: Detailed information on spending by programme in 1978-79 is not readily available on the same basis as the information for 1979-80 to 1987-88 published in Cmnd. 9428. The table gives the information requested for the period 1979-80 to 1987-88, showing the change in cash and percentage terms.

The hon. Member should note that the "territorial" analysis of public expenditure is based on a wider range of expenditure in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The latest figures, which relate to 1983-84, were published recently in the *Official Report* on 22 February, at columns *608-618*.

Change in programmes between 1979-80 and 1987-88 (in cash terms)*

Programme	*£ million* *1979-80*	*1987-88†*	*Percentage change†*
Social security	19,416	44,000	127
Law, order and protective services	2,579	5,600	117
Defence	9,228	18,870	104
Health and personal social services	8,903	18,110	103
Agriculture etc.	1,006	1,880	87
Northern Ireland	2,489	4,590	84
Wales‡	1,769	2,900	64
Scotland‡	4,552	7,250	59
Education and science	8,945	14,240	59
Transport	3,278	4,780	46
Overseas aid and other overseas services	2,030	2,770	36
Other‖	4,246	5,240	23
Industry etc.‡	4,008	3,550	−11
Housing¶	4,994	4,080	−18
Planning total•	76,971	■136,480	77
	76,971	•141,480	84

*Excluding Budget measures (see paragraphs 5.05 to 5.07 of FSBR 1985-86).

†1987-88 figures rounded to the nearest £10 million; percentage changes calculated from unrounded numbers.

‡Regional development grant expenditure throughout Great Britain is included in this table in the Industry programme, as in Chart 1.5 of Cmnd. 9428.

‖Includes Arts and Libraries, other environmental services, other public services and common services.

¶Housing programme gross of receipts.

•Net of housing receipts.

■Sum of programmes, excluding Reserve.

•Including Cmnd. 9428 Reserve of £5 billion.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Buses

Mr. Bidwell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received from the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders about effects of the Transport Bill 1985 upon the production of heavy duty buses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders has written to my Department expressing its view that the Transport Bill threatens the continued existence of a competitive bus manufacturing base in the United Kingdom. I do not share this pessimism.

Industrial Assistance

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will estimate the value of assistance provided from all sources for which he has responsibility to British industry since 1979.

Mr. Butcher: Between 1 April 1979 and 31 March 1985 the total forecast net expenditure of the Department of Trade and Industry and the Export Credits Guarantee Department is approximately £17·6 billion at 1984-85 prices. £16·6 billion of this may be broadly described as direct or indirect assistance to industry, with the remaining £1·0 billion providing for regulatory activities, consumer protection and administrative expenses.

EC (Spanish Accession)

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has made any assessment of the anticipated loss in United Kingdom trade with Latin American countries following Spanish accession to the European Economic Community.

Mr. Channon: It is not possible to quantify the effect which Spanish accession will have on our trade with Latin America, but I see no reason to assume that the effect would be harmful. Indeed, I look forward to the possibility of British and Spanish companies co-operating in the Latin American market.

Latin America

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish a table showing for each year since 1970 *(a)* the percentage of exports from Latin American countries purchased by members of the European Economic Community and *(b)* the percentage of exports from EEC countries purchased by Latin American states; and if he will list the main products involved in each case.

Mr. Channon: The figures are in the table. Latin America's main exports to the European Community are oil, coffee, animal feedstuffs, metal ores, fruit and non-ferrous metals. The Community's main exports to Latin America are industrial machinery, road vehicles and other transport equipment, electrical machinery, organic chemicals and iron and steel.

Latin America/European Community† Trade*
Percentage of:

	Total Latin America Exports going to European Community	*Total European Community Exports going to Latin America*
1970	28	3·2
1971	27	3·2
1972	27	3·0
1973	26	2·7
1974	21	3·2
1975	20	3·2
1976	22	2·6
1977	22	2·6
1978	22	2·5
1979	22	2·4
1980	20	2·5
1981	18	2·7
1982	19	2·2
1983	19	1·8
1984	‡	‡

* Comprises Cuba, Haiti, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, Mexico, Colombia, Venezuela, Ecquador, Peru, Chile, Bolivia, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, and Argentina.
† Present membership throughout.
‡ Not available.
Source: IMF Direction of Trade Statistics OECD Series 'C'.

Manufactured Goods

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what are the reasons for the differences between the figures given in his answer of 25 March, *Official Report*, columns *20* and *21*, about the United Kingdom's share of the Common Market's imports of manufactured goods and those given in the answer of 29 November 1983, *Official Report*, column *447*; and to what extent the figures have been affected by changes in the method of compiling the trade statistics.

Mr. Channon: In the earlier reply the value of imports of manufactures by the countres of the European Community included imports by the United Kingdom. In the later reply, in accordance with a revised method of compiling table E4 in the annual supplement to the "Monthly Review of External Trade Statistics", and as noted there, the value of imports by the United Kingdom has been excluded from the European Community total before calculation of the share taken by the United Kingdom.

Tourism

Mr. Fallon asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps he is taking to further the development of the United Kingdom tourism and leisure industry.

Mr. Norman Lamont: My right hon. Friend the Minister without Portfolio is to chair a group of Government Ministers, including, of course, myself, and officials which will be looking at ways to encourage the faster growth of the tourism and leisure industries in the United Kingdom. The group will concentrate on the statutory or other obstacles which stand in the way of developing employment and enterprise in the industries, and my right hon. Friend will be pleased to hear from people who have views which they think the group should take into account. The group is expected to complete its work by the end of July.

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if, pursuant to the answer of 25 March, he will list the current obstacles to the further success of tourism in Great Britain.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 29 March 1985, c. 382]: A number of suggestions were made during the tourism review about what the Government might do to remove certain obstacles to the development and growth of the tourism industry. These suggestions were referred to in the paper placed in the Vote Office on 22 November 1983 at the time of my tourism review statement and they included such topics as Sunday trading; licensing laws; and the impression given to overseas visitors at our major sea and air ports. All these topics involve policy considerations which go wider than tourism, and all are presently under consideration in a number of Government Departments. It was also suggested that much could be done to improve the level of tourism signposting in this country, and two experiments are now being conducted in Kent and Nottingham to assess the scope for better tourism signposting.

Weighing Machines

Mr. Eldon Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has made a comparison of the accommodation and overhead costs he charges for type approval of weighing machines with the accommodation and comparable overheads of a private industrial company doing business in central London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fletcher [*pursuant to his reply*, 28 March 1985, c. *312*]: No. The National Weights and Measures Laboratory provides a unique and wide-ranging service and to the best of our knowledge its accommodation requirements housing the required testing facilities and its overhead costs do not have a parallel in private industry.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Williams and Glyns Bank *v.* Boland and Brown

Mr. Dubs asked the Attorney-General what are the increased costs per year estimated to have been caused by the decision in Williams and Glyns Bank *v.* Boland and Brown; and on what basis those costs have been estimated.

The Attorney-General: In 1981 the Law Society estimated that the cost of additional inquiries arising out of the decision in Williams and Glyn's Bank *v.* Boland and Brown [1981] AC 487 was £10 in a straightforward case. On the basis of 675,000 new building society advances in the year ending 31 December 1980 the society suggested that the increased costs per year to the house owning public was £6,750,000.

Property Services Agency

Mr. Strang asked the Attorney-General if the Director of Public Prosecution's fraud investigation group has yet begun its investigation of the Property Services Agency.

The Attorney-General: Investigations are directed at areas of conduct or specific transactions alleged to have involved the commission of criminal offences rather than the overall activities of an organisation. The police have in hand a number of such investigations which relate to employees in different sections of the Property Services Agency and in seven cases are being advised by the Director of Public Prosecutions.

TRANSPORT

Road Schemes

Mr. Waller asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list all road construction contracts which his Department intends to award in 1985-86, showing in each case the total value of the contract and the expenditure likely to be incurred in that year.

Mrs. Chalker: The information requested is as follows:

Schemes		*Main Contracts*	
		Estimated Total Works Contract Value (March 1985) £ million	*Forecast Expenditure in 1985-86* £ million
M5	Rashwood-Catshill	23·3	7·9
M5	Warndon-Rashwood	18·2	0·8
M5/M42	Junction Contract 1	2·9	2·5
M27	Swaythling Link	2·9	1·1
M63	Stretford-Eccles St. 1 and 2	22·3	0·3
(M63	Stretford-Eccles Stage 3	2·7	—)
A2	GLC Boundary-M2 Hardshoulders	6·2	1·0
A2	Barham Crossroads GSJ	1·5	0·4
(A10	Buntingford BP	3·6	—)
A27	Havant-Chichester BP	24·1	3·4
(A30	Okehampton BP	16·5	—)
A30	Longrock BP	1·8	0·5
A30	Exeter-Okehampton Stage 3	20·4	3·9
(A34	East Isley-Chilton Improvement	3·8	—)
A36	Heytesbury BP	1·8	0·3
(A36	Warminster BP	6·6	—)
A43	Bulwick BP	2·4	1·0
A45	Trimley GSJ	2·2	1·7
A47	Billesden BP	3·0	0·9
A49	Leominster BP	5·7	0·4
A49/51	Tarporley BP	4·1	1·6
A52	Barthomley Link-M6	8·7	2·3
(A64	Seamer/Crossgates BP	5·3	—)
(A64	Copmanthorpe GSJ	1·6	0·5
A303	Furze Hedge Impt	1·4	0·3
A406	S. Woodford-Barking Con 1	11·9	1·5
A406	S. Woodford-Barking Con 3	19·3	1·9
A406	S. Woodford-Barking Con 4	10·3	0·5
A422	Stratford BP	11·1	1·5
A435	Evesham BP	10·3	1·5
A483	Oswestry BP	16·7	4·6
A616	Stocksbridge-M1 (inc. advance works)	19·3	2·0
A629	Kildwick-Beechcliffe	23·2	0·7
		320·4	45·0

This list shows that out of a total of 33 new main contracts, which we expect to let, 27 will incur expenditure in 1985-86. The composition of the list may change depending on the progress of the remaining statutory procedures affecting these schemes. There are a number of other schemes which could be started in 1985-86 depending on completion of statutory procedures and the availability of funds.

Mr. Waller asked the Secretary of State for Transport how the trunk road construction budget is allocated between new starts and schemes started in previous years for 1985-86 and each of the five preceding years, showing for each year the number of schemes started in that year.

Mrs. Chalker: The information requested is as follows:

£ million cash

Year	*Spending on scheme started in previous years*	*Spending on new starts*	*Number of main contracts started*
1980-81	251	39	16
1981-82	260	84	37
1982-83	366	46	24
1983-84	302	94	31
1984-85 (forecast)	333	90	31
1985-86 (planned)	386	45	27

Pilotage

Mr. Weetch asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has received any proposals from Trinity House or any other quarter to alter the limits of the Ipswich pilotage district.

Mr. David Mitchell: On 26 March, Trinity House, as pilotage authority for the London district, applied to the Secretary of State for an order under section 9 of the Pilotage Act 1983 amending the limits of the London district at the mouth of the River Orwell. I shall consider whether to grant approval to advertise this order in the normal way.

Mr. Weetch asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether it is his intention to approve pilotage orders amending existing district limits in advance of new pilotage legislation.

Mr. David Mitchell: I shall consider such orders in the light of all the circumstances.

Mr. Weetch asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether it is his intention to publish, in advance of any pilotage legislation, terms of compensation payable to those pilots who may be displaced.

Mr. David Mitchell: The consultative document on marine pilotage, published in December 1984, proposes the transfer of pilotage responsibilities to harbour authorities, with a statutory compensation scheme for those pilots for whom there is no place in the new regime. It is our intention that at least the broad terms of this scheme should have been made known by the time the proposed legislation is introduced.

Mr. Weetch asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will introduce legislation to restrict the limits of pilotage districts which are not cost-effective.

Mr. David Mitchell: The legislation envisaged in the consultative document is intended to improve the cost-effectiveness of pilotage services by making them the responsibility of harbour authorities. It will be for harbout authorities to determine the areas within which the interests of safety require the provision of pilotage services, subject to the need to obtain the approval of Parliament if they wish to extend compulsory pilotage outside harbour authority boundaries.

Mr. Weetch asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether his Department keeps statistical records of the relative and comparable cost-effectiveness of different pilotage districts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: The annual returns prepared by pilotage authorities contain basic statistical information. These are laid before Parliament. However, comparison of the relative cost-effectiveness of districts would also require other information, including the length of Acts of Pilotage and the physical circumstances of the district which is not shown in the returns.

Mr. Thornton asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy, when bringing forward legislation relating to marine pilotage, to maintain the present pension entitlements and expectations of British marine pilots; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: I am currently considering the responses which have been made to the consultative document on marine pilotage issued last December, and have noted the concern expressed by many pilots about their pension position.

British Rail (Punctuality)

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Transport if there are any arrangements for independent auditing of British Rail's punctuality data; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: British Rail provides the area transport users' consultative committees on a regular basis with punctuality data as one of a number of performance indicators covering quality of service aspects. These enable regular monitoring of BR's performance by an independent body.

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, pursuant to the answer of 27 March, he will arrange for British Rail's punctuality statistics to be deposited periodically in the Library.

Mr. David Mitchell: Information on British Rail's punctuality performance is contained in the annual reports of the British Railways Board and the Central Transport Consultative Committee, which are laid before the Houses and copies placed in the Library.

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, when he next meets the chairman of British Rail, he will ask him to display punctuality data on trains at all terminating stations.

Mr. David Mitchell: I understand from British Rail that information on train punctuality is already displayed on a regular basis at selected terminating stations. I will, however, be glad to draw my hon. Friend's point to the attention of the chairman.

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Transport what steps British Rail takes to monitor punctuality performance by trains at intermediate stations.

Mr. David Mitchell: I understand that the timings of trains at intermediate stations do not form part of the statistics on punctuality drawn up by British Rail. However, I also understand that British Rail continuously monitors the waiting times of trains at such stations in order to assess the effects on punctuality.

European Road Safety Year

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to contribute to the 1986 European Road Safety Year.

Mrs. Chalker: Plans for action at Community level are still under discussion between member states. We are currently considering what our own contribution should be.

Steering Wheels

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, to reduce the incidence of serious face injuries to belted passengers, he will introduce legislation to alter the design of steering wheels and columns.

Mrs. Chalker: Research is being carried out by the Transport and Road Research Laboratory into this subject. This may lead to changes being proposed to the relevant international standards; such changes would have to be agreed before legislation could be considered.

Windscreen Wipers and Bumper Heights

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will introduce legislation to make it madatory for windscreen wipers to be recessed;

(2) what information he has regarding the relationship between bumper heights on cars and injury causation.

Mrs. Chalker: The relationship between pedestrian injuries and the whole of the frontal area of cars is the subject of extensive research in Europe and America. The latest research findings are to be presented at a major international conference in July, and I expect this to give guidance on a number of measures for pedestrian protection, including the design of front bumpers and windscreen wipers.

M4 Motorway

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many miles of the M4 motorway are lit; in which county areas the lit sections are; and what further plans he has to light sections of the M4 motorway.

Mrs. Chalker: Lighting on the M4 motorway in England is as tabulated:

County	*Approximate length of lighting (miles)*
GLC	11·8
Berkshire	10·0
Avon	3·7
Gloucestershire	1·1
Total	26·6

Lighting on the M4 motorway in Wales is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

The further provision of lighting on the M4 motorway will be reviewed after consideration of the recommendations concerning motorway lighting in the House of Commons Transport Committee's report on road safety.

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will estimate the cost of lighting the stretches of the M4 so far unlit.

Mrs. Chalker: The estimated cost of lighting the unlit sections of the M4 in England is approximately £7 million at 1982-83 prices.

Lighting on the M4 motorway in Wales is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Windscreens

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will now introduce legislation to make it mandatory for vehicle manufacturers to fit laminated windscreens.

Mrs. Chalker: No. Such an extra cost to the consumer cannot be justified by any potential increase in road safety.

Mersey Tunnels (Tolls)

Mr. Porter asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will order a public inquiry into the proposed increase in toll charges at the Mersey tunnels.

Mr. Ridley: Representative objectors having a right to a public inquiry under section 92 of the County of Merseyside Act 1980 have asked for one. Arrangements for an inquiry are therefore being set in hand.

Severn Bridge

Mr. Roy Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will now publish the report following the public inquiry held in Bristol in July 1984 regarding his proposal to increase tolls on the Severn bridge.

Mrs. Chalker: The outcome of the inquiry will be announced shortly.

Departmental Legislation

Mr. Galley asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many Acts of Parliament have been promoted and how many statutory instruments made by his Department, or predecessor Departments covering his areas of responsibility, in each of the last 20 years.

Mr. Ridley: Her Majesty's Stationery Office publishes annually "Lists of Statutory Instruments" and "Tables and Indices to Public and General Acts and General Synod Measures". Both of these are currently up to date to the end of 1983.

Given the changes to the machinery of government over the last 20 years, apportionment of the Acts or statutory instruments to the areas of present ministerial responsibility could be done only at disproportionate cost.

European Air Routes (Deregulation)

Mr. Evennett asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he intends to take action to deregulate scheduled European air routes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: We are already pressing hard to liberalise air transport in Europe both within the European Community and with non-EEC countries. In the last nine months we have negotiated liberal agreements with the Netherlands and the Federal Republic of Germany, and have just secured one with Luxembourg. We shall be making every effort to achieve further liberalisation through both bilateral and multilateral agreements.

Air Travel (Competition)

Mr. Evennett asked the Secretary of State for Transport what action he is taking to encourage greater competition in air travel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: Greater competition in air travel should benefit the consumer in terms of better service and lower fares, and help airlines to improve efficiency. We are making a major effort to negotiate new, more liberal agreements with our European partners in order to introduce greater competition on a fair basis. We are also pressing the European Community to apply the competition rules of the treaty of Rome to air transport. Domestically the Civil Aviation Authority has proposed effectively to deregulate fares and to liberalise entry on to many routes.

Civil Aviation Policy

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Transport what consideration he has given to the paper entitled "Civil Aviation Policy: The Promised White Paper", a copy of which has been sent to him by the North of England Regional Consortium; what reply he is making; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: I have read the paper with interest and a reply has been sent to the consortium assuring it that I will bear its views in mind in formulating my proposals on airports policy.

Road Maintenance Condition Survey

Mr. Hayes asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has received the report of the 1984 national road maintenance condition survey; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: The report of the 1984 national road maintenance condition survey is published today. I have placed a copy in the Library of the House.

This report — which does not cover motorways — shows that while there has been some deterioration in recent years, the general condition of roads in England and Wales remains very similar to that when the survey began in 1977.

Nevertheless, the survey points to a deteriorating trend since 1980, both on trunk roads and on local authorities' roads. This reinforces the need for systematic identification of problem areas and careful planning of maintenance works. The deterioration in trunk road condition reflects the priority we have had to give in recent years to

maintenance of the motorway network which carries large volumes of heavy goods vehicles and is vital to the economy of the nation.

The standing committee on highway maintenance has established the NRMCS as an objective basis for discussion of road condition and maintenance expenditure. I commend the report of the 1984 survey to all who have an interest in roads.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Lebanon (British Subjects)

Mr. Evennett asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what advice his Department is currently issuing to British subjects who intend to travel to the Lebannon.

Mr. Renton: Travellers are currently being advised that, unless they have a compelling reason, they should defer their visit for the time being. Anyone who decides to travel does so at his own risk and should ensure that he is being met and looked after on arrival.

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has about the number of British subjects still in the Lebanon; and what advice he has issued to them on the desirability of their remaining there.

Mr. Renton: There are about 1,500 British citizens registered with Her Majesty's embassy in Beirut at present, nearly one third of whom are also Lebanese nationals. On 15 March, Her Majesty's ambassador issued the following warning:

"A second British subject has been kidnapped in West Beirut. British subjects there must therefore be considered at risk. They are advised not to remain unless they have a compelling reason."

British citizens in east Beirut and elsewhere in the country have not been advised to leave. They remain at their own risk.

Anglo-Irish Economic Steering Group

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish a list of all the meetings of the Anglo-Irish economic steering group, its members, and the Departments and sections from which United Kingdom officials have been seconded to it; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: The last meeting of the AIESG took place in March 1980; since then its role has been taken over by the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Council (AIIC). As with the AIIC committees, officials attended the meetings of the AIESG from various Departments depending on the subjects under discussion. It is not our practice to reveal the names of those concerned.

Falkland Islands (Oil Exploration)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what Her Majesty's Government's response has been to the representations about Falklands oil exploration which have been circulated to all members of the United Nations.

Mr. Renton: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 31 January at column 274.

Bangladesh

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many consular staff were employed in Bangladesh in June 1979; and what are the figures at the latest available date.

Mr. Renton: The information is as follows:

June 1979
Consular and immigration staff:
20 United Kingdom-based, 26 locally engaged
December 1984
Consular and immigration staff:
20 United Kingdom-based, 36 locally engaged

In addition, in both years, there were temporary relief staff to help cover leave absences.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to speed up the issue of entry certificates in Bangladesh; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: Following my visit to Dhaka in January, I have reviewed the situation and we are committed to provide temporary staff reinforcement to make up for leave absences to ensure that th effective strength of the immigration section is 15 ECOs. Overlaps are being arranged in order that new staff will be fully operative before taking over their predecessors' jobs. Other measures are being considered.

Entry Certificates

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the waiting list for the issue of entry certificates from the high commission in Dhaka, Bangladesh and other consular offices, at the latest available date.

Mr. Renton: The waiting times are published quarterly in the Home Office bulletin "Control of Immigration: Statistics," a copy of which is available in the Library of the House. At the end of 1984, waiting time to first interview for applicants in the non-priority queue in Dhaka was 23 months; in New Delhi 12 months; in Bombay six months; and in Islamabad 10¾ months. Applicants placed in priority queues were interviewed in six months or less in Bangladesh and in two months in India and Pakistan.

The numbers in the settlement queues in each case were Dhaka 12,972; New Delhi 1,394; Bombay 1,048; Islamabad 6,749; and Karachi 231.

El Salvador

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to the Government of El Salvador regarding the murder of Archbishop Romero; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: The Salvadorean Government are well aware of our concern to see those guilty of political assassinations, including the deplorable murder of Archbishop Romero, and of other crimes, brought to justice.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has now decided to send observers to the elections in El Salvador.

Mr. Renton: Her Majesty's ambassador to El Salvador and a member of his staff were designated to observe the

elections held on 31 March in the normal course of their functions. This was announced by a Foreign and Commonwealth Office spokesman on 22 March.

Human Rights (Iran)

Mr. Redmond asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what current initiatives he is promoting through international forums to seek to improve the level of human rights in Iran.

Mr. Rifkind: We remain concerned at reports of violations of human rights in Iran. We have again co-sponsored a resolution on Iran at this year's session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in Geneva. The resolution, which was adopted on 13 March, urged the Iranian Government, as a state party to the international covenant on civil and political rights, to respect and ensure to all its citizens the rights recognised in that covenant. It also extended the mandate of the special representative appointed by the commission to investigate the human rights situation in Iran, and instructed him to make an interim report to the United Nations General Assembly in the autumn and a full report to next year's session of the Commission on Human Rights.

Iran-Iraq War

Mr. Redmond asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent action Her Majesty's Government have taken through international forums to seek to bring about a settlement of the conflict between Iran and Iraq.

Mr. Rifkind: We have supported all the relevant Security Council resolutions and the efforts of the United Nations Secretary-General aimed at ending this tragic conflict. We supported the Secretary-General's appeal of 26 March, calling for both sides to stop attacks on civilian areas and merchant shipping, for an end to the threat to civil aviation and condemning the use of chemical weapons. In addition, we have participated in demarches with our Community partners in both Tehran and Baghdad calling on both sides to respond to United Nations appeals.

Iran (National Council of Resistance)

Mr. Redmond asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Ministers or officials in his Department have recently met representatives of the National Council of Resistance in Iran; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: Neither Ministers nor officials in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office have had any meetings recently with representatives of the National Council of Resistance of Iran.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Youth Training Schemes

Mr. Beggs asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the projects by name and indicate the number of trainees in each youth training programme and the action for community employment scheme, together with the amount of public money advanced annually to each scheme operating in Newtownabbey borough which is funded by the Department of Economic Development.

Dr. Boyson: The following organisations are sponsoring projects in Newtownabbey borough:

Youth Community Projects (YCP)

Name of Sponsor	*Number of Approved Training Places*	*Maximum Annual Grand Aid* £
North Eastern Education and Library Board—Rathcoole Youth Club	7	19,700

Action for Community Employment (ACE)

Name of Sponsor	*Number of Approved Jobs*	*Maximum Grant Aid for any period of 52 weeks* £
Abbey Credit Union	1	5,330
Abbots Cross Job Information Centre	3	14,740
Ballyclare Comrades Football Club	1	4,810
Ballyclare Golf Club	4	18,160
Ballyclare Presbyterian Church	2	9,210
Carnmoney Parish Church	2	9,310
Carnmoney Presbyterian Church	2	9,830
Christchurch Congregational Church	1	4,760
Covenant Christian School Society	1	5,360
Dunlop Memorial Presbyterian Church	1	4,810
Glengormley Baptist Church	9	43,040
Glengormley and District Inter Church Group	1	4,400
Glengormley Methodist Church	2	9,310
Glengormley Presbyterian Church	3	10,140
Glengormley Youth Centre	3	11,510
Greenisland Methodist Society	2	9,390
Greenisland Golf Club	2	8,790
Kilbride Presbyterian Church	1	4,810
Mossley Methodist Church	4	13,230
New Mossley Presbyterian Church	1	4,400
Newtownabbey Community Development Association	8	37,680
North Belfast Mission	2	9,310
Parish of Jordanstown, St. Patrick's Church	5	4,400
Parish of St. Mary's, Greencastle	2	24,050
Parish of St. Ninians	2	4,810
Rathcoole Self-Help Group	6	29,600
Rathcoole Youth Centre	1	4,960
Star of the Sea Youth Club	1	5,170
St. Brigid's Church	3	12,670
St. Mac Nissi's Community Association	1	4,660
St. Mary's Playgroup	1	3,880
Whiteabbey Presbyterian Church	1	5,360
Whitewell Environmental Group	8	35,170

Name of Sponsor	Number of Approved Jobs	Maximum Grant Aid for any period of 52 weeks £
Newtownabbey Borough Council	43	206,600
Northern Health & Social Services Board	6	30,770
University of Ulster, Jordanstown	15	67,920

Youth Training Programme (YTP)

Name of Provider	No. of Places	Funding 1984-85 Financial Year £
Loughview Youth Projects Ltd.	80	316,859

Roman Catholic Schools (Qualifications)

Mr. Beggs asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what evidence is available to him regarding recent changes in the curriculum of Roman Catholic maintained and voluntary grammar schools to seek to enable more students to achieve technical skills and scientific qualifications required by employers in the engineering industry in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Scott: General inspection reports indicate that in the curriculum of most schools including maintained and voluntary grammar schools increasing emphasis is being placed on the need to equip pupils for life and work in a technologically orientated society. This trend should be given further momentum by our review of and development programme for the curriculum for 11 to 16-year-olds launched in September 1984.

Departmental Legislation

Mr. Galley asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many Acts of Parliament have been promoted and how many statutory instruments made by his Department, or predecessor Departments covering his areas of responsibility, in each of the last 20 years.

Dr. Boyson: Her Majesty's Stationery Office publishes annually "Lists of Statutory Instruments" and "Tables and Indices to Public and General Acts and General Synod Measures". Both of these are currently up to date to the end of 1983.

Given the changes to the machinery of Government over the last 20 years, apportionment of the Acts or Statutory Instruments to the areas of present ministerial responsibility could only be done at disproportionate cost.

Unemployment Level

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the level of unemployment in the Province at the latest date; and what were the figures for June 1979.

Dr. Boyson [*pursuant to his reply*, 1 April 1985]: The information is as follows:

	June 1979	February 1985
Number of unemployed claimants	59,600	122,957
Unemployed claimants as a percentage of all employees	10·3	21·2

Firearms (Licensed Repairers)

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many persons within Castlereagh borough are licensed to repair firearms.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 1 April 1985]: Two.

ENERGY

Coal Industry Dispute

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Energy what is the policy of the National Coal Board, in the light of the recent strike in the industry, regarding the making of payments due to workers in the same financial year as the period for which the payments are due.

Mr. David Hunt: This is a matter for the National Coal Board.

Superphenix Reactor

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if he will set out the safeguard arrangements which will cover the nuclear material in the blanket of the Superphenix fast breeder reactor;

(2) whether the French Government have made a declaration to Euratom under articles 77 and 84 of the Euratom treaty, as to the status of the Superphenix reactor with regard to civil or military use of the products.

Mr. Goodlad: I understand that the operator of the plant (NERSA) has declared to the Commission that the purpose of Superphenix is to generate electricity, and that the materials used in the reactor are entirely subject to Euratom supervision.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Palace of Westminster (Staff)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Lord Privy Seal how many people work in the Palace of Westminster; and if he will break this figure down into categories including secretaries and research assistants to Members of both Houses.

Mr. Biffen: The information requested is as follows:

	Number
Staff and Officers of	
(i) House of Commons' Departments	931
(ii) House of Lords' Departments	315
Members' Private Staff:	
House of Commons	
(i) Secretaries	587
(ii) Research Assistants	459
House of Lords	
(i) Secretaries	48
(ii) Research Assistants	34
Staff employed by Associated Agencies in the Palace of Westminster:	705

The figures include temporary staff.

These figures do not include Civil Servants who spend a proportion of their time working in the palace or journalists accredited to the Press Galleries.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Parole

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many prisoners were released on parole during 1984 following the exercise of the powers contained in section 33 of the Criminal Justice Act 1982;

(2) how many prisoners who were eligible for parole were refused parole in 1984 following the exercise of the powers contained in section 33 of the Criminal Justice Act 1982;

(3) how many parolees released under section 33 of the Criminal Justice Act 1982 had their licence revoked during 1984;

(4) following the exercise of his powers contained in section 33 of the Criminal Justice Act 1982, how many applications for the revocation of a parole licence were turned down by the Parole Board during 1984.

Mr. Mellor: The information available, which is provisional, relates to those serving sentences of less than 19½ months who became eligible for parole under section 33 of the Criminal Justice Act 1982 and who were dealt with during 1984. About 5,120 were released on parole and 1,550 were refused parole. By the end of 1984 about 100 of those released had come to adverse notice while on parole licence of whom about 55 had their licence revoked. In the remaining 45 cases the Parole Board advised that it was not necessary to revoke the licence; about 30 received written warnings and for about 15 no further action was taken. Corresponding information about those serving sentences of 19½ months or more who were affected by the exercise of these powers could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Remanded Persons

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many males and females were remanded in custody prior to trial in 1984.

Mr. Mellor: Information on the number of untried males and females received into Prison Department establishments is published annually in "Prison Statistics, England and Wales" (Table 2.3 of the latest volume for 1983, Cmnd. 9363). Provisional information about untried males received in 1984 will be published shortly in a Home Office Statistical Bulletin (Issue No. 8/85) on "The Prison Population 1984". Information on the number of persons remanded in custody on committal for trial for indictable offences is published annually in "Criminal Statistics 1983" (Table 8.7 of the latest volume for 1983, Cmnd. 9349). Separate figures for males and females could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the average length of time spent on remand in custody for *(a)* London and *(b)* the rest of England and Wales, during 1984.

Mr. Mellor: Information is not available centrally on the average time spent on remand in different establishments. The available information about the average time spent in custody by all untried and by all convicted unsentenced prisoners is published annually in "Prison Statistics England and Wales" (Table 2*(g)* of the latest issue for 1983, Cmnd. 9363). Provisional estimates for males in 1984 will be published shortly in a Home Office Statistical Bulletin (Issue No. 8/85) on "The Prison Population in 1984".

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, on the latest date available, how many prisoners who had been remanded in custody had been waiting for their trials to commence between zero to three months, three to six months, six to nine months, nine to 12 months, 12 to 18 months and over 18 months.

Mr. Mellor: The latest readily available information relates to all untried prisoners and is given in the following table:

Estimated population of untried prisoners in Prison Department establishments in England and Wales on 31 January 1985: by length of time since initial remand in custody*

Length of time since initial remand in custody†	*Estimated number‡*
Up to 3 months	5,530
Over 3 up to 6 months	1,560
over 6 up to 9 months	480
Over 9 up to 12 months	180
Over 12 up to 18 months	140
Over 18 months	5
Total	7,890

*Based on records held centrally which are approximate; detailed checking of individual cases would involve disproportionate cost.

†Including any time which may have been spent on bail after the initial remand in custody.

‡Rounded estimates; the components do not add to the total because they have been rounded independently.

Life Sentence Prisoners

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the total number of life sentence prisoners in each of the five special categories which were created in October 1983.

Mr. Mellor: On 31 December 1984, 21 terrorist murderers were serving life sentence in Prison Department establishments in England and Wales. For information on the other categories I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Kilroy-Silk) on 12 February at column 96.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the number of life sentence prisoners who have currently served *(a)* in excess of 15 years, *(b)* between 15 and 16 years, *(c)* between 16 and 17 years, *(d)* between 17 and 18 years, *(c)* 18 and 19 years, *(f)* 19 and 20 years, and *(g)* in excess of 20 years.

Mr. Mellor: The latest readily available information is given in the following table:

Population of life sentence prisoners† in Prison Department establishments in England and Wales on 31 January 1985 whose initial reception under sentence was over 15 years by time since initial reception under sentence‡

*Estimated number**

	Over 15 up to 16 years	*Over 16 up to 17 years*	*Over 17 up to 18 years*	*Over 18 up to 19 years*	*Over 19 up to 20 years*	*Over 20 years*	*Total*
All life sentence prisoners	30	20	15	20	15	35	135
Of whom prisoners recalled after having been released on licence	5	5	5	5	10	20	50

Notes:

* The figures are those recorded centrally and are approximate; detailed checking of individual cases would involve disproportionate cost. The figures are rounded and components do not always add to the totals because they have been rounded independently.

† Including persons detained under s. 53, Children and Young Persons Act 1933 and those serving custody for life.

‡ Includes time spent on licence by prisoners recalled after having been released on licence.

Prisoners (Statistics)

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the total number of prisoners currently serving more than five years for offences of violence and drug trafficking.

Mr. Mellor: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Immigration

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the ratio of staff in his Department to applicants for (i) British citizenship, (ii) indefinite leave to remain and (iii) temporary leave to enter; and what it has been for the last five years for which records are available.

Mr. Waddington: The information available in respect of applicants for British citizenship is as follows:

	Ratio	*Applications*	*Staff in post (30 June) in Nationality Division*
1980	292:1	50,492	173
1981	383:1	70,092	183
1982	368:1	69,956	190
1983	317:1	80,457	254
1984	163:1	42,702	261½

The other information requested is not available since staff are not assigned exclusively to work on applications for indefinite leave to remain, or temporary leave to enter.

Prisoners (Deaths)

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people in 1984 died *(a)* in prison and *(b)* in hospital having been moved there from prison; and if he will indicate in each case the prison and the cause of death.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is as follows:

Establishment	*Cause of death*
1. Brixton	Suicide: asphyxia by hanging
2. Leeds	Open verdict: acute onchronic bronchitis, toxic myocarditis, coronary atheroma
3. Leeds	Natural causes: cardiac failure, coronary arterial sclerosis
4. Norwich	Natural causes: coronary thrombosis, atherosclerosis, myocardial fibrosis
5. Brixton	Suicide: asphyxia by hanging
6. Pentonville*	Natural causes: haemo pericardium, ruptured myocardial infarction, coronary thrombosis
7. Holloway*	Open verdict: subdural haemorrhage
8. Manchester*	Natural causes: cerebral haematoma
9. Parkhurst	Suicide: asphyxia by hanging
10. Parkhurst*	Natural causes: cancer
11. Parkhurst	Suicide: asphyxia by hanging
12. Coldingley	Natural causes: heart failure
13. Norwich	Suicide: asphyxia by hanging
14. Wormwood Scrubs*	Natural causes: broncho-pneumonia, cerebral infarction, cartoid artery thrombosis
15. Winchester	Misadventure: asphyxia by hanging
16. Rudgate	Natural causes: coronary occlusion, coronary atheroma
17. Lewes	Natural causes: retroperitoreal haemorrhage, ruptured atherosclerotic aneurysm of abdominal aorta
18. Wormwood Scrubs	Suicide: asphyxia by hanging
19. Leyhill*	Natural causes: subacute bacterial endocarditis
20. Norwich	Natural causes: coronary thrombosis
21. Swansea	Suicide: asphyxia by hanging
22. Pentonville	Suicide: asphyxia by hanging
23. Shepton Mallet	Accidental death: asphyxia due to inhalation of stomach contents
24. Liverpool*	Accidental death: set fire to cell
25. Brixton	Suicide: asphyxia by hanging
26. Drake Hall*	Natural causes: coronary thrombosis
27. Parkhurst	Natural causes: carcinoma of the transverse colon
28. Durham	Suicide: asphyxia by hanging
29. Norwich	Suicide: asphyxia by hanging
30. Stoke Heath	Natural causes: asphyxia due to epileptic convulsion, diabetic coma
31. Bristol	Misadventure: asphyxia by hanging
32. Exeter	Suicide: asphyxia by hanging
33. Canterbury	Natural causes: ischaemic heart disease, coronary atheroma
34. Leeds	Suicide: asphyxia by hanging
35. Winchester	Misadventure: asphyxia due to epileptic convulsion
36. Standford Hill	Natural causes: myocardial infarction
37. Featherstone	Natural causes: heart failure
38. Dorchester	Natural causes: alcoholic myocarditis
39. The Verne	Natural causes: secondary abcess on brain
40. Brixton*	Open verdict: gastro enteritis
41. Preston	Suicide: asphyxia by hanging
42. Portsmouth	Suicide: asphyxia by hanging
43. Birmingham*	Natural causes: cancer
44. Ford	Natural causes: acute left ventricular failure
45. Exeter	Suicide: asphyxia by hanging
46. Brixton*	Natural causes: coronary thrombosis
47. Lincoln*	Natural causes: brain tumour
48. Holloway*	Natural causes: kidney failure

Establishment	Cause of death
49. Leicester*	Suicide: pulmonary embolism
50. Brixton*	Natural causes: staphlocottal pyremia
51. Swansea	(awaiting inquest)
52. Lincoln	Natural causes: asphyxia following inhalation of vomit
53. Rochester	(awaiting inquest)
54. Brixton	Suicide: asphyxia by hanging
55. Shrewsbury	Suicide: asphyxia by hanging
56. Lewes	Suicide: asphyxia by hanging
57. Wakefield	Suicide: asphyxia by hanging
58. Grendon	Natural causes: coronary infarct, atheroma of coronary vessels
59. Wandsworth	Suicide: asphyxia by hanging
60. Brixton	Suicide: asphyxia by hanging
61. Haverigg	Natural causes: myocardial infarction
62. Brixton*	(awaiting inquest)
63. Canterbury*	Natural causes: coronary artery thrombosis and atheroma
64. Norwich	Bronco pneumonia, hepatic failure, hepatitis

* Died in or on way to hospital.

A34 (Traffic Incident)

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Thames valley police and make a statement on an incident on 22 March on the A34 three miles south of Newbury when the police broke the window of a parked car;

(2) if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Thames valley police and make a statement on an incident on 22 March on the A34 at the Swan roundabout near Newbury when a minibus was pushed off the road by police officers and rolled on to its side in the ditch;

(3) if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Thames valley police and make a statement on an incident on 22 March when a woman was injured outside Newbury police station in an incident involving members of his force.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The chief constable of Thames valley informs me that at 2.30 am on 22 March two cars were found blocking the road on the A34 three miles south of Newbury. One of the cars was moved by its owner, but the other had to be removed by police to clear the road. In the course of this a car window was broken. Shortly afterwards, at the Swan roundabout on the A34, a car and a minibus were found blocking both exits from the roundabout. Despite appeals for the owners to come forward no one did so, and the police therefore moved the minibus off the road. Two people were arrested and issued with summonses for obstruction of the highway. Two complaints under section 49 of the Police Act 1964 have been made about the police action.

The chief constable informs me that he is not aware of an incident outside Newbury police station that day in which a woman was injured.

Detained Persons

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department why watches are taken away from people taken into custody.

Mr. Mellor: The general position is that a person arrested by the police may keep personal property unless the police consider that it may be used to cause harm to himself or others, to effect an escape or is needed as evidence. A person committed to prison custody may bring or purchase a watch, subject to the Governor's discretion to refuse permission if the retention of the watch is considered undesirable in the prisoner's own interests or in the interests of good order or security. If the hon. Member has a particular case in mind, perhaps he would write to me.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will ensure that reading material is available in prisons for anyone who requests it who has been taken into custody.

Mr. Mellor: In accordance with rule 30 of the Prison Rules 1964, reading material is available in prisons through their libraries for all persons received into custody who request it.

Prisons (Dental Clinics)

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department on how many days in 1984 dental clinics were cancelled due to shortage of staff; and what was the total number of clinics cancelled at Pentonville, Winton Green, Liverpool, Leeds, Manchester and Holloway prisons, respectively.

Mr. Mellor: The incidence of dental clinic cancellations is not recorded centrally and could only be obtained for all prisons at disproportionate cost. As regards Pentonville, I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to his question on 17 January at column *177*. The number of days on which dental clinics were cancelled in 1984 at the other establishments mentioned was, according to information which has been specially obtained, as follows:

	No. of days on which clinics cancelled	*No. of clinics cancelled*
Birmingham	3	3
Liverpool	6	9
Leeds	1	1
Manchester	4	7
Holloway	2	4

Most, but not necessarily all, of these cancellations were due to staff shortages.

Police and Fire Services (West Midlands)

Mr. Park asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the answer of 31 January to the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Futchett), *Official Report*, column 339, if he has had any discussions with the district councils within the west midlands which had indicated their interest in direct involvement with the police and fire services.

Mr. Giles Shaw: My right hon. and learned Friend saw leaders of the Conservative groups of four district councils in the west midlands (Birmingham, Dudley, Solihull, and Walsall) on 15 November 1984.

Victims of Crime

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what reactions Ministers in his Department received to Her Majesty's Government's recent White Paper on victims of crime at the conference organised by

the Association of County Councils and the National Association of Victim Support Schemes; what representations he has had on the White Paper so far; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: At the conference the decision to increase substantially the level of grant given to the NAVSS was warmly welcomed, but concern was expressed that the Home Office was not yet making grants to individual local schemes. My right hon. and learned Friend has, as yet, received no representations relating to the White Paper which contained the Government's response to the First Report (Session 1984-85) of the Select Committee on Home Affairs.

The proposals referred to in the White Paper are being pursued. In particular, he will be giving careful and sympathetic consideration in the coming months to the matter of financial aid for victims support at local and regional level.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether Her Majesty's Government propose to make additional funds available to the National Association for Victim Support Schemes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Yes. In 1984-85 the Government grant was £58,500, but in 1985-86 a grant of up to £120,000 will be paid. The increase is mainly to enable additional staff to be appointed and the higher costs of larger premises to be met. No grant whatsoever was paid to the victim support movement before the Government were elected in 1979.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to how many local victim support schemes are claimed to be at risk because of current pressure on local authority expenditure.

Mr. Mellor: I have no specific information on this point.

National Security

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is Her Majesty's Government's definition of the term national security.

Mr. Brittan: This term has been in general use for many years in a variety of contexts and is generally understood to refer to the safeguarding of the state and the community against threats to their survival or well-being. I am not aware that any previous Administration has thought it appropriate to adopt a specific definition of the term.

Coal Industry Dispute

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will describe what information relating to offences committed by miners during the miners' dispute was passed from Metropolitan police sources to the National Coal Board.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis informs me that the Metropolitan police have passed no such information to the National Coal Board.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether, in the course of the miners' dispute, the National Coal Board requested or obtained any information from any police force relating to striking miners; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: I have been asked to reply. This is a matter for the National Coal Board.

Personal Data

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will describe the procedures he has established to ensure that personal data exempt from the Data Protection Act via section 27 are relevant and not excessive in relation to the purposes for which the personal data are collected.

Mr. David Waddington: The Data Protection Act imposes no requirement upon the Secretary of State to establish procedures for ensuring that personal data which are exempt from the provisions of the Act by virtue of section 27 are relevant and not excessive for the purpose for which they are collected. Nevertheless, as I explained in reply to a similar question from the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) on 5 July 1984, at column *219*, my hon. and learned Friend is satisfied that in the organisations for which he is responsible appropriate arrangements exist for ensuring the security and quality of personal data.

Dogs

Mr. Galley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what guidelines are issued to the police relating to policy on prosecuting subsequent to attacks by dogs.

Mr. Giles Shaw: General guidance on criteria for prosecution is to be found in the Attorney-General's memorandum on criteria for prosecution, issued under Home Office Circular 26/1983, a copy of which is in the Library of the House. No specific guidance has been issued centrally on prosecution policy in relation to attacks by dogs.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will, after consultation with the British Veterinary Association, take urgent action to ban both the importation into the United Kingdom of Chinese Sharpei dogs, and breeding from those already here, until an effective screening process can be put into effect to prevent the importation and breeding of Sharpeis with inheritable entropion.

Mr. Mellor: No. We have no power to prohibit the import or breeding of these animals.

Great Ape (Experimentation)

Mr. Greg Knight asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what species of great ape are or have been used for the purpose of experimentation in the United Kingdom at any time during the past three years; and for what purpose.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is not readily available, and I shall reply as soon as possible.

Police (Search Powers)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals Her Majesty's

Government plan to introduce to enable the police to search football supporters following the enactment of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act.

Mr. Giles Shaw: When the relevant provisions of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act are implemented on 1 January 1986, the police throughout England and Wales will have the power to stop and search those reasonably suspected of carrying stolen goods, offensive weapons and other prohibited articles such as house-breaking implements. This is a new power, so far as the police in many parts of the country are concerned; and even where stop and search powers already exist, they do not extend at present to searches for offensive weapons.

The use of the power will be subject to certain safeguards, set out in the Act itself and in the associated codes of practice, designed to ensure that the powers are used accountably, and only in the circumstances for which they are intended. Before making the search the constable must identify himself and give the object and grounds of the search; following the search he must make a written record of the search, unless it is not practicable to do so.

Those provisions of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act provide the police with an important new power in tackling street crime, including in the context of disturbances associated with football matches. The proviso that written records need not be made where this is impracticable was designed specifically to meet the problem the police would otherwise face in situations of public disorder, and there is no question of the police being inhibited in such situations, as a result of the Act. Nor does the Act in any way preclude the police or stewards searching those entering football grounds with their consent or because the club makes this a condition of entry.

Northern Ireland (Airport Landing Cards)

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the airports in Britain at which passengers flying from Northern Ireland have to complete airport landing cards; on whose instructions this is carried out; and where the completed cards are sent.

Mr. Brittan: Under article 7 of the Prevention of Terrorism (Supplemental Temporary Provisions) Order 1984 passengers arriving from Northern Ireland at any airport in Great Britain may be required to complete landing cards. It is for the chief officer of the police force concerned to decide whether and how cards should be used at any particular airport; the practice varies according to circumstances. There is no arrangement for central collecting of completed cards; their disposal is also a matter for the chief officer of the police force concerned.

Bullwood Hall, Essex

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what, by each category, is the staffing complement at Bullwood hall girls' borstal, Essex; and what in each of the past three years has been the actual staff in post.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is as follows:

Grade	As at 28 February 1983		As at 29 February 1984		As at 28 February 1985	
	Complement	Staff in Post	Complement	Staff in Post	Complement	Staff in Post
Governor Grade III	1	1	1	1	1	1
Governor Grade IV	1	1	1	1	1	1
Assistant Governor	4	4	3	3	3	3
Executive Officer	1	1	2	2	2	2
Clerical Officer	8	6	8	7	8	8
Clerical Assistant	½	½	½	½	½	½
Senior Psychologist	1	1	1	—	1	—
Psychological Assistant	1	1	1	1	1	1
Senior Nursing Sister	1	½	1	½	1	½
Nursing Sister	8	4½	8	5½	8	5½
State Enrolled Nurse	2	1½	2	2	2	2
Medical Officer	½	½	½	½	½	½
Civilian Instructional Officer Grade III	2	2	2	2	2	2
Civilian Instructional Officer Grade IV	1	2	1	2	1	3
Cleaner	½	½	½	½	½	½
Typist	2	2	2	2	2	2
Storeman	2	2	2	2	2	2
Industrial Craftsman	9	6	9	8	9	8
Plant Attendant	3	1	3	3	3	2
Farm Foreman Grade II	1	1	1	1	1	1
Agricultural Craftsman	1	1	1	1	1	1
Chief Officer II	1	—	1	1	1	1
Principal Officer	6	3	6	6	6	6
Senior Officer	8	3	8	—	8	1
Officer	59	46	64	53	64	52
Prison Auxilliary Officer	—	5	—	4	—	3
Night Patrol Officer	5	5	5	5	5	5
Officer Caterer	2	2	2	2	2	2
Senior Officer PE Instructor	1	1	1	1	1	1
Officer PE Instructor	2	2	2	2	2	2
Principal Officer (Works)	1	1	1	1	1	1
Officer Instructor	3	2	3	—	3	—
Trades Officer	3	3	3	3	2	2

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what criteria are used by the governor of

Bullwood hall girls' borstal, Essex, and the deputy governor when deciding upon requests they receive from prisoners; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Applications from inmates at Her Majesty's prison and youth custody centre Bullwood hall are considered according to the provisions in prison department standing orders, circular instructions and other central guidance. Staff dealing with applications are expected to have a proper concern for the inmates' interests and I believe that they do.

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what, by each category, has been the full-time and part-time staffing at Bullwood hall girls' borstal, Essex, in each of the past three years for which figures are available.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is as follows:

Grade	As at 28 February 1983		As at 29 February 1984		As at 28 February 1985	
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time
Executive Officer	1	—	2	—	2	—
Clerical Officer	6	—	6	2	7	2
Clerical Assistant	—	1	—	1	—	1
Senior Psychologist	1	—	—	—	—	—
Psychological Assistant	1	—	1	—	1	—
Senior Nursing Sister	—	1	—	1	—	1
Nursing Sister	4	1	5	1	5	1
State Enrolled Nurse	1	1	1	2	1	2
Medical Officer	—	1	—	1	—	1
Governor Grade III	1	—	1	—	1	—
Governor Grade IV	1	—	1	—	1	—
Assistant Governor	4	—	3	—	3	—
RC Chaplain	—	1	—	1	—	1
C of E Chaplain	—	1	—	1	—	—
Cleaner	—	1	—	1	—	1
Typist	2	—	2	—	2	—
Storeman	2	—	2	—	2	—
Industrial Craftsman	6	—	8	—	8	—
Plant Attendant	1	—	3	—	2	—
Farm Foreman Grade II	1	—	1	—	1	—
Agricultural Craftsman	1	—	1	—	1	—
Civilian Instructional Officer Grade III	2	—	2	—	2	—
Civilian Instructional Officer Grade IV	2	—	2	—	3	—
Chief Officer II	—	—	1	—	1	—
Principal Officer	3	—	6	—	6	—
Senior Officer	3	—	—	—	1	—
Officer	43	6	51	4	51	2
Prison Auxiliary Officer	5	—	4	—	3	—
Night Patrol Officer	5	—	5	—	5	—
Officer Caterer	2	—	2	—	2	—
Senior Officer PE Instructor	1	—	1	—	1	—
Officer PE Instructor	2	—	2	—	2	—
Principal Officer (Works)	1	—	1	—	1	—
Officer Instructor	2	—	—	—	—	—
Trades Officers	3	—	3	—	2	—

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department on how many occasions in the last 12 months at Bullwood hall girls' borstal, Essex, association periods have been curtailed or abandoned because of staff shortages.

Mr. Mellor: In the period 1 April 1984 to 31 March 1985 inclusive, evening association periods at HM prison and youth custody centre Bullwood hall have been curtailed on 214 occasions and abandoned on a further 74.

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the arrangements at Bullwood hall girls' borstal, Essex, for inmates to have access to education, library facilities and television; and what changes in access there have been to these over the past two years.

Mr. Mellor: Education facilities at HM prison and youth custody centre Bullwood hall are intended to be available on five days and four evenings each week. Inmates may normally attend the library once a week and watch television during evening association periods. Staff shortages have restricted the availability of these facilities during the past two years.

Fire and Police Authorities

Mr. Wheeler asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what guidance is to be issued by the Home Office on the establishment of the new fire and police authorities proposed in the Local Government Bill.

Mr. Brittan: We are making arrangements to issue to interested parties a consultative memorandum on the establishment of the new joint fire and joint police authorities. The memorandum, copies of which are being placed in the Library and the Vote Office, is primarily directed to those councillors who will be acquiring responsibilities in relation to the police and fire services from 1 April 1986. It describes the action required to ensure that the transition is handled effectively and that the most economic and efficient structure is put into place. The Home Office will be glad to join in discussions at

regional level on the new arrangements and to assist in implementation planning by the London boroughs and metropolitan districts which should now be proceeding.

Police (Professional Behaviour)

Mr. Wheeler asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis intends to publish the handbook on the principles of policing and guidance for professional behaviour.

Mr. Brittan: The commissioner is publishing today. He is sending copies personally to all right hon. and hon. Members for constituencies which fall wholly or partly within the Metropolitan police district. I am arranging for copies to be placed in the Library of the House.

Transfer of Prisoners

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the administrative arrangements for the transfer of prisoners between *(a)* England and Scotland and *(b)* England and Northern Ireland; and how many prisoners have been transferred in the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Mellor [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 December 1984, c. *4*]: The following table shows the number of transfers which took place in each of the last five years for which figures are available, showing under which of the following sections of the Criminal Justice Act 1961 the transfer took place: section 26 (permanent transfer), section 27 (temporary transfer), section 28 (transfer for trial), section 29 (transfer for other judicial purposes) or section 30 (transfer of prisoners unlawfully at large). It is possible that some transfers authorised at the end of each year may have actually taken place early in the following year. Some prisoners may have been transferred on more than one occasion, and some prisoners initially transferred under sections 27, 28 or 29 may have remained in the other jurisdiction to serve the remainder of their sentences.

	s26	*s27*	*s28*	*s29*	*s30*
1979					
England and Wales to Scotland	33	4	52	5	1
Scotland to England and Wales	16	15	77	4	3
England and Wales to Jersey	1	1	0	0	0
Jersey to England and Wales	32	0	0	0	0
England and Wales to Guernsey	0	0	0	1	0
Guernsey to England and Wales	7	0	0	0	0
England and Wales to Isle of Man	0	1	0	0	0
Isle of Man to England and Wales	9	0	3	0	0
England and Wales to N Ireland	1	2	1	1	0
N Ireland to England and Wales	2	0	1	0	0
1980					
England and Wales to Scotland	32	5	63	6	0
Scotland to England and Wales	22	13	61	6	2
England and Wales to Jersey	0	4	1	0	0
Jersey to England and Wales	20	0	2	0	0
England and Wales to Guernsey	1	0	0	0	0
Guernsey to England and Wales	9	0	0	1	0
England and Wales to Isle of Man	0	3	0	0	0
Isle of Man to England and Wales	3	0	3	0	0
England and Wales to N Ireland	1	2	2	1	0
N Ireland to England and Wales	0	2	2	0	0
1981					
England and Wales to Scotland	25	11	46	21	0
Scotland to England and Wales	17	14	67	6	4
England and Wales to Jersey	2	3	0	1	0
Jersey to England and Wales	28	0	1	0	0
England and Wales to Guernsey	1	0	0	0	0
Guernsey to England and Wales	14	0	0	0	0
England and Wales to Isle of Man	0	0	2	2	0
Isle of Man to England and Wales	8	0	3	0	0
England and Wales to N Ireland	0	1	0	0	0
N Ireland to England and Wales	2	0	0	0	0
1982					
England and Wales to Scotland	26	10	55	15	0
Scotland to England and Wales	21	9	62	9	4
England and Wales to Jersey	1	4	0	1	0
Jersey to England and Wales	22	0	0	0	0
England and Wales to Guernsey	0	1	0	0	0
Guernsey to England and Wales	1	0	0	0	0
England and Wales to Isle of Man	0	2	2	0	0
Isle of Man to England and Wales	1	0	4	0	0
England and Wales to N Ireland	0	0	0	0	0
N Ireland to England and Wales	1	0	0	0	0
1983					
England and Wales to Scotland	15	22	62	8	2
Scotland to England and Wales	16	9	70	5	4

	s26	s27	s28	s29	s30
England and Wales to Jersey	0	3	0	0	0
Jersey to England and Wales	24	0	1	0	1
England and Wales to Guernsey	1	0	0	0	0
Guernsey to England and Wales	6	0	0	1	0
England and Wales to Isle of Man	0	1	0	1	0
Isle of Man to England and Wales	4	0	1	0	0
England and Wales to N Ireland	3	1	1	0	0
N Ireland to England and Wales	2	0	2	4	0

THE ARTS

Regional Opera

Mr. Arnold asked the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State answering in respect of the Arts what plans the Minister for the Arts has to encourage regional opera with moneys which have already been voted for by Parliament for 1985-86.

Mr. Waldegrave: The distribution of funds is a matter for the Arts Council; but expenditure on opera in the English regions is expected to be approximately the same as in 1984-85.

Equal Opportunities Officer

Mr. Janner asked the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State answering in respect of the Arts whether the Minister for the Arts will now appoint a departmental equal opportunities officer with responsibility for co-ordinating the Civil Service policy of non-discrimination within his Department.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Cabinet Office provides the Office of Arts and Libraries with personnel services and an officer within the Personnel Division of the Cabinet Office has been designated as Equal Opportunities Officer with responsibility for advising on the full scope of equal opportunity matters as they concern race and sex discrimination.

Objects in Lieu of Taxation

Mr. Faulds asked the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State answering in respect of the Arts whether he will specify the objects and property accepted in satisfaction of estate duty or capital transfer tax during the financial year ended on 31 March; and if, in listing them, he will specify *(a)* the amount of tax satisfied in each case, *(b)* whether any offer of objects accepted carried conditions as to destination and *(c)* the total of tax thus satisfied during the financial year in question.

Mr. Waldegrave: The information requested is:

Property accepted	*Amount of tax satisfied* £
Calke Abbey (house, contents and land)	2,584,000
Drawings by Sir Jacob Epstein	20,000
Sculpture by Dame Barbara Hepworth-Nicholson*	145,191
Two Canalettos (balance of payment)	25,074
Land at Ty Canol Wood	76,307
Renoir painting "La Pensée"*	646,350
Louis XVI bonheur du jour	247,500
Palladius and Seneca manuscripts*	66,000
Birdoswald Land	130,138
Bust of Lord Somers	33,226
Geoffrey Keynes collection*	†26,214
Total	4,000,000

Notes:

* Conditions regarding the allocation of these items were attached to the offer and all were honoured.

† The total amount of tax satisfied by this offer was £194,000. The outstanding balance of £167,786 will be met from the AIL vote for 1985-86.

Mr. Faulds asked the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State answering in respect of the Arts whether he will list the amounts initially appearing in the Supply Estimates for the five financial years from 1980-81 to 1984-85, inclusive, in respect of the tax discharge value of works of art and property accepted in satisfaction of capital transfer tax and estate duty, together with particulars of any subsequent increases in those amounts which may have taken place during any of the five financial years in question; whether he will at the same time specify the total tax discharge value of works of art and property actually accepted during each of the five years; and whether the accounting practice is to cancel the resulting surplus in the event of the estimated quota not being fulfilled in any given year.

Mr. Waldegrave: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Benefits

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he proposes to take in respect of payments to pensioners, war pensioners and parents receiving child benefits resulting from the recommendations issued in the report by the Comptroller and Auditor General entitled, "Arrangements for Delivery of Social Security Benefits."

Mr. Newton: The Report makes clear that we have already introduced payment of certain benefits directed to bank and building society accounts by credit transfer, as recommended by a Rayner scrutiny, as an alternative to the traditional method of payment by order book across post office counters. Take-up of this new method of payment has so far been disappointingly low, and we have begun a survey of current public attitudes towards methods and frequency of payment of benefits to help us in considering whether further steps would be appropriate.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much money was paid out in *(a)* unemployment benefit and *(b)* supplementary benefit

within the City of Leicester in 1984 and in each of the preceding four years; and how these figures compare with the equivalent national figure.

Mr. Whitney: This information is not available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Elderly Persons

Mr. Andrew Bowden asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will ensure that the provision, that those over pension age in residential care and nursing homes will be able to continue for life to have their charges met at the level of payment in force when the new payment limits are introduced at the end of April, will include provision for increases in line with inflation.

Mr. Newton: The draft Supplementary Benefit (Requirements and Resources) Miscellaneous Provisions Regulations 1985 provide for supplementary benefit board and lodging payments to be protected at the amount being paid when the regulations come into operation. There are no plans to increase these protected amounts in line with inflation, but they will of course increase if they are overtaken by new limits for the relevant accommodation which result from a future review.

Population Statistics

Mr. Batiste asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the size of the population of the United Kingdom forecast for each of the next 10 years, showing men and women separately, in each of the following age bands: *(a)* 0 to 15 years, *(b)* men 16 to 64 years, *(c)* women 16 to 59 years, *(d)* men 65 to 74 years, *(e)* women 60 to 74 years and *(f)* people over 75 years; and what proportion each band is of the total population for that year.

Mr. John Patten: The latest projections by the Government Actuary of the population in the United Kingdom for the years 1985 to 1995 are in the table.

United Kingdom: mid-1983 based principal projections of the population (thousands ,000)

		Numbers					*Proportions of total population*				
Years		*Age 0-15*	*16-64(M) 16-59(W)*	*65-74(M) 60-74(W)*	*75 and over*	*All ages*	*Age 0-15*	*16-64(M) 16-59(W)*	*65-74(M) 60-74(W)*	*75 and over*	*All ages*
1985	Men	6,011	18,094	2,161	1,197	27,464	21·89	65·88	7·87	4·36	100·00
	Women	5,694	16,428	4,430	2,408	28,961	19·66	56·72	15·30	8·31	100·00
1986	Men	5,944	18,127	2,195	1,222	27,487	21·62	65·95	7·99	4·45	100·00
	Women	5,629	16,491	4,408	2,444	28,973	19·43	56·92	15·21	8·44	100·00
1987	Men	5,879	18,178	2,213	1,247	27,517	21·36	66·06	8·04	4·53	100·00
	Women	5,567	16,570	4,379	2,476	28,990	19·20	57·16	15·11	8·54	100·00
1988	Men	5,850	18,219	2,213	1,272	27,554	21·23	66·12	8·03	4·62	100·00
	Women	5,539	16,625	4,340	2,511	29,014	19·09	57·30	14·96	8·65	100·00
1989	Men	5,852	18,239	2,211	1,294	27,597	21·21	66·09	8·01	4·69	100·00
	Women	5,541	16,654	4,304	2,544	29,043	19·08	57·34	14·82	8·76	100·00
1990	Men	5,890	18,235	2,209	1,313	27,647	21·30	65·96	7·99	4·75	100·00
	Women	5,576	16,657	4,275	2,569	29,077	19·18	57·29	14·70	8·84	100·00
1991	Men	5,946	18,221	2,218	1,318	27,702	21·46	65·78	8·01	4·76	100·00
	Women	5,627	16,653	4,262	2,574	29,115	19·33	57·20	14·64	8·84	100·00
1992	Men	6,020	18,198	2,233	1,311	27,762	21·68	65·55	8·04	4·72	100·00
	Women	5,697	16,641	4,259	2,561	29,158	19·54	57·07	14·61	8·78	100·00
1993	Men	6,113	18,168	2,259	1,288	27,825	21·97	65·29	8·12	4·63	100·00
	Women	5,783	16,627	4,268	2,525	29,203	19·80	56·94	14·61	8·65	100·00
1994	Men	6,200	18,141	2,276	1,271	27,889	22·23	65·05	8·16	4·56	100·00
	Women	5,867	16,621	4,265	2,497	29,249	20·06	56·83	14·58	8·54	100·00
1995	Men	6,258	18,143	2,232	1,320	27,952	22·39	64·91	7·99	4·72	100·00
	Women	5,920	16,632	4,180	2,559	29,294	20·21	56·78	14·27	8·74	100·00

Note:
The numbers in the individual age groups may not add to the all ages total due to rounding.

Mr. Batiste asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many men will reach the age of 64 years in the next year.

Mr. John Patten: The latest population projections for the United Kingdom, show that 294,000 men will reach the age of 64 between mid 1985 and mid 1986 and survive to mid 1986.

Human Embryos (Experiments)

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Social Services which organisations he proposes to consult before drafting legislation on the Warnock committee proposals to control experiments on human embryos.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We invited views on the Warnock report from a wide range of interested organisations and the public. We are considering the substantial comment we have received and have no plans at present for further formal consultation.

Tinnitus Masker

Sir John Farr asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will make the device known as a tinnitus masker generally available on the National Health Service;

(2) in which parts of the United Kingdom a tinnitus masker is available on the National Health Service; and why it is not available nationally.

Mr. John Patten: The decision on what treatment is appropriate for a particular patient is a matter for the consultant responsible for his care. Any hospital consultant could prescribe a tinnitus masker if he considered it to be clinically necessary for his patient,

subject only to resources being available within the health authority. Alternatively, he could consider referring the patient to a specialist tinnitus clinic, where appropriate treatment would be provided. However I understand that on the available evidence maskers are not regarded as an efficacious form of treatment for many tinnitus sufferers. Consultants are therefore likely to prescribe other forms of treatment more appropriate for particular cases. The Department has funded a multi-centre field trial of maskers, the results of which are now being evaluated. No doubt consultants will wish to take account of this study, and the profession's view of it, in reaching decisions on particular cases.

Orthopaedic Beds (Wolverhampton)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what proposals he has to bring the number of orthopaedic beds in Wolverhampton up to the national norm.

Mr. John Patten: It is for the local health authority to decide the number of beds it will provide in any specialty in the light of local needs and circumstances. For this reason we do not lay down national norms.

Research Management Review

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make available to interested persons the review of the Department of Health and Social Security research management carried out by Mr. T. Nodder.

Mr. John Patten: We have recently received Mr. Nodder's report and we are considering it.

Health Authorities (Racial Discrimination)

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what guidance he issues to regional health authorities regarding the implications for their employment practices of Her Majesty's Government's policy on racial discrimination.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: In 1978, following the coming into effect of the Race Relations Act 1976, the Department issued a Health Circular (HC(78)36) setting out its implications for the National Health Service. That circular is still current. There is in addition a general Whitley council agreement, binding on health authorities and their staff, which requires that all staff be afforded equal opportunities in employment, irrespective of their sex, marital status, religion, creed or colour. The circular and the agreement are both in accordance with the Government's present policy on racial discrimination.

In November 1983 the Commission for Racial Equality wrote to chairmen of all regional and district health authorities drawing their attention to their code of practice for the elimination of racial discrimination and the promotion of equality of opportunity in employment. We are currently considering whether any further advice should be issued to health authorities.

NHS (Staff Pay)

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for Services what percentage of *(a)* males and *(b)* females working in the National Health Service in the east midlands earn less than £100 per week.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested is not available centrally.

Trent RHA (Job Losses)

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many jobs have been lost in the National Health Service in the area covered by the Trent regional health authority since 1983.

Mr. John Patten: We do not collect centrally detailed information about each health authority post. The total number of staff employed in the Trent region increased between September 1983 and September 1984 — the latest figures available — by about 60 whole time equivalents.

Handicapped Children

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will list and describe the information available about the numbers and categories of handicaps in children detected or assessed in recent years, stating whether information is available about the age at which a handicap was detected, and stating the nature of the areas or authorities for which separate information is available;

(2) if he will estimate the proportion of handicaps in children which is detected during *(a)* pregnancy, and *(b)* neonatal care; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Information about the numbers of handicaps in children, detected in pregnancy or in childhood, is not collected centrally. There is a voluntary national scheme for reporting congenital malformations detected within the first seven days of birth, and the results of this are published regularly in the "Office of Population Censuses and Surveys Monitor", series MB3.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how handicaps in children are detected and assessed.

Mr. John Patten: Handicapping conditions should be detected within the routine surveillance services that we expect health authorities to provide in order to monitor developmental progress in all children. A programme for these services was put forward by the Department in a paper "Prevention in the Child Health Services" published in 1980, and we know that health authorities have developed a variety of arrangements to provide a subsequent detailed professional assessment of the needs of handicapped children when they are detected.

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. Hayes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the latest figures available for *(a)* the number claiming supplementary benefit and *(b)* the total number dependent on supplementary benefit; and how many of the latter were children.

Mr. Whitney: At December 1983, 4·3 million people were in receipt of supplementary benefit for themselves and their dependants, totalling 7·2 million people of whom 1·8 million were children.

Family Statistics

Mr. Hayes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the latest figures available for the number of children living in families with at least one unemployed parent.

Mr. Whitney: The latest available figures are derived from the 1981 family expenditure survey. These indicate that there were then 1·2 million dependent children in families where at least one parent had been unemployed for three months or more. Figures for families with shorter durations of unemployment are not readily available.

NHS (Funding)

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the extent to which any increase in real terms in the funding of the National Health Service over the last five years takes account of demographic changes and the impact on costs of technological developments.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The Government have increased spending on the National Health Service by 18 per cent. in real terms over the last five years. This increased spending after allowing for increased NHS costs, is more than enough to meet demographic changes and to make some contribution to the costs of medical advance. Greater efficiency has added to the resources available—health authorities planned to make improvements valued at £100 million or over 1 per cent. of their revenue budgets in 1984-85 alone—and will make a growing contribution. Increased resources and greater efficiency are reflected in the use of services by patients. In 1983 hospitals in England alone treated 649,000 more inpatient cases, 252,000 more day cases and had over 2·5 million more outpatient attendances than in 1978.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the current level of expenditure on the National Health Service expressed as a percentage of gross domestic product; what information he has as to the comparable figures in other western countries; and to what extent differences in these percentages reflect variations in wage levels as between the countries concerned.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Expenditure on the National Health Service in the United Kingdom, amounted to 5·6 per cent. of the gross domestic product in 1983, the latest year for which data are available.

Estimates of public and total expenditure on health care by other Western countries, which have been derived by the OECD, are presented as follows for the latest year for which data are available (1982).

	Public expenditure on health care as a percentage of GDP (1982)	*Total expenditure on health care as a percentage of GDP (1982)*
Canada	5·9	8·2
France	6·7	9·3
Germany	6·6	8·2
Italy	6·0	7·0
United States	4·5	10·6
United Kingdom	5·2	5·9

Source: Public Expenditure on Health under Economic Constraints OECD 1984.

These comparisons should be treated with great care. Some countries define health care to include items which we would regard as personal social services and which are not included in our NHS figures. The share of public expenditure on health care in GDP is affected by several factors, including the definition of public expenditure and the balance between public and private provision. These differences and many others mean that precise comparisons cannot be made.

The lack of comparable data on the wages of health care workers in different countries makes it impossible to calculate the extent to which variations in these wage levels contribute to variations in the share of expenditure on health care in GDP.

Population (Distribution)

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the percentage distribution of the population as a whole in England by socio-economic group as used for census purposes in 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983 and 1984, respectively.

Mr. John Patten: The information required is available only for years between population censuses from the general household survey and for combined categories of socio-economic group. These figures are shown in the table. Figures for 1984 are not yet available.

Socio-economic groups of the population in England

Percentages

Socio-economic group	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*
Professional (self-employed and employees) workers	5	4	5	5
Employers and Managers	16	14	16	16
Intermediate and Junior non manual workers	21	21	21	20
Skilled manual and Own Account (non professional) workers	36	36	35	34
Semi-skilled manual and Personal Service workers	17	19	18	19
Unskilled manual workers	5	5	5	6
BASE (=100 per cent.)	25,333	26,169	21,473	21,114

In this table members of the Armed Forces, full-time students and those who have never worked have been excluded. Moreover a married woman is classified according to the socio-economic group of her husband if he is in the household, and a child under 16 is classified according to the socio-economic group of the father (if there is no father in the household the child is classified according to the socio-economic group of the head of household).

The General Household Survey is based on a sample of households and differences in these percentages from year to year are subject to sampling error.

Fuller details of the number of households in England and Wales classified by the socio-economic group of the household head—at the time of the 1981 Census—can be found in Table 8 of the Census 1981 report on Household and Family Composition.

Back Pain

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when the back pain study by the University of Surrey sponsored by his Department will be published;

if he will publish any interim statistics and information already available to his Department in the *Official Report;* and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I refer the hon. Member to my reply on 27 March to the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) at column *253-4*.

Iranian Servicemen (Medical Treatment)

Mr. Greg Knight asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many Iranian servicemen have received medical treatment in the United Kingdom during the last six months, what was the cost of such treatment; and at whose expense such treatment was given.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I understand that during the past six months, visas have been issued to 37 Iranian servicemen to travel to this country for medical treatment and that treatment has been given in private hospitals and paid for by an Iranian organisation. We have no information on the costs involved nor on the numbers who have actually travelled.

Dovenby Hospital, Cumbria

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Social Services for what purpose an open market valuation is being placed on Dovenby hospital in Cumbria.

Mr. John Patten: The report on underused and surplus property in the National Health Service—published in January 1984 — recommended that all NHS property should be valued as part of a wider exercise to create a comprehensive estate data base. I understand that the valuation of Dovenby hospital follows that recommendation.

Mr Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many offers have been made or expressions of interest shown by private interests in the site or parts of the site of the Dovenby hospital in Cumbria.

Mr. John Patten: We do not have this information. The hon. Member may care to contact the West Cumbria health authority.

RHAs (Property)

Mr Steen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the regional health authorities which have sought professional advice on their property holdings, following his Department's circular 22/83.

Mr. John Patten: Thirteen regional health authorities have regional estates surveyors in post and eight regions have set up regional property panels. Two regions—including the one which does not employ a regional estates surveyor — have appointed firms of outside agents to give them comprehensive advice on property matters.

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he has yet had cause to penalise any regional health authority for not implementing the system of notional rents for property, as set out in his Department's circular 22/83: and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will list the regional health authorities which have already complied with his Department's circular 22/83 with regard to the introduction of a system of notional rents on property.

Mr. John Patten: No region has a full notional rental system in operation. It has proved necessary for the Department to undertake further substantial development work before a satisfactory system can become fully operational. This work is planned to be completed shortly. No regional health authority has therefore been penalised for not introducing a system.

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the amount of property and land, in each of the regional health authorities, which has been sold as a result of the changes in estate management practice set out in his Department's circular 22/83.

Mr. John Patten: Circular HC(83)22 gave guidance on a variety of aspects of good estate management. It is not possible to determine what proportion of land sold is as a direct result from the circular's advice. Land sales for the year ending 31 March 1984 were as follows:

Region	*Disposals in the Year* *Total Acreage*	*Total Receipts £000s*
Northern	20	858
Yorkshire	88	844
Trent	55	2,342
East Anglian	6	934
North West Thames	13	6,096
North East Thames	13	3,771
South East Thames	8	1,570
South West Thames	7	2,409
Wessex	233	1,238
Oxford	66	1,522
South Western	80	972
West Midlands	83	1,930
Mersey	148	1,464
North Western	8	999
BG/SHAs	30	4,559
England	858	31,508

Speech Therapy Services

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) pursuant to his answer of 20 March, *Official Report,* column *503,* what are the terms of the appointment of Mrs. Susan Swan as the new adviser to his Department on speech therapy services; what are the terms of the appointment of his Department's existing advisers on occupational therapy and physiotherapy, respectively; and if he will make a statement about the reasons for any differences between the terms of Mrs. Swan's appointment and those of his Department's advisers on occupational therapy and physiotherapy;

(2) pursuant to his answer of 20 March, *Official Report,* column *503,* how many days per year he expects Mrs. Susan Swan to devote to her duties as his Department's new adviser on speech therapy services; how this figure was determined; how it compares with the equivalent figures for his Department's advisers on occupational therapy and physiotherapy; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what representations he has received from the College of Speech Therapists regarding the terms of the appointment of Mrs. Susan Swan as his Department's new adviser on speech therapy services; and what response he has made;

(4) if he will appoint a full-time adviser to his Department on speech therapy services.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The terms of appointment of Mrs. Susan Swan as adviser to the Secretary of State on speech therapy services are that she is to provide advice on

> the effect of current policies on speech therapy services; the formulation of future policies relating to speech therapy services; other matters connected with speech therapy.

Within this she will advise on the planning, provision and development of speech therapy in the context of rehabilitation and education services, and on the work of speech therapists, and in service training of speech therapists.

The physiotherapy and occupational therapy officers are full-time established officers of our Department and each has at present a full-time temporary assistant. The difference between the need for established posts within the Department for physiotherapy and occupational therapy and that for an external adviser lies in the relatively smaller number of issues that arise in the content of speech therapy. On the basis of experience in the past two years, the Department needs to call on the advice of the speech therapy adviser to the extent of some two days per month. The position will be reviewed if our needs for advice increase.

We have received no representations from the College of Speech Therapists about Mrs. Swan's appointment.

Talking Newspaper Association for the Blind (Correspondence)

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services why there has been no reply to the letter sent to him on 20 November 1984 by Mr. Ted Davis, chairman of the Talking Newspaper Association for the Blind of the United Kingdom; when he intends to reply; if he will publish the exchange of correspondence in the *Official Report;* and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Mr. Davis's letter contained a request for funding under section 64 of the Health Service and Public Health Act 1968 as from July 1985. I regret that it has taken longer to consider than I would have wished. I hope to write to Mr. Davis shortly and will arrange for a copy to be sent both to the right hon. Member and to my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith) who has also written to me about this matter.

Cervical Screening

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what system for the call and re-call of women who need or who have had cervical smears is operated by the Barking, Havering and Brentwood district health Authority.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I refer the hon. Member to my reply on 18 March to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) at column 635. We do not routinely collect information on local screening services, but the hon. Member may wish to approach Barking, Havering and Brentwood health authority for the details he requires.

DEFENCE

Cleaners (Dismissal)

Mr. Bidwell asked the Secretary of State for Defence what recent representations he has received concerning the dismissal of Mrs. Molly Balkinson and other cleaners at the Ministry of Defence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: I received a letter from the Transport and General Workers Union on 21 March 1985. The question of Mrs. Balkinson's dismissal is the subject of proceedings before an industrial tribunal and it will not therefore be proper for me to make a statement about the case.

Obsolete Service Supplies (Disposal)

Mr. Michael Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many overseas contractors have received orders for the disposal of obsolete service supplies in each of the last three years; and if he will list the categories of the supplies concerned.

Mr. Butler: It is not the Department's practice to place orders with contractors for the disposal of obsolete service supplies. Stores for which there is no longer any requirement are normally disposed of by public auction or by competitive tender.

Intermedica Ltd.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether his Department has any links or contracts with Intermedica Ltd.; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butler: Our searches have not revealed any Ministry of Defence contract or other link with Intermedica Ltd. whose name does not appear on the Register of Limited Companies. It would not however be possible without disproportionate effort to establish the position for contracts below £5,000 or placed locally by establishments. If the hon. Member is aware of any particular case perhaps he would write to me with any questions he may have about it.

British Military Nuclear Reactors

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Defence when the British military nuclear reactors at Calder Hall and Chapelcross are expected to become obsolete.

Mr. Butler: The reactor facilities at Calder Hall and Chapelcross, which are maintained to meet any defence requirements, are owned and operated by British Nuclear Fuels plc. BNF plc intends to operate the reactors as long as economies and safety requirements allow, and advises that such operation is likely to continue at least well into the next decade.

American Special Commission on Binaries

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he intends to meet members of the American special commission on binaries while they are in London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: No. At their request members of the United States Presidential Review Commission did, however, pay a call on senior United Kingdom officials in London in the course of a visit to Europe last week.

Crown Proceedings Act

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many certificates have been issued under section 10 of the Crown Proceedings Act each year since 1955, broken down according to whether issued under section 10(3)*(a)* or section 10(3)*(b)*.

Mr. Lee: Records are not maintained in such a way as to enable the information requested to be provided.

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will seek to amend the Crown Proceedings Act, section 10, to ensure that immunity from liability applies only in the event of declaration of war or declaration of state of emergency.

Mr. Lee: It would be inappropriate to take any action, legislative or otherwise, with regard to the operation and effects of section 10 of the Crown Proceedings Act 1947 until the current review of that section is completed.

Armed Forces (Travel Discounts)

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether discounts for travel by British Rail are to be withdrawn from members of the armed forces.

Mr. Lee: It is assumed that the discounts to which reference is made are those available to service personnel and their dependants under the forces railcard scheme. This scheme is a concession given by British Rail which is comparable to the discounted schemes available to pensioners, students and other groups within the community. The British Railways Board, which is responsible for the scheme, will no doubt be able to provide full details of the scheme and changes which are planned. However, I understand that a railcard offering discounted travel will continue to be available to members of the armed forces.

United Scientific Holdings (Contract)

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will make a statement on the contract with United Scientific Holdings for the supply of gun pods for Phantom fighter aircraft;

(2) what was the cost of the repair work to the Phantom aircraft cannon pods bought from United Scientific Holdings; and who is to pay for the repair work.

Mr. Butler: No. I do not wish to prejudice the outcome of current contractual negotiations with the company by making any statement on the details of this case.

Honduras

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) whether any British defence manufacturer has been granted permission to export gun systems to the Honduras Government;

(2) whether any British company was involved in any military contracts with the Honduras Government in 1984; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butler: It has been the consistent policy of this and previous Administrations not to disclose details of defence sales business with other countries. However, it has always been, and will remain the Government's policy to

exercise strict control over the sale of arms and all such business is considered carefully on its merits on a case by case basis.

Military Bases (Maintenance)

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Defence who pays for the repairs and maintenance of buildings and runways on bases where facilities are shared with United States' forces.

Mr. Lee: Arrangements between the Governments of the United States and the United Kingdom concerning the burden—sharing of the support for United States forces in this country are confidential.

Nuclear Devices

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any information about tests of any triggering devices, similar to those referred to in the paper relating to consideration of trials of an atomic device near Wick, a copy of which he has placed in the Library, in the United Kingdom subsequent to 1954; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Defence if, referring to the documents on the testing of initiators placed by his Department in the Library on 26 March, he will make a statement as to *(a)* what an initiator is, *(b)* what its function is and *(c)* what nuclear radiation is produced.

Mr. Butler: I refer the hon. Members to the answer which the Prime Minister gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes).

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether there has been any subsequent revision in the light of experience of any of the figures for the area of contamination both ground and air from those stated in the documents concerning initiator testing recently placed in the Library, in particular the prognostications contained in paragraphs three, four, five and six of the paper on initiator trials September 1954 Wick or Australia dated 5 January 1954.

Mr. Butler: No.

Directorate General of the Defence Accounts (Efficiency Audit)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will provide details of the financial and manpower savings projected by the first phase in the efficiency audit of the Directorate General of the Defence Accounts conducted by Coopers and Lybrand.

Mr. Butler: In their report on phase I of the efficiency audit Coopers and Lybrand Associates offered the view that there are further major efficiency gains which could be made by reviewing and changing some of the present computer and clerical systems. No specific financial or manpower savings were projected.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will modify the terms of reference given to Coopers and Lybrand for phase two of the efficiency audit of the Directorate General of the Defence Accounts to exclude the civilian pay and records office in Portsmouth.

Mr. Butler: No.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence why the Department of Environment pay accounts processed by the Directorate General of the Defence Accounts are not included in the Coopers and Lybrand audit of the Directorate General of Defence Audits.

Mr. Butler: The processing by DGDA of Department of Environment industrial pay accounts was covered by the Coopers and Lybrand audit.

Civil Servants (Pay)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence if it is his policy that the payment of civil servants employed in sensitive areas, such as those in contact with members of the Royal Family, Members of Parliament, and so on, will continue to be processed by civil servants.

Mr. Butler: There are no plans to change the present pay processing arrangements.

Civilian Pay and Record Office, Portsmouth

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the estimated operational life of the new computer facility installed at the civilian pay and record office in Portsmouth; and at what cost this facility is to be installed.

Mr. Butler: The normal estimated operational life for a computer facility of the type to be installed at CPRO Portsmouth is 10 years, though it has often proved economic to replace equipment sooner. The cost of the new computer facility will be just over £1 million.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions have taken place between his Department and other organisations concerning proposals to offer for tender to private contractors work currently undertaken by the civilian pay and records office Portsmouth.

Mr. Butler: None. There are no proposals to offer for tender to private contractors work currently undertaken by the CPRO Portsmouth.

Western Isles (Air Traffic)

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Defence what steps he has taken to satisfy himself that the arrangements for the separation of military and civil air traffic over the Western Isles will be adequate to cope with the increased levels of military air traffic in this area as a result of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation redevelopment of Stornoway airport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: Flying activities at Stornoway will continue to be conducted in accordance with existing regulations which govern the operation of civil and military aircraft at Stornoway and all other similar airfields in the United Kingdom. The regulations have been developed over many years and take account of all relevant factors. They are considered to be adequate to maintain the separation of military and civil air traffic over the Western Isles.

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the proportion of low level military flights in United Kingdom airspace which included overflight of the Western Isles, giving figures for each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Lee: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Defence what changes have been made to air traffic control and safety procedures, particularly those designed to ensure safe separation of civil from military air traffic, over the Western Isles following the incorporation of that area into the United Kingdom military low flying system in 1979.

Mr. Lee: None.

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Defence which of the air misses between civil and military aircraft recorded over the Western Isles in 1973, 1974, 1976, 1980 and 1982 occurred at heights less than 2,000 ft above ground level.

Mr. Lee: Those which occurred in 1976, 1980 and 1982.

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Defence what changes have been made to the requirements for military aircraft to report their position in the airspace over and adjacent to the Western Isles as a result of the air misses occurring in 1973, 1974, 1976, 1980 and 1982.

Mr. Lee: None.

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Defence what changes have been made to the requirements for military aircraft to report their position in the vicinity of Stornoway airport as a result of the air misses occurring in 1973, 1974 and 1976.

Mr. Lee: None.

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Defence what changes have been made to air traffic control and safety procedures in the air space over and adjacent to the Western Isles as a result of the air misses occurring in 1973, 1974, 1976, 1980 and 1982.

Mr. Lee: None.

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Defence what changes have been made to air traffic control and air safety procedures in the vicinity of Stornoway airport as a result of air misses occurring in 1973, 1974 and 1976.

Mr. Lee: None.

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list his powers to prevent air traffic controllers at civil airports from inviting, or allowing, military aircraft flying in the vicinity of those airports, to perform low passes and approaches for the benefit of aircraft enthusiasts on the ground.

Mr. Lee: The Secretary of State for Defence holds no powers of control over civilian air traffic controllers who are responsible for air traffic movements in the vicinity of civil airports.

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many practice approaches and practice diversions by military aircraft have been carried out at Stornoway airport in each year since, and including, 1978; and if he will provide a monthly breakdown of the figures.

Mr. Lee: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave him on 12 December 1984, at column 504.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 3 April 1985

WALES

Equal Opportunities Officer

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will now appoint a departmental equal opportunities officer with responsibility for co-ordinating the Civil Service policy of non-discrimination within his Department.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I refer the hon. and learned Gentleman to the reply given to him on 14 May 1984 by my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, at column 46.

Milk Quotas

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many farmers in Wales and in Dyfed have now decided to abandon their application for monetary compensation under the outgoers scheme; and how many litres of quota this has made available for redistribution through the secondary quota;

(2) how many farmers in each of the counties in Wales have decided against accepting the terms offered to them by the milk outgoers scheme after having indicated their unequivocal interest in withdrawing from milk production with its financial settlement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The following table gives the fullest breakdown available and shows the position as at 22 March 1985:

Divisional Office	*Original application (closing date 28 August 1984)*		*Withdrawals/Rejections*	
	Number	*Quota (million litres)*	*Number*	*Quota (million litres)*
Carmarthen (Dyfed)	328	44·4	203	23·8
Caernarfon (Gwynedd)	111	10·2	66	6·3
Cardiff (Gwent, Mid-Glamorgan, South Glamorgan and West Glamorgan)	90	20·9	48	8·4
Llandrindod Wells (Powys)	56	6·5	29	3·3
Ruthin (Clwyd)	116	20·0	64	8·9
WALES	701	102·0	410	50·7

It is not possible to make a meaningful distinction between withdrawals and rejections, as some farmers will have given effect to their decision to withdraw by failing to respond to their firm offers in the time allowed.

No additional quota is made available as a result of these withdrawals and rejections.

Meat Consumption

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he proposes taking to halt the decline in beef, lamb and pork consumption in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: A number of initiatives are already under way to improve the marketing and consumption of meat, particularly of leaner cuts. Given the importance of the livestock sector in Wales, I naturally take every opportunity to encourage and support these developments.

Public Expenditure Plan

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Wales why a public expenditure plan for Wales is not published similar to the" Commentary on the Scotland Programme".

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Extensive information concerning expenditure within my responsibility is provided by the Wales chapter of the annual White Paper on public expenditure and by the various publications listed at the end of that chapter. I do not believe that there is a need for a further publication.

Rates

Mr. Gwilym Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Hooson), *Official Report*, 14 January, column *26*, if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of the rate increases for all the county councils in Wales for 1985-86.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The information is as follows:

County council	*Average poundage 1984-85*	*Average poundage 1985-86*	*Percentage change*
Clwyd	162·00	172·00	6·17
Dyfed	142·67	170·62	19·59
Gwent	141·00	146·00	3·55
Gwynedd	145·00	150·00	3·45
Mid Glamorgan	180·4	187·5	3·93
Powys	134·00	154·00	14·93
South Glamorgan	132·4	147·4	11·33
West Glamorgan	175·00	182·27	4·15

Rose Row, Cwmbach

Mr. Hubbard-Miles asked the Secretary of State for Wales whether he has concluded a settlement with the Cynon Valley borough council in respect of his Department's financial responsibility arising from the development of Rose row, Cwmbach, Aberdare in 1965.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Last week, £400,892 was paid by the Department to the council in full and final settlement of the council's claim.

ENERGY

Nuclear Power Industry

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Energy what public funds, measured at constant prices, have gone into the United Kingdom fast breeder nuclear power programme in each of the past 10 years; and when he expects to receive an economic return on this investment.

Mr. Goodlad: Government expenditure on fast reactor research and development over the past 10 years has been (at 1984-85 prices):

Year	*£ million*
1975-76	*155·3
1976-77	*145·9
1977-78	152·4
1978-79	166·0
1979-80	134·7
1980-81	132·4
1981-82	125·7
1982-83	116·1
1983-84	125·6
†1984-85	104·3

* In these years, expenditure on reactor safety was included within a separate aggregated category. It is estimated that some £9-13 million (1984-85 prices) per annum was spent on fast reactor safety in this period.
† Estimated.

In addition, the CEGB and BNFL have spent relatively small sums on fast reactor work, mainly within their own organisations.

The Government's policy on the fast reactor research programme was set out in my right hon. Friend's replies of 29 November 1982 to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Ancram), at columns 2-3, and of 16 January 1984 to the hon. Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry), at columns 47-48.

The time scale on which fast reactors will become economically competitive with thermal nuclear reactors depends on a number of factors. These include:

(i) the future cost of thermal nuclear generation (which depends in part on longer term trends in the price of uranium); and

(ii) the extent to which the European collaborative research and development programme leads to reductions in the capital and fuel cycle costs of the fast reactor.

Electricity (Standing Charges)

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether he is considering any new measures to assist small domestic consumers of electricity to meet the cost of standing charges, following the decision of the London electricity board to discontinue the standing charge rebate scheme introduced in 1983.

Mr. Goodlad: I understand that the electricity supply industry is considering how deserving consumers affected by the abolition of the rebate scheme could be assisted.

Departmental Legislation

Mr. Galley asked the Secretary of State for Energy how many Acts of Parliament have been promoted and how many statutory instruments made by his Department, or predecessor Departments covering his areas of responsibility, in each of the last 20 years.

Mr. Peter Walker: Her Majesty's Stationery Office publishes annually "Lists of Statutory Instruments" and "Tables and Indices to Public and General Acts and General Synod Measures". Both of these are currently up to date to the end of 1983.

The number of Acts promoted by the Department of Energy, and statutory instruments made, during each year from the creation of the Department in January 1974 to the end of 1984 is as follows:

	Acts	*SIs*
1974	—	35
1975	2	44
1976	3	76
1977	2	73
1978	1	24
1979	—	29
1980	2	45
1981	4	37
1982	2	51
1983	3	107
1984	—	186
	19	707

Given the changes to the machinery of Government over the last 20 years, apportionment of the Acts or statutory instruments — including some of those in the above list — to the areas of present ministerial responsibility could be done only at disproportionate cost.

Coal Industry Dispute

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether any information relating to striking miners was passed from the police to the National Coal Board.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. and learned Friend is making inquiries of the chief constables concerned in England and Wales, and I shall reply as soon as possible.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Veterinary Services (Advertising)

Mr. Hickmet asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what action he intends to take on the recommendations in the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's report on the "Supply of Veterinary Services in Relation to Restrictions on Advertising"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fletcher: Following discussions which I and the Director General of Fair Trading have had with the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, the college is to issue a code of advertising practice to provide guidance to its members with regard to their general right to advertise and the ways in which they may advertise. The code will come into effect on 1 June 1985.

In its report published in 1976 the Monopolies and Mergers Commission found that restrictions in the college's guide to professional conduct prohibited individual veterinary practices from engaging in any form of advertising, promotion or publicity except for a bare minimum that the profession regarded as being essential for keeping the public informed of the existence and location of practices or as being desirable in the interests of the profession as a whole. The commission concluded that these restrictions operated against the public interest, and it considered that they should be terminated and

replaced by a rule that would permit veterinary practices to use such methods of publicity as they thought fit subject to certain constraints in respect of claims of superiority, inaccuracies, claims to specialisation, and professional propriety.

The college's code of advertising practice, together with consequential amendments to the guide to professional practice, represents a significant relaxation of the rules governing advertising by vets. I welcome this. In certain respects, notably the continuing prohibition of fee advertising and direct mailing, the new rules are more restrictive than the commission's report considered necessary to protect the interests of either clients or patients; and I should have preferred the code to follow more closely the commission's recommendations in these respects. But I note that the college's advisory committee constantly reviews the college's position in ethical matters, and I hope that the college will keep under review the scope and operation of its rules on advertising, and in the light of experience of its operation consider the scope for further relaxation. I have asked the Director General of Fair Trading, as part of his responsibilities for keeping competition in the economy under review, to review the operation of the code in consultation with the college, and to report to me in two years' time.

Animal Waste (Report)

Mr. Hickmet asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on the "Supply of Animal Waste in Great Britain" is to be published; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fletcher: The report is published today. The commission found that a monopoly situation existed in that about 44 per cent. of animal waste was supplied to the Prosper de Mulder Group. It also found that implementation of the company's pricing policy for purchases of animal waste was against the public interest. This included both prices paid by the company to abattoirs for waste material for rendering and also prices paid to the abattoirs for contracts to operate their gut-rooms, where abdominal material is recovered and sorted. The commission found that in both cases, when faced with loss of supplies, Prosper de Mulder attempted to secure or recover them by a price campaign, aimed mainly at particular competitors, regardless of whether the prices paid or offered would involve it in losses (which might be met through cross-subsidation). The particular effect adverse to the public interest was that this was likely to restrict competition in rendering or in gut-room operation.

The commission found no current cases of such pricing for material for rendering, but drew attention to the fact that any future examples of predatory pricing in this field could be investigated under the Competition Act 1980. Regarding gut-room contracts there was a current problem and the commission therefore recommended that Prosper de Mulder should give an undertaking that it would not offer for or enter into gut-room contracts without having first established a reasonable expectation that the operation of any particular gut-room, taken on its own, would be carried on at a profit. There should be no cross-subsidisation between gut-room business and other parts of the company's business or between any individual gut-room operations.

The commission also considered allegations that Prosper de Mulder might be refusing to collect an abattoir's low grade material unless it was also offered the high grade material. The commission found no specific cases of this conditional buying and they accepted an assurance from Prosper de Mulder that it never had, nor ever would follow, this practice.

Finally, the commission made two further suggestions for action to maintain competition in the industry. First, it pointed out that further acquisitions of renderers on waste collectors by Prosper de Mulder could be referred for investigation under the merger provisions of the Fair Trading Act, and suggested that this be considered. Secondly, it considered that the tendency of local authorities to seek stricter enforcement of anti-pollution measures might cause problems for existing renderers and possible new entrants to the market. It recognised the need for the public to be protected by such measures and had no wish to suggest any relaxation of steps to enforce them; but it expressed interest in a suggestion made to it that a system of voluntary arbitration might be set up under which a member of the Institute of Environmental Health Officers and a member of the United Kingdom Renderers Associations would visit plants with odour problems and suggest remedies.

I accept the findings of this report. I am asking the Director General of Fair Trading to open discussions with Prosper de Mulder Ltd. with a view to securing an appropriate undertaking regarding gut-room contracts. I am also asking the Director General to seek assurances from the company that it will not pursue a policy of conditional buying and that it will notify the Director General in advance of any proposal to acquire any other rendering business.

I have asked my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment to consider the commission's suggestion regarding environmental health controls.

British Aerospace plc

Mr. Wilkinson asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement about the proposed sale of the Government shareholding in British Aerospace plc.

Mr. Pattie: A preliminary prospectus for the joint offer of shares by the Government and the company was issued today.

The preliminary prospectus is a draft, subject to completion and amendment, of the final prospectus for the offer. The offer will be for a total of some 146·9 million ordinary shares, of which 96,852,746 will be offered for sale by the Government (representing the whole of the Government's residual ordinary shareholding in the company) and 50 million will be new shares issued by the company.

The company has given notice of an extraordinary general meeting, convened for 29 April 1985, to seek shareholders' approval of certain matters necessary for the offer to proceed. These include the creation of a special share, to be held by the Secretary of State. The consent of the special shareholder will be required for any change to specified provisions of the company's articles of association, including those dealing with United Kingdom control. Some detailed amendments to those provisions are also being proposed.

Subject to market conditions the offer is intended to take place in early May.

Rural Development Areas (Aid)

57. **Mr. Beith** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will seek to secure that rural development areas determined by the Development Commission become eligible for European regional aid.

Mr. Trippier: The areas eligible for aid from the European regional development fund have already been extended as far as possible. Some rural development areas, determined by the Development Commission, are eligible where they are also in an assisted area.

Trade Statistics

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether the volume figures given in special table B of the "United Nations Monthly Bulletin of Statistics" for the volume of exports of manufactures from the United Kingdom are statistically consistent with those given in table B7 of the "Monthly Review of External Trade Statistics"; and if he will account for differences in the actual numbers.

Mr. Channon: In principle the two series are identical apart from the deflator used, which in the UN source is a unit value index and in the United Kingdom source is an average value index. In practice the effect of this is small; most of the difference between the series is due to revisions to export figures which the UN have not incorporated.

Imports and Exports

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the value of *(a)* imports and *(b)* exports of the following commodities in 1980 and 1984 at current prices: (i) cereals, (ii) all agricultural products, (iii) motor vehicles, (iv) coal, (v) steel and (vi) electrical goods; and if he will show the net increase or decrease since 1980 in money and percentage terms.

Mr. Channon: The information is as follows:

Value £ million

	(a): UK imports (cif)				*(b): UK exports (fob)*			
	1980 Imports	*1984* Imports*	*Change £ million*	*Change Percentage*	*1980 Exports*	*1984* Exports*	*Change £ million*	*Change Percentage*
(i) Cereals and cereal preparations	603	629	+26	+4	456	993	+537	+118
(ii) Agricultural products	6,003	8,592	+2,589	+43	2,125	3,260	+1,135	+53
(iii) Motor vehicles	2,493	4,357	+1,864	+75	1,525	1,485	−40	−3
(iv) Coal	215	493	+279	+130	116	72	−44	−38
(v) Steel	1,274	1,244	−31	−2	769	1,288	+519	+68
(vi) Electrical goods	3,838	9,988	+6,150	+160	4,149	7,331	+3,182	+77

Sources: The following SITC R2 data in the UK *Overseas Trade Statistics*: (i) Division 04, (ii) Sections O & 4 and Division 22, (iii) Groups 781, 782, 783 and Sub-group 784.1, Sub-groups 322.1 and 322.2, (v) Groups 672-675, Sub-groups 678.2, .3, .4 and 779.3, and Items 676.01 (part), 676.02 (part), 679.42, and 791.99 (part), (vi) Divisions 75, 76, 77 and Group 716.

*1984 figures are provisional.

South Africa

Mr. Caborn asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has as to the number of British trade missions which visited South Africa in each year from 1979; how many such missions received a grant from his Department; what was the average grant per mission in each year; and what was the total cost to his Department in each year.

Mr. Channon: The Department does not keep records of trade missions to South Africa outside the BOTB scheme.

Details of missions which received BOTB financial support for the years specified are as follows:

Year	*Number of missions*	*Annual value of BOTB subvention (£)*
1979	13	60,375
1980	11	57,960
1981	15	113,645
1982	14	92,325
1983	14	127,680
1984	14	127,200
1985 (1st quarter)	4	36,480

The grant to each mission member for the period until 31 March 1981 was £345; from 1 April 1981 to 31 October 1982, £415; from 1 November 1982 to date, £480.

Mr. Caborn asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many export credit guarantees for exports to South Africa were granted in each of the years from 1979; and what was the total value of such guarantees for each year.

Mr. Channon: As a large part of the Export Credits Guarantee Department's business is conducted under comprehensive policies it is not possible to advise on the number of guarantees issued in each year.

It has been the policy of successive administrations not to discuss details of the Department's exposure on individual markets.

New Businesses

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is his estimate of the average annual turnover of a new business in its first, second and fourth years respectively.

Mr. Trippier: Those traders which register for VAT provide turnover information but there are too many uncertainties for estimates to be made in the form requested; we have no knowledge of when a business starts to trade and many businesses never register for VAT. The problems were discussed in the article "Business starts and

stops: analysis by turnover and sector of trade, UK 1980-83" (*British Business* 18 May 1984) copies of which were placed in the Library.

Job Creation

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what is his estimate of the average number of jobs created by a new business by the end of its first fourth and eighth years, respectively;

(2) what is his estimate of the number of jobs created on average by a small business per £1,000 turnover;

(3) what is his estimate of the number of jobs created on average by a high technology company in its first five years of operation.

Mr. Trippier: This information is not available. The VAT system, which is our source of information, does not collect employment details.

Small Businesses

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is his Department's definition of a small business.

Mr. Trippier: There are no hard and fast rules about defining a small firm and different definitions can be appropriate for specific purposes. In manufacturing, we stick by and large to the definition of 200 employees or less and use a variety of thresholds, usually related to annual turnover, in the other sectors.

Our views were set out in some detail in the article "How Small is a Small Firm" (*British Business* 22 June 1984) copies of which were placed in the Library.

Textile Industry

Mr. James Lamond asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is his response to the report entitled "The Winding Down of Textiles", published by the board for social responsibility in the diocese of Manchester, a copy of which has been sent to him; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what evidence he has of investment by Governments of other member countries of the EEC in their domestic textile industries under schemes which have not received the approval of the European Commission in each of the years since 1975.

Mr. Trippier [*pursuant to his reply*, 1 April 1985, c. *470*]: Comprehensive information about the investment support given to particular companies in other member states is not available. Sectoral aid schemes for the textile and clothing industry have generally been brought into operation only after Commission approval. The only exception we know of is a scheme for reduced social charges in France which operated for a time without such approval.

The Commission has now, however, stated that sectoral aid schemes in the textile sector are in principle no longer acceptable and the Government intend to give the Commission their full support in ensuring that this policy is implemented.

National Girobank

Mr. Eggar asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement about the financial objective for the National Girobank.

Mr. Pattie: The existing target expired on 3 April 1985. A new objective has been agreed with the Post Office Board to run for three years from 4 April 1985. During this period, the target will be for the National Girobank to make an annual average return, before interest on long-term loans from the Secretary of State, of 22 per cent. of mean net assets on the historical cost accounting convention.

Humberside (European Regional Development Fund)

Mr. Hickmet asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether any further tranches of European regional development fund non-quota funds are to be made available to Humberside; what sums will be allocated to Glanford and Scunthorpe from that source by his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier [*pursuant to his reply*, 1 April 1985, c. 469]: There may be further ERDF non-quota aid for steel industry areas, but as yet there are no specific arrangements.

The European Commission has also published proposals for ERDF non-quota aid for areas where fisheries activities have declined, under which £7·4 million would be allocated to the United Kingdom in respect of Hull and Grimsby. However, it is not clear when these proposals will be considered by the Council.

It is not possible at this stage to say how much from either possible sources of aid would go to Glanford and Scunthorpe.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish in the *Official Report* the complete range of tourism services provided within the countries of the European Economic Community which attract value added tax together with the individual percentage rates currently being levied.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 March 1985, c. 209]: The table showing the percentage rates of value added tax applying to the main areas of tourist expenditure in EC member states contained an error. In Ireland, value added tax is charged at 10 per cent. on hotel rooms and not 23 per cent. as given. The corrected table is as follows:

	Belgium	*Denmark*	*France*	*Germany*	*Ireland*	*Italy*	*Luxembourg*	*Netherlands*	*United Kingdom*
Hotels—rooms	6	22	17, 18·6	14	10	19, 38	6	5	15
Hotels—meals	19	22	18·6	14	23	19, 38	6	5	15
Restaurants	17	22	18·6	14	23	9	6	5	15
International Passenger Transport									

	Belgium	Denmark	France	Germany	Ireland	Italy	Luxembourg	Netherlands	United Kingdom
Air	0	exempt	0	0	exempt	0	0	0	0
Sea	0	exempt	0	0	exempt	0	0	0	0
Rail	*6	exempt	0	*7	exempt	0	0	*5	0
Road	*6	exempt	*18·6	*7	exempt	0	0	*5	0
Public Transport	6	exempt	7	‖7	exempt	exempt	6	5	0
Theatre	6	22	7	exempt	exempt	9	6	19	15
Clothes	19	22	18·6	14	10	•18, 38	12	19	15
Books and maps	6	22	7	7	0	■2	6	5	0
Gold and gold-plated jewellery	25	22	33·33	¶14	23	18	12	19	15
Antiques	17	†22	18·6	¶14	23	18	12	5	15

* Only applies to the portion of travel within the national territory.
† Sculptures, paintings, drawings and original lithographs are exempt.
‡ Higher rate applies to luxury hotels.
‖ For journeys of less than 50 kms within towns; otherwise 14 per cent. in Germany, 18 per cent. in Italy.
¶ "Works of art and collectors' pieces" are taxed at 7 per cent.
• Higher rate applies to furs and hides.
■ Antique books are taxed at 10 per cent.

SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND

Coal Industry Dispute

Mr. Canavan asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland how many miners are still awaiting trial as a result of incidents arising from the miners' strike; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: As at 22 March 1985, 247 persons had still to be dealt with by the courts in respect of offences arising out of the miners' strike.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Immigration

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many husbands of women who are British citizens were granted entry clearance to join their wives in the United Kingdom in each of the last five years for which records are available;

(2) how many husbands of women who have obtained indefinite leave to remain in the United Kingdom were granted entry clearance to join their wives in the United Kingdom in each of the last five years for which records are available.

Mr. Waddington: Information on the number of husbands in the Indian sub-continent granted entry clearance to the United Kingdom is given in table 8 of "Control of Immigration: Statistics, United Kingdom, 1983" (Cmnd. 9246) and in table 9 of the Home Office statistical bulletin "Control of Immigration: Statistics, Fourth Quarter and Year 1984" (Issue 5/85). Corresponding information for countries outside the Indian sub-continent is not available.

Information on husbands granted entry clearance in the Indian sub-continent since 1980 under the 1977 immigration rules is not available separately for husbands of women who are British citizens and who are not British citizens respectively. The requirements of the 1980 and 1983 rules specify that the wife must be a British citizen, and entry clearance is granted only very exceptionally to a husband where his wife is not a British citizen.

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average length of time taken to process applications from the husbands of women who are British citizens who are seeking to obtain entry clearance to join their wives in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Waddington: Information on waiting times is available only for the Indian sub-continent, where husbands and fiancés applying for entry clearance to the United Kingdom are put in the same queue as non-priority applicants for immediate settlement. The waiting times to first interview for applicants in this "main queue" are given in table 10 of the Home Office statistical bulletin "Control of Immigration: Statistics, Fourth Quarter and Year 1984" (Issue 5/85). Applications are decided at the first interview unless further inquiries need to be made or a refusal is followed by an appeal, in which case the time taken depends upon the particular circumstances of the application.

Tactical Aid Group (Manchester)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Greater Manchester about the role of his force's tactical aid group; and if he will make a statement on the substance of the report.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The chief constable of Greater Manchester informs me that the role of his force's tactical aid group is to maintain a support team to give assistance to divisional and departmental commanders in a variety of policing operations. These include hijacks and hostage takings; the containment of armed and besieged criminals; searches and cordoning at the scene of bomb incidents and disasters; security of buildings and areas for VIP visits; the support of divisional officers at parades, demonstrations and football matches; assistance in major crime inquiries; escorts for high risk prisoners; and other specialist operations.

Dogs

Mr. Galley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many court orders for the destruction or control of dogs have been issued in each of the last five years.

Mr. Mellor: The available information, which may be incomplete, is as follows. Information for 1984 is not yet available.

Orders made under section 2 of the Dogs Act 1871 to destroy dogs England and Wales

	Number of orders made
1979	750
1980	790
1981	900
1982	520
1983	490

Departmental Legislation

Mr. Galley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Acts of Parliament have been promoted and how many statutory instruments made by his Department, or predecessor Departments covering his areas of responsibility, in each of the last 20 years.

Mr. Brittan: The information, not all of which relates to current areas of responsibility, is as follows:

*Acts of Parliament**		*Statutory Instruments*	
Session	*Number*	*Calendar year*	*Number*
1983-84	5	1984	154
1982-83	2	1983	183
1981-82	3	1982	136
1980-81	4	1981	186
1979-80	5	1980	230
1978-79	2	1979	233
1977-78	6	1978	275
1976-77	2	1977	260
1975-76	4	1976	306
1974-75	5	1975	298
1974	5	1974	197
1973-74	2	1973	159
1972-73	2	1972	121
1971-72	4	1971	159
1970-71	8	1970	150
1969-70	3	1969	132
1968-69	7	1968	172
1967-68	6	1967	174
1966-67	6	1966	116
1965-66	2	1965	150
1964-65	6		

* Does not include Acts sponsored by private Members.

Metropolitan Police (Complaints)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give details of the arrangements which allow officers of the Metropolitan police with misgivings about their duties, complaints about their superior officers or information about malpractice, to put their case direct to the commissoner; how many such requests have been granted and how many refused; and where an appeal lies in the event of a refusal.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Metropolitan police general orders provide that any officer may make written representation to, or request an interview with, any senior officer, including the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis. Requests to see the commissioner must be made in writing and should give—in confidence if the officer so wishes—a brief statement of the reason. I understand that a request for an interview would almost always be granted, but the commissioner would normally ask another senior officer to conduct it on his behalf.

No records are kept of the number of requests made or their outcome.

Football Matches (Policing Costs)

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the cost of policing football matches in England and Wales for each of the last three years.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The information is not collated centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Licensing Laws

Mr. Hayward asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how soon after the key findings of the report by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys on attitudes to the licensing laws in Scotland are available to Her Majesty's Government in June he intends to publish his recommendations regarding the future of the licensing laws in England and Wales.

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. and learned Friend will want to consider carefully both the preliminary key findings of the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys' report and the subsequent full report before deciding whether relaxations in the permitted opening hours of licensed premises in England and Wales should be introduced. He is fully aware of the extent of public interest in this matter, and will wish to make a statement as soon as possible.

Swansea Prison (Suicides)

Mr. Williams asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many suicides and attempted suicides have occurred in Swansea prison in the last two years; how this record compares with that of other prisons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Verdicts of suicide have been returned on 21 prisoners who died in 1983 and 23 prisoners who died in 1984: one of the deaths in 1984 occurred at Swansea. There were also 221 incidents of self-injury with apparent suicidal intent in 1983, of which eight were at Swansea; later figures are not available. Fifteen deaths of prisoners in 1984 and 1985 are still subject to inquests: we are provisionally taking the view that one case at Swansea in 1984 and another in 1985 were cases of suicide.

Prisoners (Statistics)

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the total number of prisoners currently serving more than five years for offences of violence and drug trafficking.

Mr. Mellor [*pursuant to his reply*, 2 April, c. *565*]: It is estimated from central records that on 31 January 1985 between 2,000 and 2,500 persons in prison department establishments in England and Wales were serving sentences of more than five years for offences of violence or drug trafficking within the scope of the parole policy announced on 30 November 1983, that is, as defined under section 32 and schedule 1 of the Criminal Justice Act 1982.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Departmental Achievements

Mr. Pawsey asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list his Department's principal achievements since 1979.

Mr. Jopling: Further to the answers given to my hon. Friends the Members for Welwyn, Hatfield (Mr. Murphy) on 17 May 1984, and for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Heddle) on 31 October 1984, my Department has been responsible for, or played its part in, the following achievements.

At the Dublin summit in December 1984 the Community adopted a text on budgetary discipline based on the agreement reached at Fontainebleau in June. This included a financial guideline for agriculture specifying that net expenditure on agricultural markets should, from 1986, grow less fast than the rate of growth of own resources of the Community.

The Council in February 1985 agreed wide-ranging measures to reform the Community's wine regime, by introducing a guarantee threshold to curb surplus production, by encouraging winegrowers to grub up vineyards, and by a restrictive price policy for as long as the surplus remained.

The Community reached agreement earlier this month on a new agricultural structures regulation which will govern member states' farm investment programmes. The text as finally adopted clearly reflects our concern to continue to exclude wasteful and discriminatory items, to control grant-aid to capital expenditure which may add to surplus products and to ensure that agricultural development takes account of environmental needs. In particular, the Council accepted our proposal that member states should be authorised to designate environmentally sensitive areas in which farmers may be offered incentives to maintain valuable landscapes and wildlife habitats.

In Febuary 1985 we successfully obtained agreement in the Council of Ministers on additional measures to simplify the application of the milk supplementary levy arrangements, including a provision to prevent them from operating as an artificial constraint on those dairy producers with mixed businesses selling milk to the milk marketing boards and also marketing their own milk directly for consumption.

Statutory control over the price of liquid milk in England, Wales and Northern Ireland ended on 31 December 1984, a year ahead of our target date. Controls had already ended in Scotland.

I have brought forward the Food and Environment Protection Bill, which will provide for greater protection of the public and the environment in three main areas. First, it will provide statutory backing for measures intended to protect the public from food affected by incidents involving a release of harmful substances. Secondly, it will provide for improved controls over the dumping of wastes at sea. Thirdly, it will introduce statutory controls on the supply and use of pesticides with a view to achieving a higher level of safety for health and the environment.

We have continued to advise and encourage farmers to take reasonable measures to ensure that farm practices do not result in pollution. This has recently been strengthened by the publication of a code of good agricultural practice, which provides advice to farmers on ways to minimise the risk of pollution of water from the use of fertilisers, manures, farm waste, silage and pesticides.

The Environment Co-ordination Unit established in July 1984 continues to strengthen links within the Ministry to ensure a closely integrated approach to environmental issues.

The higher rates of grants for hedges, shelter belts and traditional walls are now payable in the lowlands as well as in the less favoured areas. We are also providing half the cost of an experimental grazing scheme designed to help safeguard the unique landscape of the Broads.

We have recently announced proposals in response to the recommendations of the report of a panel of the Committee on Medical Aspects on Food Policy on diet and cardiovascular disease published last year. Details were given in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Devon, West (Sir P. Mills) on 12 March 1985. Draft guidelines for voluntary full nutrition labelling of foods were issued for comment on 27 March.

My Department has participated actively in efforts to increase exports of food and agricultural products and of associated inputs and technology.

Between May 1979 and February this year the average annual rate of increase in the food prices index has been 7·0 per cent. This is again below the increase for all items in the retail price, index of 9·3 per cent. The current annual rate of increase in the Food Price Index is 3·5 per cent.

In January 1985 hill livestock compensatory allowances were introduced, at rates of £22·25 per eligible cow and £2·12 per eligible ewe, in the United Kingdom's "disadvantaged" areas (that is those marginal land areas which were given less favoured area status for the first time in February 1984).

On 1 January 1985 the Community became a member of the International Sugar Agreement 1984.

We have enacted legislation to give effect to revised support arrangements for potatoes, which should reduce the call on public funds in the longer term.

We have continued to protect farmers and growers from the introduction of non-established plant pests and diseases into the United Kingdom.

We have issued a Green Paper reviewing the long-standing arrangements for financing administration of land drainage, flood prevention and coast protection and proposing changes.

Together with DoE we have issued notes of guidance to drainage authorities regarding their environmental and conservation responsibilities under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and are now undertaking a strengthening of those Guidelines.

In the field of animal welfare we have pressed for the introduction of Community standards for laying hens in battery cages and have continued to support the work of the standing committee of the European convention on farm animal welfare.

At the beginning of this year we introduced new, permanent arrangements for the sale of certain veterinary drugs to farmers through agricultural merchants. These arrangements will safeguard the farmers' traditional source of supply whilst improving the standards of distribution and service for these products.

In 1983 we began a complete overhaul of the legislation controlling animal breeding. New powers were taken in the Animal Health and Welfare Act 1984 and within the

last two months proposals for revised controls over the animal health and livestock quality aspects of the artificial insemination of cattle have been issued for comment.

We concluded the first full year of the effective operation of the revised common fisheries policy by reaching agreement in December last on a complete package of total allowable catches and quotas for 1985, involving significant increases in the fishing opportunities available to our industry, particularly in the North sea.

Community log books and landing declarations, for which we have been pressing for some time, have now been issued throughout the Community and will be in force from 1 April.

To assist the control of fish and shellfish diseases, we have brought into operation the Diseases of Fish Act 1983.

We were the first member state to implement the Community fisheries structures package through the Fishing Vessels (Financial Assistance) Scheme 1983 which provides grants for the decommissioning and laying-up of vessels, exploratory voyages and joint ventures — together with aids for building and modernising vessels. These measures, which came into effect on 1 January 1984, will enable the fleet to adapt to the available fishing opportunities.

Together with the Departments of the Environment and of Transport my officials played a full and constructive part in the North sea conference on marine pollution held in Bremen in the autumn of 1984. At the conference the validity of the United Kingdom's science-based approach to environmental protection was acknowledged with the result that sea dumping will continue to be available for disposal of certain categories of waste under strict safeguards.

My Department's fisheries research effort has been rationalised. In particular, increased resources have been allocated to the protection of the aquatic environment duties which include the commissioning of a new research vessel. At the same time, and even greater commercial orientation has been given to the work of the Torry research station.

All of these policies have been carried out while achieving a further reduction in Ministry staff.

Departmental Legislation

Mr. Galley asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many Acts of Parliament have been promoted and how many Statutory Instruments made by his Department, or predecessor Departments covering his areas of responsibility, in each of the last 20 years.

Mr. Jopling: The number of Acts of Parliament promoted by my Department in each of the last 20 years* is as follows:

Year	*Acts*
1964-65	1
1965-66	0
1966-67	4
1967-68	1
1968-69	1
1969-70	1
1970-71	0
1971-72	1
1972-73	3
1973-74	1
1974	2
1974-75	1
1975-76	2
1976-77	2
1977-78	0
1978-79	1
1979-80	2
1980-81	2
1981-82	1
1982-83	5
1983-84	2

* By Parliamentary Session.

The number of statutory instruments made in each of the last 20 years* is as follows:

Year	*Statutory Instruments*
1965	131
1966	109
1967	124
1968	148
1969	131
1970	141
1971	164
1972	239
1973	156
1974	96
1975	87
1976	136
1977	121
1978	116
1979	84
1980	143
1981	109
1982	115
1983	109
1984	83

* By calendar year.

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Forth asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he envisages any increase in the budgetary commitment of the common agricultural policy in the event of the accession of Spain and Portugal to the European Economic Community.

Mr. Jopling: Provision for agricultural expenditure arising from the accession of Spain and Portugal to the European Economic Community will be made in the Community budget for 1986.

Imported Foodstuffs (Levy)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, further to his answer of 4 March, *Official Report*, column 393, concerning the formula used for calculating the levy on imported foodstuffs, whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the levy chargeable at the current time for all the common agricultural policy foodstuffs together with the monetary compensation amounts, the threshold prices and the world price.

Mrs. Fenner: The information requested is set out for the main commodities in the table.

The import levies are shown after deduction of the monetary compensatory amount (MCA) and adjustment by the monetary coefficient: the MCA that has been deducted is shown separtely. The "world" prices shown are generally the lowest offer prices at the Community

frontier which underlie the Commission's calculation of the variable import levies. I would remind the hon. Member that these are the lowest prices recorded and it is likely that, on average, higher prices would have to be paid if larger quantities were to be purchased on world markets.

Levy and Monetary Compensatory Amount Applicable in the United Kingdom, Threshold Price and Notional "World" Price on 27 March 1985 for the Main Food Items covered by the Common Agricultural Policy

£/tonne

Commodity	*Levy applicable in United Kingdom**	*Of which monetary compensatory amount*	*Threshold or equivalent price†*	*Notional "world" price‡*
Common wheat	47	−1	168	123
Barley	49	−1	154	107
Maize	41	−1	154	115
Rice	339	N/A	503	167
Sugar (white)	287	−4	410	125
Olive oil	458	N/A	1,244	804
Butter	¶1,289	−20	2,215	940
Skimmed milk powder	607	−10	1,153	555
Beef and veal	●1,438	−18	2,358	976
Pigmeat	244	−5	1,258	971
Sheepmeat	■−	N/A	3,038	1,815
Poultrymeat	135	−2	874	754
Eggs	148	−3	788	653

Notes

N/A=not applicable.

All figures have been rounded to the nearest £.

* The rates of levy vary for different tariff headings. The rates quoted are: beef and veal—carcase; pigmeat—carcase; poultrymeat—70 per cent. chickens; rice—wholly milled long grain; olive oil—virgin lampante; eggs-in shell. Levies are shown after deduction of the monetary compensatory amount where applicable.

† For commodities for which there is no threshold price the following have been taken: beef and veal—guide price converted to deadweight (using a killing-out percentage of 53·8 per cent.; pigmeat and sheepmeat—Basic price; poultrymeat and eggs—sluicegate prices and plus basic levy converted at the green rate of exchange.

‡ Notional "world" prices have been calculated by subtracting the levy applicable on 27 March from the "threshold" price. The beef price is also adjusted for duty. In the case of pigmeat, poultrymeat and eggs, the "world" price has been taken as the sluicegate price, less supplementary levy where appropriate. The resulting estimate has been converted from ECU/t at the appropriate market rate of exchange £0·632535=1 ECU.

‖ In practice the United Kingdom's imports from third countries are normally covered by the Lomé convention and enter the Community levy-free.

¶ A special lower rate of levy is applicable to imports of butter from New Zealand.

● Most imports of beef from third countries are subject to special arrangements allowing entry at reduced levy rates.

■ Imports of lamb under voluntary restraint arrangements with principle suppliers and related agreements are subject to a reduced charge of 10 per cent. ad valorem. Any imports outside these arrangements are subject to levies which cannot exceed the 20 per cent. tariff bound in the GATT.

Salmon

Sir Kenneth Lewis asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what consultations he has held concerning the report of the salmon sales group entitled, "Salmon Conservation—A New Approach"; and if he is now in a position to announce his decisions on the report's recommendations regarding the problems of salmon conservation.

Mr. MacGregor: As I said in reply to the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) on 6 March, we have been carrying out a very thorough review of the proposals for salmon tagging set out in the report "Salmon Conservation—A New Approach" and are still examining the problems highlighted by our examination. I shall make an announcement as soon as we have been able to reach a conclusion.

Agricultural Land

Mr. Steen asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much agricultural land has been lost to alternative development since 1970.

Mrs. Fenner: I regret that no precise figures are available. However, it is estimated that, from 1970 to 1984, the total net loss of agricultural land in England and Wales was some 300,000 hectares. About half of this net loss was recorded as having been to alternative development.

Council of Agriculture Ministers

Sir Peter Mills asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the outcome of the Council of Agriculture Ministers' meeting in Luxembourg on 1 and 2 April; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: With my hon. Friend the Minister of State, I represented the United Kingdom at the Council of Agriculture ministers in Luxembourg on 1 and 2 April. The main subject of the Council was the Commission's price proposals for 1985-86.

It became evident that it would not be possible to reconcile the divergent views of member states on appropriate price levels and related issues at this Council. The Presidency undertook to explore with the Commission the scope for compromise and the Council decided to resume work on the morning of 22 April.

The Council also decided that the marketing years for milk products, beef, sheepmeat and dried fodder should be extended until 28 April.

Uneconomic Farms

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans the Government have to bring forward proposals to facilitate the closing down of uneconomic farms.

Mr. Jopling [*pursuant to his reply*, 2 April 1985, c. *526*]: None. It is up to individual farmers to decide whether to remain in the industry.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Members' Travel Costs

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Lord Privy Seal what was the total cost of hon. Members' travel within the United Kingdom by air for the years 1982-83, 1983-84 and 1984-85.

Mr. Biffen: The total costs of the hon. Members travel, by air, within the United Kingdom paid from the House of Commons Vote (Class 13.2) are as follows:

Year	*£*
1982-83	317,913
1983-84	310,033
1984-85*	413,035

*To date.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Lord Privy Seal what was the total cost of hon. Members' travel within the United Kingdom by rail for the years 1982-83, 1983-84 and 1984-85.

Mr. Biffen: The total cost of the hon. Members' travel, by rail, within the United Kingdom paid from the House of Commons Vote (Class 13.2.) are as follows:

Year	£
1982-83	389,652
1983-84	447,205
1984-85*	458,840

* To date.

Standing Order No. 2

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Lord Privy Seal how many times Standing Order No. 2 has been invoked in each year since 1968; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Biffen: Before the adoption by the House of Standing Order No. 2 on 12 November 1968 a temporary order with similar effect (agreed to by the House on 12 December 1967) was used six times in 1968. The S.O. was then used on two further occasions that year. In 1969 the S.O. was used seven times. It has not been used since.

Palace of Westminster (Staff)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Lord Privy Seal how many people work in the Palace of Westminster; and if he will break this figure down into categories including secretaries and research assistants to Members of both Houses.

Mr. Biffen [*pursuant to his reply*, 2 April 1985, c. *562-3*]: The number of Staff and Officers employed by the House of Lords' Departments is 263, and not 315 as stated in my earlier reply.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

School Meals

Mr. Hayes asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what are the results of the October 1984 census of school meals; and how they compare with 1983.

Mr. Dunn: The information is as follows:

Maintained Schools (including nursery and special): England

	October 1984		*October 1983*	
	Numbers	*As percentage of pupils in attendance*	*Numbers*	*As percentage of pupils in attendance*
Pupils in attendance	6,613,026	—	6,770,975	—
Pupils taking school meals				
On payment	2,243,548	33·9	2,406,955	35·5
Free	1,147,886	17·4	1,074,882	15·9
Total	3,391,434	51·3	3,481,837	51·4
Pupils bringing own food	1,940,682	29·3	1,909,718	28·2
Pupils having other arrangements	1,280,910	19·4	1,379,420	20·4

An analysis of the returns shows the following proportions for primary and secondary pupils, as percentages of pupils in attendance.

	Primary		*Secondary*		*percentage*
	1984	*1983*	*1984*	*1983*	
Pupils taking school meals	53·4	54·2	48·2	47·8	
Pupils bringing own food	35·7	34·4	23·2	22·5	
Pupils having other arrangements	10·9	11·4	28·6	29·7	

Detailed tabulations on the returns from local education authorities from which these national figures are taken are being placed in the Library.

Schools (Expenditure Statistics)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will provide in the *Official Report* a table showing the expenditure per head in state schools and service schools, respectively.

Mr. Dunn: In 1983-84 the average expenditure per pupil in maintained schools in England was £1,025; this figure comprises the recurrent expenditure of the schools, the cost of transport from home to school and school meals. In the same year the average cost of each child educated locally in schools run by the Services Children's Education Authority was £2,275. The two figures are not comparable for a number of reasons, including the boarding expenditure at SCEA schools.

Teachers (Pay)

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the average annual increase in teachers' earnings as a result of incremental drift.

Sir Keith Joseph: Between April 1979 and April 1984 the average salary of teachers in maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools in England and Wales is estimated to have risen by 5·1 per cent. as a result of incremental drift. The annual average increase over the period on this account is therefore about 1 per cent.

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science why the Burnham committee has not replaced its offer of a 4 per cent. pay incease with an offer of a flat rate amount per teacher.

Sir Keith Joseph: This is a question not for me but for the Burnham Primary and Secondary Committee.

Unborn Children (Protection) Bill

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what assessment Her Majesty's Government have made of the potential impact of the enactment of the

Unborn Children (Protection) Bill on research on the detection of genetic defects by examining nucleic acid samples from early embryonic tissue; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The Unborn Children (Protection) Bill provides that the Secretary of State's authority for the possession and implantation of a human embryo shall be given only for the purpose of enabling a specified woman to bear a child, and not for any other purpose. It follows that research on the detection of genetic defects by examining nucleic acid samples from early human embryonic tissue would not be possible. I understand from the Medical Research Council that this would prevent further research and development work taking place on the technique known as embryonic biopsy, which might prove especially valuable in diagnosing serious genetic disorder in embryos fertilised in vitro, before possible implantation in the uterus, in the case of couples who are known carriers of a wide range of genetic diseases such as the thalassaemias, haemophilia, sickle-cell disease and Huntington's Chorea.

Teachers (Training)

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to implement the decision to include an introduction to the teaching of children with special educational needs as part of basic teacher training as outlined in Cmnd. 9649.

Mr. Dunn: Criteria for the approval of initial teacher training courses issued in April 1984 include the requirement that students should be introduced to ways of identifying children with special educational needs, helped to appreciate what the ordinary school can and cannot do for such children, and given some knowledge of the specialist help available and how it can be enlisted. Over the next three to four years all initial teacher training courses will be reviewed against the criteria by the Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education, which will advise my right hon. Friend whether existing courses should continue to be approved, and whether proposals for new ones should receive approval. Accordingly, my right hon. Friend expects that those teacher training institutions which do not already include an introduction to the subject of special educational needs in their initial training will shortly take steps to do so.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many teachers have received in-service training to assist in the teaching of children with special educational needs since the Education Act 1981.

Mr. Dunn: The total numbers of teachers from maintained and independent schools attending full-time courses of 20 days or more—or the part-time equivalent — concerned solely with special educational needs which have been offered in higher education institutions over the last three years are as follows:

Academic year	*Numbers of teachers (rounded)*
1981-82	1,040
1982-83	1,360
1983-84	1,530

The figure for 1983-84 includes teachers released for training under the Government's in-service teacher training grants scheme which was introduced in April 1983. Grant has been paid in respect of some 370 teachers released to attend one-term courses concerned with special educational needs in ordinary schools during the period April 1983 to August 1984. These courses remain eligible for the purposes of the scheme in the current academic year 1984-85, and it is intended that they should continue to be so designated in 1985-86.

The Department does not collect statistics on attendance by teachers on in-service training courses of less than 20 days—or the part-time equivalent—or on any training mounted by bodies other than higher education institutions, including that offered by individual local education authorities through their advisory services and teachers' centres.

Pupils (Special Education Needs)

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to be able to announce new advice on staffing requirements for pupils with special educational needs as outlined in Cmnd. 9649.

Mr. Dunn: A review of staffing standards for pupils with statements of special educational needs has begun. The results of the review will be published in due course.

Schools (Wheelchair Access)

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he is satisfied with the extent of wheelchair access to schools since the coming into force of the Education Act 1981; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: It is for individual local education authorities to decide what measures are necessary to fulfil their obligations under the Education Act 1981. Advice on the design and adaptation of buildings was issued last year in the Department's building bulletin 61 "Designing for Children with Special Educational Needs — Ordinary Schools." Specific guidance on access for disabled people to educational buildings, including wheelchair access, is given in design note 18, revised last year.

Homework

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to undertake the consultation on the subject of homework which was proposed in the White Paper, "Better Schools", Cmnd. 9469.

Sir Keith Joseph: I am today issuing a discussion paper on this subject. Copies have been placed in the Library.

Engineering and Technology (Graduates)

Mr. Stern asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will take steps to increase the output of graduates in engineering and technology; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Keith Joseph [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 March 1985, c. *482-84*]: Proposals from universities to participate in the engineering and technology programme have been considered by the University Grants Committee, which has in turn consulted members of the

Information Technology Skills Agency. I have now received and accepted the committee's advice about the institutions which should participate in the first phase of the programme. The participating institutions, the relevant departments and the proposed student intakes, are as follows:

University	*Department*	*Intake*	
		**UG*	*†PG*
Aston	Electrical and Electronic Engineering	20	—
Bangor	Electronic Engineering Science	25	—
Birmingham	Engineering Production	10	20
	Electronic and Electrical Engineering (with Computer Science)	25	—
	Mechanical Engineering	—	14
Bradford	Electrical Engineering	30	20
Cambridge	Engineering	30	—
East Anglia	Information Systems	25	—
Essex	Computer Science	12	—
	Electrical Engineering Science	—	15
Heriot-Watt	Mechanical Engineering	15	—
Hull	Electronic Engineering	24	—
Kent	Computing Laboratory	20	—
Lancaster	Engineering	12	—
Imperial	Mechanical Engineering	10	—
Nottingham	Production Engineering and Production Management	20	—
	Electrical and Electronic Engineering	12	10
Salford	Electronic and Electrical Engineering	20	—
Strathclyde	Electronic and Electrical Engineering	25	—
	Design and Manufacture/Production Management and Manufacturing Technology	10	—
Surrey	Electronic and Electrical Engineering	20	25
Sussex	Electrical, Electronic and Control Engineering and Computer Science	15	—
Swansea	Electrical and Electronic Engineering	20	—
	Metallurgy and Material Technology / Mechanical Engineering	10	—
Warwick	Engineering	20	—
	Electrical Engineering	25	—
York	Computer Science	20	—
Totals		475	104

The institutions concerned will be receiving further details from the UGC. Phase 2 of the programme will be announced later in the year.

* Undergraduates.

† Postgraduates.

Examination Results

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether his Department has reached its conclusions about possible methods of comparing examination results from different types of school system; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Keith Joseph [*pursuant to his reply*, 28 March 1985, c. *298*]: I am considering suggestions for further research into factors affecting pupil performance following my statement to the House on 15 November 1984 at columns 698-99. The Government's policies on examinations and assessment and monitoring were set out in chapters 3 and 13 of the Government's White Paper "Better Schools" (Cmnd. 9469).

PRIME MINISTER

MI5

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Prime Minister what salary will be payable to the person appointed as the new head of MI5.

The Prime Minister: It is not the practice to comment on questions relating to the staffing of the security service.

Civil Servants

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Prime Minister what steps she takes to satisfy herself that misgivings reported by civil servants to their seniors in pursuance of the arrangements announced by her on 26 February, *Official Report*, column *130*, are fully investigated.

The Prime Minister: Any matters which were reported to a senior civil servant, or about which a senior civil servant was consulted, under the arrangements described in the note of guidance by the head of the home civil service, would be taken very seriously, and anything that needed to be done, by way of investigation or otherwise, would be done.

Mr. Gerald Price

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Prime Minister what reply she is sending to Mr. Gerald Price, a blind person, who sought urgent help in a letter to her dated 26 March; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Although the Civil Aviation Authority has statutory responsibility for the regulation of sport parachuting, the authority looks to the British Parachute Association—a very responsible body with a

great deal of practical experience—for the detailed day-to-day control of the sport. My office is writing to Mr. Price explaining that it would not be appropriate for me to intervene over the association's decision not to allow him to make a parachute jump.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Steen asked the Prime Minister what is the present percentage of unemployed in each of the 10 largest cities in the United Kingdom; and how many individuals this amounts to.

The Prime Minister: The following information is in the Library. Figures are given for travel-to-work areas, the smallest areas for which unemployment rates are calculated.

Total unemployment on 14 February 1985 in the travel-to-work areas corresponding to the 10 largest cities in the United Kingdom

	Total unemployment	*Percentage rate*
Birmingham	123,099	16·5
Bristol	36,455	11·5
Coventry and Hinckley	38,396	16·0
Edinburgh	34,192	11·4
Glasgow	114,025	17·6
Leeds	42,888	13·1
Liverpool	106,163	21·0
London	370,328	10·5
Manchester	111,299	14·5
Sheffield	43,790	15·3

Civil Servants

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory asked the Prime Minister whether the statement of procedure to be followed when the reliability of a civil servant is thought to be in doubt on security grounds, and the terms of reference of the three advisers, have been revised; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: In the light of the Security Commission's report following its review of security procedures and practices in the public service (Cmnd. 8540) the terms of reference of the three advisers and the statement of procedure have been revised. I am arranging to have copies placed in the Library of the House.

SCOTLAND

Forestry Policy

Mr. Maclean asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the main achievements of his Department with regard to forestry policy in England and Wales since 1979.

Mr. John Mackay: Considerable progress has been made towards achieving the forestry policy objectives for Great Britain as a whole announced by my right hon. Friend on 10 December 1980. The industry is now expanding on a sound base, with restored confidence in the private sector and improved efficiency in the Forestry Commission. The new forestry grant scheme has encouraged the private sector to take the lead in increasing the rate of new planting, while the Forestry Commission has carried through a major internal mangement reorganisation and begun the rationalisation of its forest estate through the programme of sales described by my right hon. Friend in his written reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Central (Mr. Lord) on 8 November 1984 at columns 6-7.

Processing capacity has been expanded with the development of the newsprint outlet at Shotton, the expansion the Thames Board mill at Workington for carton-board production, the investments by Caberboard in medium-density fibre-board and particle-board at Cowie and Irvine and the plant for structural composition board planned by Highland Forest Products at Dalcross near Inverness.

In addition, the Forestry Commission is completing a review of policy toward broadleaved woodlands designed to encourage their positive and sympathetic management, about which my right hon. Friend expects to make a statement before the summer recess.

Equal Opportunities Officer

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will now appoint a departmental equal opportunities officer with responsibility for co-ordinating the Civil Service policy of non-discrimination within his Department.

Mr. Younger: An officer within the personnel division of my Department has been designated since January 1984 as equal opportunities officer with responsibility for co-ordinating policy and advising on the full scope of equal opportunity matters as they concern race and sex discrimination.

Edinburgh Western Relief Road

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make it is his policy not to introduce the Confirmation Bill for the Act to confirm the Lothian Region (Edinburgh Western Relief Road) Provisional Order until the transcript of the evidence given at the recent parliamentary inquiry is available for consideration by honourable Members.

Mr. Ancram: In relation to the Lothian Region (Edinburgh Western Relief Road) Provisional Order, my right hon. Friend intends to follow the practice whereby a Confirmation Bill is not introduced until a transcript of the evidence is available to hon. Members.

Departmental Legislation

Mr. Galley asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many Acts of Parliament have been promoted and how many Statutory Instruments made by his Department, or predecessor Departments covering his areas of responsibility, in each of the last 20 years.

Mr. Younger: Her Majesty's Stationery Office publishes annually "Lists of Statutory Instruments" and "Tables and Indices to Public and General Acts and General Synod Measures." Both of these are currently up to date to the end of 1983.

Given the changes to the machinery of government over the last 20 years, apportionment of the Acts or statutory instruments to the areas of present ministerial responsibility could be done only at disproportionate cost.

Legal Aid

Mr. Malone asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will make a statement about possible changes in the arrangements for legal aid in Scotland.

Mr. Younger: I intend to issue a consultation document tomorrow inviting views on a range of proposals for changes in the present system of legal aid in Scotland. I have arranged for copies of the consultation document to be placed in the Library of the House today.

NHS (Improvement and Refurbishment Expenditure)

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what allocations he has made to health boards for expenditure on improvement and refurbishment of hospitals and other National Health Service buildings in 1985-86.

Mr. Younger: I have allocated £25 million to health boards from the capital programme to enable them to continue the work of improving the fabric of the existing NHS estate in 1985-86. This represents an increase of 22 per cent. over the sum allocated in 1984-85 and is in addition to the £36·5 million already allocated to health boards for their ordinary capital programme for 1985-86.

EMPLOYMENT

School Leavers

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many and what percentage of school leavers have been on youth training or youth opportunity schemes in each of the last five years in the Greater London area.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Information in the precise form requested is not available.

Table 1 shows the number of school leavers in the Greater London area in each year from 1978-79 to 1982-83 (the last five years for which figures are available).

Table 2 shows for the Greater London area the number of young people on the youth opportunities programme or youth training scheme in March of each year from 1980 to 1984. It should be noted, however, that trainees in a particular year will not necessarily have left school during the preceding academic year.

Table 1: Number of school leavers in the Greater London area 1978-79 to 1982-83

Year	*Number (000s)*
1978-79	92·5
1979-80	92·1
1980-81	88·2
1981-82	90·5
1982-83	91·4

Table 2: Number of young people in the Greater London area on YOP/YTS March 1980-March 1984

Year	*Number (000s)*
1980	1·6
1981	4·1
1982	6·5
1983	9·1
1984	18·5

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has issued guidance to *(a)* the Manpower Services Commission, *(b)* the careers service, *(c)* jobcentres and *(d)* the managing agents forums following the Commission for Racial Equality's survey of the youth training schemes about the representation of young people of Asian and West Indian origin on mode A youth training schemes.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The Manpower Services Commission has already issued guidance on equal opportunities to all those involved in the delivery of the youth training scheme. In the light of the Commission for Racial Equality's recent survey of the scheme, the Manpower Services Commission is currently revising the guidance given.

Public Sector Employees

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will compare the total number of persons employed in the entire public sector *(a)* in actual and *(b)* in full-time equivalent terms, where appropriate, for each of the years 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985; and if he will show these figures as a percentage of the total employed work force in each year.

Mr. Alan Clark: The latest available estimates are given in the table.

Public Sector Employment in the United Kingdom

June	*Persons employed ('000)*	*As percentage of employed labour force*	*Full-time equivalents ('000)*	*As percentage of employed labour force*
1979	7,417	29·3	6,555	31·8
1980	7,356	29·1	6,512	31·8
1981	7,154	29·4	6,363	32·5
1982	6,992	29·3	6,168	32·3
1983	6,904	29·3	6,071	32·5
1984	6,825	28·5	5,972	31·8

Source: Central Statistical Office Department of Employment

Earnings

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the number of persons in work who have net incomes per week of less than *(a)* £50, *(b)* £60, *(c)* £70, *(d)* £80, *(e)* £90, *(f)* £100, *(g)* £110, *(h)* £120.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The latest information on the distribution of the net incomes of employed persons relates to the family expenditure survey for 1982. The table shows the cumulative percentages of those in full time employment with net incomes (gross personal income less tax and national insurance) below various amounts:

*Net incomes *below £*	*Percentage of persons*
40	3
50	8
60	15
70	25
80	37

Net incomes *below £	Percentage of persons
90	47
100	56
110	65
120	73

* Gross income attributable to the person, both from employment or from other sources, net of national insurance and tax. This will differ from household income to the extent that full-time employees within the household are counted as separate persons, income from part-time employment is not covered and some household income for example child benefit may be attributed to a household member not in full-time employment.

Source: Family Expenditure Survey 1982.

Later information on the distribution of gross income from employment is available from table 1 of New Earnings Survey 1984, a copy of which is in the Library.

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will publish a table showing the proportion of full-time employees in the Greater Manchester area who, in the New Earnings Survey 1984, are paid less than £105 a week and £110 a week, both when overtime earnings are excluded and included, for all males and females and sub-divided into manual and non-manual males and females.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The available information in addition to that already published is shown in the table.

Percentage of employees with average gross weekly earnings less than £110 in Greater Manchester in April 1984*

	Including overtime	Excluding overtime
Full time manual men	22·8	33·9
Full time non manual men	10·4	12·3
All Full time men	17·4	24·5
Full time manual women	82·3	85·6
Full time non manual women	50·0	51·0
All Full time women	59·1	60·8
All men and women	31·0	36·3

* On adult rates and whose earnings were not affected by Absence.

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will publish figures showing the distribution of gross hourly earnings of part-time female employees in April 1984, for the Greater Manchester area, using the format adopted for various regions of Britain in table 175 of the New Earnings Survey 1984, together with his estimate of the total numbers of women employed part-time in the Greater Manchester region.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Figures covering the hourly earnings of all part-time employees are not available. The additional available information relating to Greater Manchester, having the same scope and coverage as table 175 of the 1984 New Earnings Survey report is as follows:

Part-time female employees on adult rates in Greater Manchester
Gross hourly earnings

Less than: pence	Percentage
140	3·1
160	6·4
180	17·3
200	46·2
220	57·0
240	68·5
260	77·2
280	82·2
300	85·7
360	91·4
400	93·9

Note: The New Earnings Survey covers a sample of employees who are members of pay-as-you-earn schemes and in general will not cover employees whose earnings are below the national insurance contribution level. The employees excluded would tend to be part-time employees whose hourly earnings will not necessarily be the same as those with higher weekly earnings covered in the survey.

The total number of part-time female employees in the Greater Manchester area is estimated to have been just under 190,000 in 1981.

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish harmonised figures for January 1984 or the latest date available showing average earnings for *(a)* men, and *(b)* women in each of the member states of the European Community.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The latest harmonised figures on average earnings for all European Community member states relate to October 1982 and were published in "Hourly Earnings and Hours of Work — X, 1982" (Eurostat, 1983). The data for most countries were updated to April 1983 in "Earnings in Industry and Services" (Eurostat, 1984.) For the United Kingdom alone, the latest information on average earnings was published in the February 1985 issue of *Employment Gazette*. Copies of all of these publications are in the Library.

Community Programme and Youth Training

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Employment which regions of the United Kingdom will benefit from his proposal to extend the community programme providing 131,000 jobs for the long-term unemployed and to change the youth training scheme into a two-year programme for youngsters under the age of 18 years.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: All regions of Great Britain will benefit from the expansion of the community programme and the youth training scheme.

My right hon. Friend has written to the chairman of the Manpower Services Commission and has asked him to proceed so that an additional 50,000 community programme places can be filled by December 1985. He has also asked the commission to make detailed recommendations for the implementation of the two-year youth training scheme.

Noise Surveys

Mr. Flannery asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many noise surveys have been undertaken by the Health and Safety Executive since the start of the campaign.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I shall write to the hon. Member later this year when I expect an evaluation of the Health and Safety Executive's noise enforcement initiative.

Wages Inspectorate

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Employment (1) whether he will publish by region and sub-region, the latest breakdown of Wages Inspectorate staff, showing separately those who are outdoor inspectors, on an establishment and in post basis, and if he will also publish comparable figures for April 1979;

(2) whether he will publish for the years 1970, 1974 and 1978 onwards in respect of the north western (east) division of Wages Inspectorate *(a)* the number of wages council establishments registered, *(b)* the proportion of these inspected by visit, *(c)* the proportion of firms inspected by visit found to be underpaying, *(d)* the total arrears assessed and *(e)* the total arrears paid;

(3) whether he will publish estimates for 1984 on *(a)* establishments covered by wages councils, *(b)* numbers of inspections and underpayments, *(c)* numbers of workers covered, together with figures on underpayment and arrears assessed and *(d)* a regional breakdown of wages council inquiries, in the same format as that used in the reply given on 4 June 1984, *Official Report*, columns 103-4, together with a breakdown of arrears assessed and arrears actually paid by wages council and region; and whether he will also indicate the number and regional location of cases of underpayment where the employer was prosecuted, and where civil proceedings were taken to recover arrears of wages;

(4) whether he will publish for the north-west (east) division of the Wages Inspectorate a breakdown by wages council of *(a)* the number of firms inspected and number of workers whose pay was checked, showing those by visit and those by other method, *(b)* the number of firms found to be underpaying, *(c)* the number of workers underpaid, *(d)* the total arrears assessed and *(e)* the total arrears actually recovered, in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Enterprise Allowance Scheme

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for Employment (1) how many applications were submitted for consideration in the pilot enterprise allowance scheme;

(2) how many applications were actually considered in the pilot enterprise allowance scheme;

(3) how many applications submitted for consideration in the pilot enterprise allowance scheme proved successful in their application.

Mr. Alan Clark: A total of 4,992 applications were submitted and considered for the pilot enterprise allowance scheme. Of these 3,379 were approved and 3,331 started on the scheme.

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many businesses have received enterprise allowance from the inception of the scheme to the latest cut-off date.

Mr. Alan Clark: By 28 February 1985, 72,630 people had entered the enterprise allowance scheme since it was introduced on a pilot basis in early 1982. The actual number of businesses supported is slightly lower as some participants have set up in partnership with other recipients of the allowance; but exact figures are not available.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Football Hooliganism

Mr. Amess asked the Attorney-General how many prosecutions have taken place arising from incidents at or after football matches in the last year for *(a)* offences against the person and *(b)* offences against property.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I have been asked to reply.

Centrally collated statistics of prosecutions do not distinguish between those arising from incidents at or after football matches and other events.

TRANSPORT

The Minch (Pollution)

58. **Mr. Kennedy** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what investigations his Department have made into the likely environmental consequences of a spillage from a large, crude oil-carrying tanker in the Minch; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: The consequences of an oil spillage depend on a number of factors, including the amount of oil spilt, its type, the weather and tidal conditions at the time and the speed within which a clean-up operation can be mounted.

My Departments marine pollution control unit spends just over £1 million a year on research into methods of dealing with pollution accidents at sea and on the beaches. This research is directed to the minimising of environmental effects, but it is not normally related to any particular section of coastline.

Road Schemes

Mr. Waller asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, for each road scheme identified in table 1 of Class VI, Vote 1 of the Supply Estimates, 1984-85, he will state (i) the expenditure provision for 1984-85, (ii) the estimated actual expenditure in 1984-85, (iii) the estimate of total cost at November 1983 prices made in March 1984, (iv) the latest estimate of total cost at November 1983 prices, (v) the estimate of year of completion made in March 1984, and (vi) the latest estimate of year of completion.

Mrs. Chalker: I shall write to my hon. Friend.

British Rail (Midland Region)

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, pursuant to the answer of 27 March regarding punctuality of trains in the London Midland Region of British Rail, he will give similar data for services from Rugby to London Euston.

Mr. David Mitchell: I understand from British Rail that records are not readily available for this particular service in isolation.

Heavy Lorries

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of those countries in the European Economic Community which have legal requirements that the minimum distance between heavy lorries on motorways must be at least 50 metres.

Mrs. Chalker: I am not aware that any country in the Community has such a requirement, but I am making further inquiries.

Hackney Carriage (Conditions of Fitness)

Mr. Gregory asked the Secretary of State for Transport which district councils have adopted the hackney carriage conditions of fitness.

Mr. David Mitchell: In England (outside London) and Wales hackney carriages are licensed by district councils, and it is for these authorities to determine the conditions to be attached to such licences. No central record is kept but I understand that the following 30 district councils have adopted the metropolitan conditions of fitness for hackney carriages.

Metropolitan District Councils

Birmingham
Bolton
Coventry
Knowsley
Liverpool
Manchester
Salford
Sheffield
Solihull
Stockport
Trafford
Walsall
Wolverhampton
Wirral

Non-Metropolitan District Councils

Alyn and Deeside
Chester
Corby
Dartford
Ellesmere Port
Halton
Harlow
Northampton
Norwich
Plymouth
Preston
Shrewsbury
Swansea
Three Rivers
West Lancashire
Wrekin

Second Severn Crossing

Mr. Roy Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will now publish phase 1 of the feasibility study into the proposal for a second crossing of the Severn.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. Friend published the report on Monday 1 April.

Severn Bridge

Mr. Roy Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Transport what has been the approximate amount spent since his announcement of 7 February 1984 that £33 million would be spent on strengthening the Severn bridge.

Mrs. Chalker: About £2 million has been spent on the preparation of design and associated research and development work. Tenders for preliminary work, worth about £1·4 million, have already been invited and further tenders will be invited later this year for other major strengthening works worth £18 million. This will be followed by further contracts in 1986 and 1987.

Motorway (Repairs and Construction)

Mr. Roy Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will reconsider his proposals to reduce motorway reconstruction to 70 miles in 1985-86 and to reduce other trunk road reconstruction to 100 miles in 1985-86.

Mrs. Chalker: No. We are doing as much renewal work as can reasonably be achieved, and within the funds available.

Woolwich Ferry

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will set out the financial basis on which he is inviting the London boroughs of Greenwich and Newham to take over the operation of the Woolwich ferry after the proposed abolition of the Greater London council.

Mrs. Chalker: The discussions in hand with local authority associations about grant arrangements following abolition include services such as the ferry, where costs will fall upon a limited number of boroughs. The Local Government Bill provides for appropriate adjustments to targets, if they continue, and to expenditure levels to reflect the actual geographical distribution of such post-GLC expenditure.

Bridges and Tunnels

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list such information as he has for the Severn, Humber, Forth, Tay, Itchen, Cleddau and Tamar bridges and the Mersey, Tyne and Dartford tunnels, the total capital repayment to be made by the bridge authority, and the time scale for repayment, the annual upkeep costs and any central Government revenue provided for these costs.

Mr. Ridley: The information requested is given in the table. Central Government do not make annual contributions to revenue; they do provide loans to meet capitalisation of interest where the legislation so provides. The position on central Government loans outstanding is shown in the tabulation.

Tolled crossings

	Total capital repayment at 31 March 1984	*Period for repayment*	*Operating and maintenance costs 1983-84*	*Central Government loans at 31 March 1984*
	£ million	*Years*	*£ million*	*£ million*
Severn	*46·1	40	*2·60	*46·1
Humber	210·0	60	0·74	180·5
Forth	21·8	30	1·10	21·8
Tay	6·7	60	0·31	3·0
Itchen	10·9	Between 40-60	0·17	—
Cleddau	7·3	Between 50-60	0·12	3·6
Tamar	—	—	0·59	—
Mersey	88·6	60	3·70	27·7
Tyne	21·2	30	1·26	16·8
Dartford	66·2	60	2·28	6·5

* Publication of the 1983-84 account awaited.

The period for repayment is different for land and construction costs at Itchen and Cleddau. Repayment periods are extendable in certain cases.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Salmon

Mr. Maclean asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the overall value of the salmon trade in the United Kingdom; what he estimates to be *(a)* the proportion of the trade made up by salmon farmers, *(b)* the proportion of the trade represented by net fishermen and *(c)* the proportion of the trade made up by fly and line catchers; for each of these, if he will estimate the number of people involved; and how many are dependent on this type of fishing for a livelihood.

Mr. MacGregor: We estimate that, of the Atlantic salmon available to the market in Great Britain in 1983, 38 per cent. came from British salmon farms, 38 per cent. from imports, 20 per cent. from commercial net fishermen and 4 per cent. from rod and line catches (not all the latter will necessarily have been marketed). In 1984 fish farm production rose by just over 50 per cent. and imports rose very slightly; final figures for net catches and rod and line catches are not yet available. Records are not available of the value of trade in salmon, of the number of people employed in the trade or of the number of people dependent on salmon fishing for a livelihood.

Outgoers Scheme

Mr. Knox asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on progress made on the outgoers scheme for dairy farmers.

Mr. Jopling [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 March 1985, c. 266]: A total of 224 million litres of milk quota is available under the outgoers scheme. A further 94 producers, each with over 725,000 litres of quota who in February reaffirmed their interest, have now been invited to join.

These producers will be expected to return their claim forms within one week and to cease milk sales within three weeks but any who experience difficulties in stopping sales within this period may be allowed some extra time, individual circumstances being taken into account.

Any producer in this position should contact his local divisional office.

A total of 1,451 producers have now joined the outgoers scheme in our progress towards meeting the 289 million litre target.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Nicaragua

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs why the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation has not condemned the threat of force by the United States of America against Nicaragua, in violation of its obligations under the United Nations charter.

Mr. Renton: Like ourselves, the United States Administration have said that they wish to see political reform in Central America through peaceful means. United States support for the Contadora initiative was reiterated at the last United Nations General Assembly session.

Nuclear Test Ban

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what were the existing verification procedures to ensure compliance with a nuclear test ban considered adequate by the United Nations General Assembly in resolution 39/52; why the United Kingdom voted against this resolution; and what attitude was taken by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Mr. Rifkind: Resolution 39/52 contained no indication of the measures its Warsaw Pact sponsors considered adequate to ensure compliance with a nuclear test ban. Because it was an unbalanced declaratory resolution which did nothing to advance the prospects for real progress towards a comprehensive test ban, the United Kingdom and the majority of our NATO Allies did not support it. The Soviet Union voted in favour of it. As I told the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang) on 11 December 1984, at column 450, we believe that for a test ban to command general acceptance it must contain adequate safeguards against the danger of non-compliance by any of its signatory parties. A first step towards ensuring this would be the improvement of current verification techniques. We will continue to play an active part in any discussions of this aspect of a CTB at the Geneva conference on disarmament.

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs why the United Kingdom voted against resolution 39/60 of the United Nations General Assembly regarding the immediate cessation and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Mr. Rifkind: The resolution referred to by the hon. Member called for the immediate cessation of nuclear weapons testing and urged the conference on disarmament to proceed with negotiations on a treaty. I would also refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him to his previous question.

Our vote against this resolution in no way lessens our determination to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons. We are fully committed to the non-proliferation regime established by the non-proliferation treaty.

Hong Kong

Sir Paul Bryan asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he is satisfied with the conduct of the recent elections in Hong Kong; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: In the recent elections held on 7 March for Hong Kong's local district boards, 213 seats were contested by nearly 500 candidates, and over 476,000 people voted. This represents an increase of almost 134,000 over the number who voted in the first elections in 1982. It is a very satisfactory result, and an encouraging indication of popular support in Hong Kong for the steps that are being taken to develop a more representative system of government there.

Departmental Legislation

Mr. Galley asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many Acts of Parliament have been promoted and how many statutory instruments made by his Department, or predecessor Departments covering his areas of responsibility, in each of the last 20 years.

Mr. Rifkind: As my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Treasury indicated on 1 April, at column 507, in answer to a similar question from my hon. Friend, because of the changes in the machinery of government over the last 20 years, the apportionment of Acts and statutory instruments to the areas of present ministerial responsibility could be done only at disproportionate cost.

Non-Proliferation Treaty

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government towards extending the competence of the European Economic Community into matters of non-proliferation; and how such proposals would affect the United Kingdom obligations under the non-proliferation treaty.

Mr. Rifkind: We regard competence in non-proliferation matters as resting with the member states of the Community.

Discussions on non-proliferation matters between member states are carried on in the political co-operation machinery which is outside the framework of the treaty of Rome.

Plutonium

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 18 February, *Official Report*, columns *359-60*, whether any plutonium produced in British Nuclear Fuels Ltd. reactors has been exported to any state without the application of nuclear safeguards since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: All exports for civil purposes of plutonium produced in British Nuclear Fuels plc reactors have been in accordance with the guidelines set out in my hon. Friend the Member for Shoreham (Mr. Luce) answer of 18 February to the hon. Member.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Health Education

Mr. Dormand asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what action Her Majesty's Government has taken on the proposals made in the Kirby report on health education.

Mr. John Patten: Following the report's publication in 1981 the Government-funded Health Education Council set up a training consultative group to keep under review the provision for education and training of health education officers. The council subsequently established links with the NHS training authority, to which the staff committees are now accountable. A review day is planned for 1 May, at which the Department will be represented, to update the Kirby report and consider future possibilities.

NHS (Supervisory and Management Boards)

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will make a statement about the establishment of the Health Services Supervisory Board and the National Health Service Management Board as recommended by the Griffiths Inquiry.

Mr. Fowler: I set up the Health Services Supervisory Board on 25 October 1983. It meets regularly under my chairmanship. Its members are the Minister for Health, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security, my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Mr. Patten), my noble Friend Baroness Trumpington, the Permanent Secretary, the Chief Medical Officer, the Chief Nursing Officer, the chairman of the NHS Management Board and Mr. Roy Griffiths.

The chairman of the NHS Management Board, Mr. Victor Paige, was appointed from 1 January this year. The board has now been constituted and is in operation within my Department and accountable to me, as follows:

Director of Health Authority Finance—Mrs. G. T. Banks, Under Secretary DHSS.

Director of Planning and Information Technology—Mr. M. J. Fairey, Chairman of the Health Service Information Advisory Group.

Director of Health Authority Liaison—Mr. C. Graham, Under Secretary DHSS.

Director of Operations—Mr. G. Hart, Deputy Secretary DHSS.

Director of Financial Management—to be appointed.

Director of Personnel—to be appointed.

Dr. Donald Acheson, the Chief Medical Officer, and Mrs. Anne Poole, the Chief Nursing Officer, will serve on the management board, as well as being members of the supervisory board.

The NHS Management Board will be accountable to me for the implementation within the health authorities of the Government's policies for their management. It will, on my behalf, give leadership and monitor performance, with the aim of securing improvements in services to patients and more effective use of resources. The board's membership is drawn from the NHS, the DHSS and the business world — as Roy Griffiths and his team recommended.

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will investigate the recent allegations made to his Department of maladministration in his Department's local offices in Glasgow in relation to the suitable alternative furnished accommodation aspect of single payments, regulation 10, and its effect on claimants' entitlements; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: We have no reason to believe there has been any maladministration in the Department's local offices in Glasgow. I shall be writing to the hon. Member about this matter.

Mr. Hayes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when final results of the 1983 statistical inquiry of supplementary benefit claimants will be available.

Mr. Whitney: Their availability is dependent upon the overall recovery position of the Newcastle computer section, following last year's industrial action. At the current rate of recovery it is estimated that the final figures will be available by the end of May 1985, and printed tables will be placed in the Library from six to eight weeks later.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what will be the position of claimants under the new supplementary benefit regulations making applications for supplementary benefit before 1 April whose claims are not processed until after 1 April; and if they will

be treated on the same basis as existing claimants for the purposes of assessing supplementary benefit and transitional protection claims.

Mr. Whitney: I assume that the hon. Member is referring to the proposed new regulations relating to board and lodging payments which are intended to apply from 29 April. Claims made before that date will be assessed in accordance with existing rules and the transitional protection provisions will apply.

Vaccine Damage

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether, in view of the number of awards made under the Vaccine Damage Payments Act 1979, he has revised his assessment of the risk ratio involved in the use of whooping cough vaccine.

Mr. John Patten: I have nothing to add to my reply to the hon. Member on 31 January, at column 299.

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* the latest number of those awarded payments under the Vaccine Damage Act 1979; and in how many cases there were published contra-indications prior to being immunised.

Mr. John Patten: Up to 28 March 1985, 800 awards have been made under the Vaccine Damage Payments Act 1979. It is not known in how many of these cases there were published contra-indications prior to vaccination.

Medical Students

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his policy regarding hospitals accepting students from American medical schools for training purposes; whether such entry can occur with lower entry requirements than for British students; if capacity for British students to occupy National Health Service training places is reduced as a result; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We are committed to providing National Health Service clinical training facilities for undergraduates students admitted to British medical schools under criteria set by academic authorities. We have no responsibility for students from other medical schools with unknown entry requirements. However, we would expect health authorities involved in any such arrangements to observe the overriding obligations of patient care and certainly not to incur any additional costs on public funds. We have no present reason to suppose that undergraduate students from British medical schools have been deprived of appropriate clinical training, but we shall monitor the situation.

Dogs (Injured Persons)

Mr. Galley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people have been treated in hospital as a result of attacks by dogs in each of the last five years.

Mr. John Patten: The requested information is not available centrally.

Maternity Grant

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what consideration he has given to increasing the maternity grant level; and for which categories of families.

Mr. Whitney: The provision of financial help for maternity, including the maternity grant, is one of the subjects which have been under review. The Government will be announcing the outcome of the social security review as a whole shortly.

Single-parent families

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many single-parent families he estimates there are in the United Kingdom now and on 1 January of each of the past five years for which records are available; and in each case how many and what percentage of the parents are male and how many and what percentage are female; how many and what percentage are the result of broken marriages; and how many and what percentage are the mothers of illegitimate children.

Mr. John Patten: Information is available only in respect of Great Britain.

Taking account of results from the 1981 census and information from the general household survey the best estimates at present available of the numbers of one-parent families with dependent children are as follows:

Marital status	*1979*		*1980*		*1981*		*1982*	
	thousands	*per cent.*	*thousands*	*per cent.*	*thousands*	*per cent.*	*thousands*	*per cent.*
Lone mother		89		88		89		89
Single		16		18		19		19
Widowed		16		14		14		13
Divorced		34		35		37		38
Separated		21		21		19		19
Lone father		11		12		11		11
Total	840		870		900		930	

The percentage distributions according to marital status are derived from the general household survey by averaging the results for three years, centred on the year indicated.

Children born to single women are by definition illegitimate. No information is available about the proportion of other mothers who have illegitimate children.

Reye's Syndrome

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the estimated incidence of Reye's syndrome in England and Wales; what is the estimated mortality; and how the figures compare with the incidence in the United States and Northern Ireland.

Mr. John Patten: In the year 1 August 1983 to 31 July 1984 82 cases in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland were reported to the communicable disease surveillance centre under its voluntary reporting scheme. Of these, 58 were in England and Wales and 17 in Northern Ireland. The estimated incidence based on these figures is 0·5 and 4·0 respectively per 100,000 children under 16 years old. In total 34 deaths were reported, representing a 41 per cent. mortality rate. The estimated incidence of Reye's syndrome in the United States of America in 1984 was 0·3 per 100,000 children under 18 years old.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make Reye's syndrome a notifiable disease.

Mr. John Patten: The voluntary reporting scheme started in August 1981 by the British Paediatric Association and the communicable disease surveillance centre appears to be working effectively and we have no plans to replace it with a statutory reporting system.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what conclusion was reached by the March meeting of experts arranged by his Department which discussed cot deaths and post neonatal mortality, regarding the possible involvement of Reye's syndrome in actual and near miss cot deaths.

Mr. John Patten: I understand that no definite conclusions were reached at the meeting regarding the possible involvement of Reye's syndrome in sudden infant deaths.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what research is currently being undertaken into Reyes syndrome; who is financing it; what is the nature of the research; and when the results are expected.

Mr. John Patten: I understand that currently there are underway at the communicable diseases surveillance centre a two-year epidemiological study, using the voluntary reporting scheme, to determine the part played by risk factors suggested by previous studies, and a follow-up study of survivors reported to the scheme. Neither the Department nor the Medical Research Council is currently funding studies specifically into Reye's syndrome, but both are prepared to consider sound proposals for research.

Mr. Ashley: asked the Secretary of State for Social Services in the study of post-neonatal mortality co-ordinated by Professor John Knowelden, how many of the infants who had suffered a cot death were found also to be suffering from Reyes syndrome; and what proportion this was of the total.

Mr. John Patten: In the multi-care study, individual causes of death were not specifically identified, but were grouped within certain disease categories, and the report does not therefore provide the data requested.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to receive further advice from the Committee on Safety of Medicines on the alleged association between Reyes syndrome and aspirin; if he will make a statement when he does so; and if he will publish the main points of the advice and the reasons for it.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The committee is actively considering this issue. The committee began to re-examine the matter at its March 1985 meeting when it decided to seek further information for consideration at future meetings. When the committee has finished its work on this, we shall decide whether any statement is needed and, if so, the form it should take.

Influenza and Chicken Pox (Salicylates)

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services which of the studies it considered led the Committee on Safety of Medicines in 1982 to dissent from the view of the United States Surgeon General of the Public Health Service who was advising that children with influenza or chicken pox should not be given salicylates and salicylate containing medications.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The committee considered that the totality of evidence available at that time did not justify the issue of such advice in the United Kingdom.

Imunisation (Adverse Reactions)

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will outline the methods used by his Department for recording the number of children who have suffered an adverse reaction requiring medical attention following immunisation against measles;

(2) if his Department keeps records of the number of children who suffer an adverse reaction to any of the childhood immunisations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The Committee on Safety of Medicines is responsible under the Medicines Act 1968 for promoting the collection and investigation of information on adverse drug reactions whether experienced by children or adults. Details of adverse reactions to vaccines and immunological products reported by doctors to the committee, including the age of the patient, are recorded in its computerised adverse reactions register.

Hospital Waiting Lists (Surgery)

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to the number of people who have been recommended for surgical treatment on the grounds of extreme pain and who are currently on hospital waiting lists; and what information he has as to the proportion of this figure accounted for by *(a)* elderly and *(b)* housebound people.

Mr. John Patten: The requested information is not available centrally. The question of when to treat a patient is a matter for the clinical decision of the consultant responsible. If a general practitioner felt that a particular patient needed to be admitted earlier this should be discussed with the consultant.

Overseas Social Security Payments

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the additional cost in £

sterling at current prices of *(a)* payments to persons in the United States of America from his Department and *(b)* payments to persons in the United Kingdom from the United States social security administration arising from the agreement on social security recorded in Cmnd. 9443 in 1985-86 and 1988-89, respectively; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: Since the benefit provisions of this agreement on social security will not take effect until 1 January 1988, there will be no cost to this Department in 1985-86. The cost in 1988-89, at the rates of benefit payable at the present time, is estimated as £210,000. The cost to the United States social security administration of payments arising from the agreement is a matter for the United States authorities.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what, consequent on the agreement on social security described in Cmnd. 9443, will be the entitlement to benefit of a United Kingdom citizen with a sufficient insurance record who falls sick while working in the United States of America before he has been credited with four quarters of coverage under the laws of the United States of America.

Mr. Whitney: From January 1988 a United Kingdom citizen who falls sick while working in the United States of America and who is unable to qualify for United States disability benefit will be able to receive United Kingdom invalidity pension if he has not been absent from the United Kingdom for more than five years and, when he left the United Kingdom, he satisfied the contribution conditions for sickness benefit.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will specify the distinction in the rules relating to the social security entitlement of United Kingdom citizens in the United States of America and in Canada following the full implementation of the agreement on social security between the United Kingdom and the United States of America described in Cmnd. 9443.

Mr. Whitney: Under an agreement on social security made in 1969 between the United Kingdom and the United States of America, United Kingdom pensioners living in the United States of America receive uprating increases of retirement and widow's pensions. The agreement described in Cmnd. 9443 continues this.

The new agreement regulates liability to social security contributions for people from the United Kingdom working in the United States of America so that they are liable to contribute to one country's scheme only in respect of any one employment. In relation to benefit entitlement for people in the United States of America, with effect from January 1988 the new agreement provides as follows:

People who have been insured in both countries and do not have entitlement to retirement or widow's pension from either will be able to aggregate insurance in both countries to qualify for a proportional rate of pension.

People who fall sick and cannot qualify for United States disability benefit will be able to receive United Kingdom invalidity pension if they have not been absent from the United Kingdom for more than five years and if, when they left the United Kingdom, they satisfied the contribution conditions for sickness benefit.

Payment of United Kingdom guardian's allowance will continue.

There are no arrangements between the United Kingdom and Canada which affect the social security entitlement of United Kingdom citizens in Canada.

Mobility Allowance

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to the reply of the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe, on 12 November 1984, *Official Report*, columns 143-44, if he has reached a decision on repayment of mobility allowance consequent to Commissioner's decision R(M)2/82; and if he will make a further statement.

Mr. Newton: I shall write to the right hon. Member as soon as I can about this.

Renal Transplants and Dialysis

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he categorises *(a)* renal transplant surgery and *(b)* dialysis treatment as routine treatments available on the National Health Service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Yes. Both these services are provided in each health service region.

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received advocating that renal transplant surgery and dialysis treatment should not be regarded as an area of priority development in the National Health Service; what response he has made; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: No such representations have been received.

National Insurance Contributions

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will give the revenue raised in a full year from employers' national insurance contributions in respect of all areas with a total unemployment rate in excess of 20 per cent;

(2) if he will give the revenue raised in a full year from employers' national insurance contributions in respect of employees under the age of 21 years in areas with a total unemployment rate in excess of 20 per cent. on 1 January.

Mr. Whitney: I regret that this information is not available.

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the revenue raised in a full year from employers' national insurance contributions in respect of employees under the age of 21 years.

Mr. Whitney: The estimated revenue in 1984-85 from employers' national insurance contributions in respect of employees under age 21 was roughly £880 million.

Glaucoma

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what support his Department is giving to National Glaucoma Action Week from 21 to 27 April, organised by the International Glaucoma Association; if he will increase the facilities for providing glaucoma treatment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: We have been informed of the International Glaucoma Association's initiative in

organising a National Glaucoma Action Week from 21 to 27 April, to increase public and professional awareness of glaucoma and we wish them every success. The provision of facilities for treatment of glaucoma must be a matter for individual health authorities, based on their knowledge of local circumstances and priorities.

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the number of people suffering from glaucoma in England and Wales; if he is satisfied with the facilities available for treating such patients; if he is satisfied with the methods used to alert patients to the importance of early diagnosis and treatment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: I understand that surveys reported in the medical press suggest that the prevalence of all types of glaucoma within the total population is around 1 per cent., with the following approximate percentages for different age groups:

Age	*Per cent. suffering from glaucoma*
40-50	under 1
50-60	under 1
60-70	under 1
70-80	under 3
80-90	about 10

Facilities for the detection and treatment of glaucoma are provided in hospital eye departments and are the responsibility of individual health authorities. The present view of the Faculty of Ophthalmologists is that glaucoma screening is cost-effective only for patients at special risk, in particular the first degree relatives of glaucoma sufferers. Opthalmologists would normally advise glaucoma sufferers that their first degree relatives over the age of 40 should be screened.

Family Practitioner Committees (Audit)

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the estimated cost of establishing internal audit sections in each family practitioner committee, or in groups of family practitioner committees; and how much additional money he plans to make available to family practitioner committees for this function.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: No estimate of the cost of internal audit arrangements is possible until family practitioner committees have submitted their proposals to our Department. The cost of the arrangements made is to be met from within existing allocations to committees.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Ulster Office, London (Flag)

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when the Northern Ireland flag was last flown at 11 Berkeley street, London.

Dr. Boyson: There is no record of a Northern Ireland flag having been flown at the premises in question. Arrangements regarding the flying of the Union Flag are the same as for other Government buildings.

York Road-Central Station (Rail Link)

Mr. Beggs asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether plans have been completed for the proposed rail link between York Road-Central Station; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: Outline design and engineering plans for the proposed rail link between York Road and Belfast Central railway stations were prepared by consultants in 1979. Since then the Government have made it clear on several occasions that the proposal would have to compete with other public expenditure priorities. An updated analysis of the costs and benefits associated with this proposal will form part of a review of transport policy which is being undertaken in connection with the preparation of a new plan for the Belfast urban area.

Constitutional Study (Funds)

Mr. Kilfedder asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will consider providing funds for the study by a Northern Ireland-based body, such as one of the universities or an all-party committee, of the extent to which the American constitution could serve as a model for the future government of Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom.

Mr. Hurd: I have no plans to do so.

Human Rights

Mr. Kilfedder asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he expects to introduce legislation to extend the scope of the remit of the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights to include a broader range of human rights issues.

Mr. Hurd: Any change in the statutory remit of the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights will require amendment of the Northern Ireland Constitution Act 1973. I cannot at present say when such legislation is likely to be introduced. I recognised the commission's wider role in the field of human rights generally in Northern Ireland in my response to the commission's tenth annual report, a copy of which was placed in the Library on 21 February 1985.

Employment Grant Schemes

Mr. J. Enoch Powell asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will consider the extension of employment grant schemes in Northern Ireland to cover the retail sector, as in Great Britain.

Dr. Boyson: The employment grant schemes administered by the Department of Economic Development are all available to the retail sector.

Housing Executive House Sales

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the number of dwellings, and percentage of the total stock, sold by the Housing Executive to tenants and others.

Mr. Chris Patten: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. I understand from the chairman that at 27 March 1985, 26,029 dwellings had been sold, representing 14·5 per cent. of the Housing Executive's stock of dwellings.

Lignite

Mr. Clifford Forsythe asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether any study has been made of the possible effects of transport of lignite by road from County Antrim on roads and the environment in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Chris Patten: These were investigated at the early planning stage of the project.

Railway Museum, Carrickfergus

Mr. Clifford Forsythe asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what encouragement he is giving to the Railway Preservation Society of Ireland in its efforts to establish a railway museum at Carrickfergus.

Mr. Scott: I accept in principle the need for the development of local museums, but because of pressure on resources I am unable to commit funds to this, and other, local museum initiatives. I will, however, keep the situation under review.

Voluntary Bodies (Grants)

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a list of those voluntary bodies who received grants under class C3 from the Northern Ireland Department of Health and Social Services; and if he will list the amounts received in each case for the last five years.

Mr. Chris Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 28 March 1985, c. *301*]: The information is as follows:

Grants paid under the Health and Personal Social Services (Northern Ireland) Order 1972

	1984-85 £	*1983-84* £	*1982-83* £	*1981-82* £	*1980-81* £
Northern Ireland Council of Social Services	276,000	199,990	177,507	162,667	149,680
Community Service Volunteers	5,381	8,065	11,500	23,270	19,636
St. Vincent de Paul Society	52,026	39,303	39,650	33,250	26,708
Belfast Voluntary Welfare Society	3,500	4,000	3,000	2,000	2,000
Carafriend	5,147	4,625	2,100	1,875	1,610
Retirement Association of Northern Ireland	7,235	6,890	6,500	6,000	6,000
International Voluntary Service	14,438	11,000	11,718	10,976	10,700
Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (ROSPA)	27,268	25,970	24,500	21,000	17,500
Northern Ireland Council for Orthopaedic Development	16,800	16,000	13,000	12,000	12,000
National Deaf Children's Society	2,420	2,300	2,000	2,000	2,000
Ulster Institute for the Deaf	6,300	6,000	5,500	5,000	5,000
Age Concern	71,873	68,450	64,575	35,841	30,747
Abbeyfield Society	2,400	2,400	2,200	2,000	1,738
Royal Society for Mentally Handicapped Children and Adults	7,560	4,000	3,750	3,500	3,000
Northern Ireland Association for Mental Health	81,432	69,252	55,285	52,236	53,944
Northern Ireland Marriage Guidance Council	31,981	60,600	33,590	34,278	22,500
Northern Ireland Council on Alcohol	55,599	139,461	47,168	43,346	36,350
British Epilepsy Association (Northern Ireland Region)	6,000	2,650	2,200	2,000	2,000
Northern Ireland Womans Aid Federation	30,300	20,700	19,000	17,300	11,900
Northern Ireland Widows Association	5,230	1,525	—	—	—
Gingerbread	45,660	46,500	44,490	31,300	16,100
Catholic Marriage Advisory Council	70,900	35,378	30,000	11,500	—
Church of Ireland Social and Family Welfare Society	1,120	1,060	1,000	750	670
Blind Centre for Northern Ireland	18,000	10,000	7,200	6,600	6,000
Motability	11,111	11,376	11,220	8,681	9,682
Multiple Sclerosis Action Group	13,340	12,700	12,000	11,000	5,000
Soldiers, Sailors and Airmens Families Association	700	650	600	575	500
Physically Handicapped and Able-Bodied	13,000	8,250	7,500	5,000	3,000
Family Planning Association (NI Region)	3,500	3,300	3,300	3,300	3,300
Council on Alcohol Related Problems	23,924	18,887	26,933	15,224	11,940
Crossroads Care Attendant Scheme	14,700	5,833	—	—	—
Multiple Sclerosis Society (NI Branch)	3,150	3,000	1,000	1,000	—
Ambulance Services	3,150	3,180	3,994	—	—
Womens Health Fair	2,250	—	—	—	—
National Health Service Retirement Fellowship	557	530	1,000	—	—
PRAXIS	22,298	30,629	18,000	12,500	—
Home Insulation Schemes	56,437	38,000	6,500	60,000	—
Disabled Drivers' Association	1,050	1,000	—	—	—
National Schizophrenia Fellowship	16,065	5,250	—	348	—
National Council for Carers and their Elderly Dependents	500	—	500	—	—
National Rubella Campaign	700	500	—	—	—
Northern Ireland Hospice	50,000	100,000	—	12,000	—
Northlands Centre	17,000	—	664	—	—
Marie Curie Memorial Foundation	5,000	—	—	—	—
Industrial Therapy Organisation	25,000	—	—	—	—
Order of Malta Ambulance Corps	15,500	—	—	—	—
British Red Cross Society	1,289	—	—	—	—
Womens Information Group	2,000	—	—	—	—
CRUSE in Northern Ireland	11,250	—	—	—	—
Open Door Housing Resettlement Project	7,000	—	—	—	—
Presbyterian Church in Ireland	1,820	—	—	—	—
Northern Ireland Council for the Single Homeless	1,500	—	—	—	—
Workers Education Association	2,400	—	—	—	—
SHARE	—	7,700	—	—	—

	1984-85 £	1983-84 £	1982-83 £	1981-82 £	1980-81 £
Northern Ireland Voluntary Trust	10,000	—	—	—	—
£1 for £1 scheme	—	15,000	40,000	—	—
Arthritis Care	—	1,000	—	—	—
Counter Unemployment Measures	—	—	175,855	119,394	—
Non-Recurring Grants	—	—	182,005	69,995	—
Community Projects Foundation	—	—	1,500	—	—
Centre for Policy on Ageing	—	—	1,500	—	—
Voluntary Services Belfast	—	—	300	—	—
Muscular Dystrophy Group of Great Britain (Northern Ireland Branch)	—	—	—	1,000	1,000
Seminar on Domestic Violence	—	—	—	225	—
Chest, Heart and Stroke Association	—	—	—	—	2,000
Standing Conference of Councils of Social Services and Community Councils	—	—	—	—	50
Down and Connor Catholic Family Welfare Society	—	—	—	—	40,933

Grants paid under the Children and Young Persons Act (Northern Ireland) 1968

Voluntary Organisations	1984-85 £	1983-84 £	1982-83 £	1981-82 £	1980-81 £
International Year of the Child Committee	—	—	—	—	440
National Childminding Association	—	2,053	1,770	1,600	1,100
Northern Ireland Childminders Development Committee	4,193	—	—	—	—
Parents Advice Centre	2,913	2,470	2,629	167	9,736
Extern—West Belfast Auto Project	26,770	24,201	20,247	14,577	3,500
Northern Ireland Foster Care Association	4,163	2,391	2,102	1,907	2,548
Northern Ireland Pre-School Playgroup Association	66,954	37,241	20,679	21,359	13,854
Northern Ireland Intermediate Treatment Association	1,364	1,098	1,244	766	1,350
Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders	3,443	3,280	2,927	2,716	—
Down and Connor Catholic Family Welfare Society	53,225	48,093	61,173	72,997	525
National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children	37,444	35,393	26,474	40,000	—
Dr. Barnardo's	54,506	26,174	31,291	61,112	—
Belfast Voluntary Welfare Society—Home Start Scheme	5,016	5,037	404	—	—
Save the Children Fund—Minnowburn Youth Farm	—	15,237	10,614	—	—
Community Service Volunteers	20,455	3,580	3,442	—	—
National Council of Voluntary Child Care Organisations (Northern Ireland Group)	1,833	774	—	—	—
National Playbus Association	106	—	—	—	—
Childhaven Children's Home, Millisle	—	—	6,423	3,606	16,214
Glendhu Children's Hostel, Belfast	3,827	9,027	18,554	22,705	31,897
Hopedene Hostel, Belfast	—	—	5,000	—	—
Johnston Memorial Children's Home, Belfast	10,000	51,153	50,947	7,253	1,030
Manor House Children's Home, Lisburn	15,223	—	—	—	457
Marianvale Children's Home, Newry	—	—	—	—	2,864
Marianville Mother and Baby Unit, Belfast	14	10,125	1,258	—	—
Nazareth House, Belfast	—	—	—	46,700	—
Nazareth House, Londonderry	2,619	—	960	6,319	—
Nazareth House, Portadown	—	—	—	—	10,336
Nazareth Lodge, Belfast	—	11,000	34,255	—	29,333
Orange Children's Home, Newry	415	2,085	3,962	3,854	5,007
St. Joseph's Children's Home, Belfast	—	—	5,382	—	10,169
St. Joseph's Children's Home, Londonderry	—	—	—	1,193	—
Thorndale House, Belfast	—	—	—	4,000	—
Victoria Voluntary Homes, Belfast	—	—	3,813	21,963	114,543
Glebe House Holiday Home, Kilclief	1,187	—	—	4,000	2,000
Ozanam Holiday Home, Portaferry	—	—	—	2,800	2,000

Labour Statistics

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of long-term youth unemployed in each year since 1979 to the latest date.

Dr. Boyson [*pursuant to his reply*, 1 April 1985, c. *484*]: The following table shows the number of young people aged 16 to 17 who had been unemployed for more than one year in Northern Ireland at April of each year since 1979 and at February 1985.

	Number
April 1979	353
April 1980	219
April 1981	603
April 1982	483
April 1983	498
April 1984	481
February 1985	472

Job Creation

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what assessment he has made of the impact of the Budget on reducing unemployment in the Province.

Dr. Boyson [*pursuant to his reply*, 1 April 1985, c. *484*]: The 1985 Budget will improve labour market prospects in Northern Ireland, as in the rest of the United Kingdom, by continuing the Government's strategy to control inflation and create the conditions in which enterprise and initiative can flourish. The increases in personal tax allowances and the restructuring of National insurance contributions will help to increase the opportunities and incentives for employment at wages that businesses can afford. For illustration, it will now cost an employer £3 per week less to take on an employee at £90 per week, and the employee will take home £3 more out of the same £90 wage.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to reduce unemployment in the Province; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Boyson [*pursuant to his reply*, 1 April 1985, c. *484*]: The Government are continuing their efforts to stimulate the revival of the Northern Ireland economy and to promote a climate favourable to innovation and enterprise of all kinds. The measures announced in last month's Budget add further impetus to these efforts, particularly in relation to the creation of new employment.

THE ARTS

Grants Policy

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State answering in respect of the Arts whether, in considering applications for grants, the Arts Council seeks information about the annual running costs of individual theatres or other bodies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Arts Council seeks detailed information about the financial efficiency of funded bodies, as well as evaluating their artistic standards.

Objects in Lieu of Taxation

Mr. Faulds asked the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State answering in respect of the Arts what offers of pre-eminent objects and property for acceptance in satisfaction of capital transfer tax or estate duty have been received in respect of the value of £2 million which has been provided for during the financial year 1985-86; and if he will state the total commitment involved, and specify the individual items, together with the amount of tax to be satisfied in respect of them.

Mr. Waldegrave: Offers in lieu of tax are put to the Government on a confidential basis, and it would be inappropriate to give the information requested. Details are released when an offer has been accepted by the Government.

Mr. Faulds asked the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State answering in respect of the Arts whether he will list the amounts initially appearing in the Supply Estimates for the five financial years from 1980-81 to 1984-85, inclusive, in respect of the tax discharge value of works of art and property accepted in satisfaction of capital transfer tax and estate duty, together with particulars of any subsequent increases in those amounts which may have taken place during any of the five financial years in question; whether he will at the same time specify the total tax discharge value of works of art and property actually accepted during each of the five years; and whether the accounting practice is to cancel the resulting surplus in the event of the estimated quota not being fulfilled in any given year.

Mr. Waldegrave [*pursuant to his reply*, 2 April 1985, c. *578*]: The information requested is as follows. The sums involved are shared equally on the Votes of the Department of the Environment and of the Office of Arts and Libraries.

£ million

Acceptances in lieu	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*
Initial Vote Estimate	2·200	0·972	2·000	2·000	4·000
Revised Estimate	*2·017	†1·597	†2·171	2·000	4·000
AIL expenditure	0·322	1·535	2·171	0·815	4·000
Unspent balance	1·695	0·062	—	1·185	—

At the end of the financial year any unspent balance on the AIL Vote is transferred by administrative arrangement to the National Heritage Memorial Fund.

*The sum of £183,000 was transferred to the Welsh Office.

†Intra vote transfers:

1981-82: +£625,000

1982-83: +£171,000

ENVIRONMENT

Mobile Homes Act 1983

15. **Mr. Nicholls** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is satisfied with the operation of the Mobile Homes Act 1983.

Sir George Young: On the whole, yes; the Mobile Homes Act 1983, together with other statutory provisions relevant to mobile homes, provides a fair and sound framework for mobile homes' residents and site owners; but I am watching progress closely.

Repair and Improvement Grants

16. **Mr. John Fraser** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will publish a consultative document on repair and improvement grants.

Home Improvement Policy

33. **Mr. Hargreaves** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he plans to publish his proposed changes in home improvement policy.

Mr. Gow: We intend to issue shortly a consultation document on private sector housing improvement policy, including the future of the home improvement grant system.

Students (Housing)

17. **Mr. Penhaligon** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what consultations or discussions he has had since last September or proposes to have with representatives of universities, polytechnics and colleges, and their student bodies, on the subject of the provision of housing for students in the coming academic year.

Sir George Young: My right hon. Friend has had no such consultations or discussions and has no plans to have any.

Artefacts and Animals (Preservation)

18. **Mr. John Browne** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what amount of money was provided in 1984 for *(a)* the preservation of man-made artifacts and *(b)* the preservation of endangered species of animals.

Mr. Waldegrave: During 1984-85 my Department made grants totalling £54·4 million to the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission, the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (England) and the Redundant Churches Fund; and grants totalling £21·3 million to the Nature Conservancy Council and the Zoological Society of London. The National Heritage Memorial Fund, which is concerned with both the natural and man-made heritage, received £29 million.

Gleneagles Agreement

19. **Mr. Tom Clarke** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he next intends to discuss the Gleneagles agreement with the chairman of the Sports Council.

Mr. Macfarlane: I have at present no plans to do so.

51. **Mr. Ron Davies** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he has taken in 1985 to bring to the attention of sports bodies the Goverment's view of the Gleneagles agreement.

Mr. Macfarlane: All governing bodies have been advised of the Government's commitment to the 1977 Commonwealth statement on apartheid in sport in advice issued by the Sports Council. I only rarely need to approach individual bodies to repeat or clarify that advice; the last occasion was in respect of the RFU tour of South Africa in 1984.

Rate-capped Authorities (Publicity Campaigns)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to how much money has been spent to date by each of the rate-capped local authorities on publicity campaings opposing rate capping; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Patrick Jenkin: I do not have precise information though the sums are considerable, because of their concern about such matters, the Government have set up the committee of enquiry chaired by David Widdicombe.

Inner Urban Aid (Churches)

Mr. Sackville asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received concerning the extension of eligibility of inner urban aid to cover repair of churches threatened with demolition.

Sir George Young: Ministers have received a few representations, including one from the area dean of Bolton on behalf of the Bolton Council of Churches, which has the support of Bolton metropolitan borough council.

Urban Land (Development)

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what impact he expects the abolition of development land tax to have on the redevelopment of urban land held by public bodies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The abolition of development land tax has been welcomed by the building and development sectors. Its abolition will encourage land owners, including those public bodies hitherto liable to pay this tax, to sell more land or to undertake its development. This would particularly apply to sites where the development value likely to be realised is large. Some sites of this kind are in Urban areas.

Local Authorities (Recruitment)

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has received from the Joint Manpower Watch about the level of recruitment by local authorities in the most recent period for which figures are available.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Local authorities in England in 1984 employed some 5,000 fewer staff than 12 months previously. The joint manpower watch is a head count and it is not possible to give the figures for recruitment.

Domestic Rating System

24. **Mr. Knox** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received in favour of the domestic rating system during the past year.

Mr. Waldegrave: None.

Business Rates

25. **Mr. Allan Roberts** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received in response to the report commissioned by his Department on "The Effect of Business Rates on the Location of Employment".

Mr. Patrick Jenkin: Many people expressed astonishment and disbelief when a few carefully selected bits of the report were circulated before its publication. The full report, which is based on figures only up to 1981, did not examine the impact of rates in the most extreme cases. In such cases, rate increases may be the last straw that leads to closures and redundancies.

38. **Mr. Nicholas Brown** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the bodies to whom he has sent copies of the Cambridge report on "The Effect of Business Rates on the Location of Employment" for their comments.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have specifically invited comments from the Confederation of British Industry, the Trades Union Congress, the Association of British Chambers of Commerce, the Association of County Councils, the Association of Metropolitan Authorities, the Association of District Councils, the London Boroughs Association, the Association of London Authorities, the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives, the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors and the Rating and Valuation Association.

Housing Expenditure

26. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he makes of the effect of the Budget on Government spending on housing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gow: The Government's public expenditure plans for housing are set out in the annual public expenditure White Paper (Cmnd. 9428) and have not been changed by the Budget.

Building Regulations

27. **Mr. Hannam** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made in amending the building regulations to incorporate access provision for disabled people.

Mr. Gow: My right hon. Friend laid before the House yesterday an amendment to the 1976 building regulations. The amendment introduces a new part T to the regulation which requires that access for disabled people should be provided to all floors of all new offices and shops and to new single storey buildings which are open to the public.

The commencement date for the new requirements to come into operation is 1 August this year.

GLC and Metropolitan Counties (Staff)

28. **Mr. Meadowcroft** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to the number of staff who have left the employment of the Greater London council and the six metropolitan counties since the publication of the Local Government Bill; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: This information is not available centrally.

Natural Environment Research Council

29. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will assess the environmental implications of restructuring proposals in the Natural Environment Research Council's corporate plan 1985 to 1990.

Mr. Waldegrave: My Department commissions research from a range of organisations including the Natural Environment Research Council, universities, Government laboratories, research associations, and the private sector. The Natural Environment Research Council is an important source of advice and we shall continue to ask the council to undertake work for us where it is the best body to do so. Its restructuring proposals are a matter for decision by it.

Local Authorities (Expenditure)

30. **Mr. Tony Banks** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many consents under section 7 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act 1984 have been refused by his Department.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: None.

Mr. Straw asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish, for each year from 1981-82 to 1985-86, total net provision, cash limit, for local authority capital expenditure in England, total capital allocations, and total gross capital provision; if he will publish outturn or estimated outturn figures against each of these heads; and if he will analyse the figures by service area.

Mr. Waldegrave: Following is the information.

Local authority capital expenditure against DOE/LA1: England

£ million

	Education	*Personal social services*	*Housing*	*Transport*	**Other services*	*Total DOE/LA1*
1981-82						
Net capital provision	364	92	1,396	631	656	3,139
Capital allocation	355	89	1,796	615	639	3,494
Gross capital provision	388	94	2,178	633	714	4,007
Gross capital expenditure†	423	96	1,901	614	894	3,927
Net capital expenditure	385	68	936	557	582	2,527
1982-83						
Net capital provision	309	102	1,489	720	765	3,385
Capital allocation	338	103	2,179	685	967	4,272
Gross capital provision	339	104	2,553	722	823	4,541
Gross capital expenditure†	428	95	2,388	662	1,177	4,750
Net capital expenditure	380	64	650	608	813	2,515
1983-84						
Net capital provision	285	108	1,192	766	585	2,935
Capital allocation	295	109	2,223	742	706	4,075
Gross capital provision	340	120	2,484	836	952	4,732
Gross capital expenditure†	445	101	3,087	753	1,161	5,547
Net capital expenditure	398	66	1,360	711	768	3,303

	Education	Personal social services	Housing	Transport	*Other services	Total DOE/LA/
1984-85‡						
Net capital provision	275	108	1,028	795	246	2,453
Capital allocation	301	116	1,852	805	372	3,447
Gross capital provision	340	126	2,493	865	614	4,438
1985-86‡						
Net capital provision	256	71	729	615	240	1,911
Capital allocation	315	70	1,600	640	320	2,945
Gross capital provision	326	86	2,324	685	610	4,031

* In 1981-82, 1982-83 and 1983-84 urban programme provision and allocation are included in the other services block but expenditure is included under the relevant service blocks. The urban programme allocations in the three years were £83 million, £174 million and £179 million respectively.

† Including the capital value of leased assets.

‡ The figures for 1984-85 and 1985-86 exclude local authority capital expenditure on urban programme and derelict land, which is now included in the DOE/UA1 cash limit and for which provision in 1984-85 and 1985-86 is £296 million and £279 million respectively. The outturn information for 1984-85 is available for the first three quarters only.

‖ Allocation in 1985-86 will be increased by 5 per cent. across all service blocks for authorities complying with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's request for restraint in 1984-85.

Mr. Straw asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish, for each year from 1981-82 to 1985-86, the estimates of total local authority capital receipts underlying public expenditure provision for local authority capital expenditure in England, and actual or estimated receipts in each year; if he will show separately the prescribed and non-prescribed proportions of receipts; and if he will give separate figures for each service area.

Mr. Waldegrave: Following is the available information.

Local Authority Capital Receipts: England

£ million

	Estimates of Capital Receipts underlying public expenditure provision			*Capital Receipts Outturn*†‡*		
	Total	*Prescribed proportion*	*Non-prescribed proportion*	*Total*	*Prescribed proportion*	*Non-prescribed proportion*
1981-82						
Housing	782	413	369	965	497	468
Transport	2	2	0	57	57	0
Education	24	24	0	38	38	0
Personal Social Services†	2	2	0	28	28	0
Other services	58	58	0	312	312	0
Total	868	499	369	1,400	932	468
1982-83						
Housing	1,064	593	471	1,738	928	810
Transport	2	2	0	54	54	0
Education	30	30	0	48	48	0
Personal Social Services†	2	2	0	31	31	0
Other services	58	58	0	364	364	0
Total	1,156	685	471	2,235	1,425	810
1983-84						
Housing	1,292	684	608	1,727	n/a	n/a
Transport	70	35	35	42	n/a	n/a
Education	55	27·5	27·5	47	n/a	n/a
Personal Social Services†	12	6	6	35	n/a	n/a
Other services	368	184	184	393	n/a	n/a
Total	1,797	936·5	860·5	2,244	1,191	1,053
1984-85‖						
Housing	1,465	660	805			
Transport	70	35	35			
Education	65	32·5	32·5			
Personal Social Services†	18	9	9			
Other services	368	184	184			
Total	1,986	920·5	1,065·5			
1985-86						
Housing	1,595	325	1,270			
Transport	70	21	49			
Education	70	21	49			
Personal Social Services†	15	4·5	10·5			
Other services	370	111	259			
Total	2,120	482·5	1,637·5			

* All receipts counted against the DOE/LA1 cash limit.
† Payments from district health authorities used to finance prescribed expenditure are included in capital receipts outturn but excluded from estimated capital receipts underlying public expenditure provision.
‡ For 1983-84 the prescribed and non-prescribed proportion of receipts outturn cannot be indentified by service.
‖ Outturn information for 1984-85 is available for the first three quarters only.

Mr. Straw asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will detail the information that he collects from local authorities about their capital expenditure and capital receipts.

Mr. Waldegrave: The main information which the Department of Environment collects from local authorities about their total capital expenditure and receipts is provided on the following forms, specimen copies of which I have today placed in the Library.

Capital Estimates and Commitments Return (CECR)

This is an annual return which provides forecasts at the start of the year of capital commitments, payments and receipts in the year ahead.

Capital Payments Returns (CPR)

These are quarterly forms which provide summary outturn information on capital payments and receipts by service. They also collect information on capital allocations, prescribed expenditure and the prescribed proportion of in-year capital receipts.

Capital Outturn (CO) Forms

There are annual forms which provide detailed outturn information on capital expenditure and income for each service.

Tenants' Charter

31. **Mr. Heddle** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will review the effectiveness of the tenants' charter.

Mr. Gow: My Department has commissioned a study into local council implementation of the tenants' charter provisions in the Housing Act 1980. My right hon. Friend will consider its findings in due course.

Tenants' Rights

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to publicise private tenants' rights.

Sir George Young: My Department publishes a series of booklets which explain the rights of private tenants. These are widely and freely available through local authorities, citizens' advice bureaux, rent officers and other sources. We have no plans to add to this publicity.

Rate Capping

32. **Mr. Wareing** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he proposes making a statement about the future designation of authorities under the Rates Act.

Mr. Patrick Jenkin: Not yet.

Pre-cast Concrete Council Houses (Sale)

34. **Mr. Amess** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to the extent to which the effectiveness of the legislation governing council house sales may be affected by the reluctance of tenants to purchase pre-cast concrete council houses as a result of the unwillingness of insurance companies to issue policies in respect of such properties.

Mr. Gow: I have no such information.

Children (Play Opportunities)

35. **Mr. Ron Lewis** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the achievements of his Department in providing for children's play opportunities.

Mr. Macfarlane: My responsibility is to provide a focus for Government policy across Departments in relation to children's play. I am not responsible for the provision of play opportunities since the need for such provision is clearly a matter for local decision.

We have encouraged and supported the voluntary movement to set up a new national body to promote facilities and opportunities in children's play. As a result, the Association for Children's Play and Recreation known as Play Board, has been established as an independent agency funded by my Department. I look to Play Board to play an increasingly important role in the promotion of local opportunities and facilities for play, and to advise central and local Government on needs and resources.

Local Authorities (Rate Yield)

36. **Mr. Hardy** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the total yield of local authority rates; and what proportion of local authority expenditure this will provide in 1984-85.

Mr. Waldegrave: Rate income — net of domestic rate relief grant and rate rebates—for local authorities in England in 1984-85 is estimated at £11·1 billion. This represents 52 per cent. of authorities' budgeted "Total" expenditure estimated at £21·39 billion.

Council Houses

37. **Mr. Marlow** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many local authority houses have passed to the control of the private sector, excluding sales to sitting tenants, in each of the last three years.

Sir George Young: Excluding sales to sitting tenants, English local authorities sold 5,875 dwellings in 1981-82, 4,710 in 1982-83 and 8,455 in 1983-84.

Gipsy Sites

39. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will seek powers to make 100 per cent. grants to local authorities for the establishment of gipsy sites in London boroughs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Macfarlane: My right hon. Friend already has powers in section 70 of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 to make grants on such terms as he and the Treasury determine. The current rate is 100 per cent. of admissable costs.

Marine Nature Reserve

40. **Mr. Kenneth Carlisle** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects agreement to be reached on the first marine nature reserve.

Mr. Waldegrave: It is not possible at present to forecast exactly when the first reserve will be designated; we have reasonable hopes of agreement at two sites.

Green Belt (Planning Appeals)

41. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many planning appeals have been determined by his inspectors; and how many of these have been upheld, relating to designated green belt land within the Greater London area and in the rest of the metropolitan green belt, respectively, in the last 12 months for which figures are available.

Mr. Macfarlane: The information is not available in the form requested. Currently available statistics of planning appeals in designated green belts were recently supplied to my hon. Friend in reply to parliamentary questions which I answered on 13 March 1985 at column 146.

Derelict Land Scheme

42. **Mr. Pike** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is satisfied with the operation of the derelict land scheme.

Mr. Macfarlane: In general, yes. My Department continues to monitor the scheme to ensure that its objectives are being met in the most efficient way.

Local Authorities (Capital Expenditure)

43. **Mr. Michie** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has received a copy of the latest Audit Commission investigation into the operation of local authority capital expenditure controls.

Mr. Patrick Jenkin: I understand that the Audit Commission's report on local authority capital expenditure controls is to be published very shortly. I have just been sent a proof of the report and am studying it with interest.

Council House Building

44. **Mr. Dykes** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the anticipated level of new construction of council-owned dwellings in the outer London boroughs, as estimated by his Department for 1985, 1986 and 1987 in 1983 and 1984, respectively.

Sir George Young: My Department makes no such estimates. It is for the boroughs to decide how many dwellings to build, in the light of their own priorities and resources.

Local Government Reform (Savings)

45. **Mr. Madden** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has made any changes to his estimates of possible savings arising from the abolition of the Greater London council and metropolitan counties.

Mr. Waldegrave: No.

Local Government Finance

46. **Mr. Cartwright** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what consultations he is undertaking as part of his review of local government finance.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Ashford (Mr. Speed) on 4 March, at column 349, by my right hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government.

54. **Mr. Fisher** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a progress report on the studies on local government finance being carried out by his Department.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Prime Minister and colleagues discussed the studies on 31 March. They welcomed the progress which had been made so far. There is much further work to be done over the next few months and in due course there will be opportunities for wider public discussion before final decisions are made.

Conservation (Environment Committee Report)

47. **Mr. Alton** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to publish his response to the Environment Committee's first report on the "Operation and Effectiveness of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981".

Mr. Waldegrave: The Government's response is expected to be issued shortly after the Easter recess.

Planning Permission (Misuse)

48. **Mr. Nicholas Baker** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about the misuse of planning permissions for dwellings granted on the basis of agricultural need where an agricultural occupancy condition has been imposed.

Mr. Macfarlane: Representations in the last year have included questions from my hon. Friend and the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay). Other representations have sought the relaxation of my Department's policy on the use of agricultural occupancy conditions.

Disabled Persons (Access to Buildings)

49. **Mr. Wigley** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will now take steps to ensure that facilities for disabled people are provided in alterations and extensions carried out to existing buildings.

Sir George Young: A circular to accompany the new amendment to the building regulations dealing with access for disabled people will draw the attention of designers and developers to the obligation in the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 to ensure that reasonable provision for disabled people is made in both new and converted buildings.

There are considerable practical difficulties in devising regulations which can apply to alterations and extensions to buildings and result in positive improvements in access for disabled people. Building regulations apply only to items of new building work and cannot require the provision of facilities that do not already exist. My Department is examining the problem, however, and I hope that progress can be made.

Rate-capped Authorities

50. **Mr. Corbyn** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will meet a delegation of councillors representing the rate-capped local authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Watson) on 14 March at column 219.

Rates

52. **Mr. Ashdown** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will name those English local authorities which had not, by 1 April, fixed their rate for the financial year 1985-86.

Mr. Waldegrave: The councils are Camden, Greenwich, Hackney, Haringey, Islington, Lambeth, Lewisham, Liverpool, Newham, Sheffield, Southwark and Tower Hamlets.

Swans

53. **Mr. Kilroy-Silk** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what study he has made of the effect on swans of the use of lead shot by anglers.

Mr. Waldegrave: There has been a number of scientific studies by the Nature Counservancy Concil and other organisations. Recent evidence shows that there has been a small increase in the overall swan population over the past five years, but it appears that in excess of 3,000 swans continue to die each year from lead poisoning caused by ingesting anglers' weights.

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he can indicate from his Department's recent surveys what effect on the swan population has been registered by industrial pollution, diesel fumes and pollution of waters by increased river usage of diesel-driven vessels, dredging and the reduction of riverside vegetation as a result of pollution and dredging; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what effects the increased use of herbicides and insecticides has had on the swan population;

(3) to what extent, in determining lead poisoning in swans, a separate analysis was made of the effects of lead shot from gun sports; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: The 1981 report by the Nature Conservancy Council, "Lead Poisoning in Swans", examined all causes of swandeaths. Post mortem examinations in 1980-81 showed:

Cause	*Percentage of deaths*
Lead poisoning	39·2
Collisions with overhead wires and by other structures	27·4
Disease and infection	10·4
Internal injuries	10·0
Shot or deliberately killed	5·5

In the period October 1981 to January 1985, 55 per cent. of post-mortem examinations indicated lead poisoning as the cause of death. Evidence from all post-mortems in the period 1973 to 1981 showed that pellets of split-lead shot used in angling were present in 58 per cent. of swans examined, whereas gunshot was found in less than two per cent. of cases.

There is no evidence that industrial pollution, herbicides or insecticides have been a primary cause of death in swans.

In dealing with the suggestion that fumes emitted from petrol-engined boats may cause lead poisoning of swans the 1981 report states.

"Evidence from blood lead levels in swans shows that individual birds feeding on the same stretch of river may have very different blood lead levels. The considerable variation between individual birds can only be accounted for by differences in the amount of particulate lead ingested by each individual bird. Such variation is not consistent with the uptake of dissolved lead direct from water, and this must be discounted."

The 1981 report does, however, acknowledge that the problem of lead poisoning by anglers' weights seems to be particularly acute in waterways which do not have an abundance of aquatic vegetation, often as a consequence of an increase in river traffic. The report suggests that this may occur because discarded or spilt shot may remain more easily accessible to swans where vegetation is sparse.

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the areas within the southern and eastern counties of England and the parts of northern England and Scotland where the swan population has increased over the last 10 years giving numbers and percentage figures where available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: Information on increases in the swan population over the last 10 years is not available. However, the Wildfowl Trust conducted a national census in 1978 and again in 1983. In this five-year period the overall population increased by 7 per cent. The following counties in England and Scotland showed increases of over 10 per cent. in the period:

County (old boundaries)	*Number of Swans*		*Percentage Increase*
	1978	*1983*	
England			
Northumberland	221	300	36
Westmorland	54	93	72
Yorkshire, West Riding	191	227	19
Lancashire	195	331	70
Lincolnshire	511	714	40
Leicester and Rutland	144	268	86
Northampton	186	338	82
Cambridge	322	422	31
Norfolk	999	1,299	30
Suffolk	375	535	43
Buckingham	208	255	22
Hertford	262	294	12
Sussex	615	795	29
Hampshire	801	1,029	28
Wiltshire	622	699	12
Devon	320	570	78
Scotland			
Orkney	274	323	18
Aberdeen	208	324	56
Clackmannan	4	8	100
Ayr	69	82	19
West Lothian	8	9	12
East Lothian	83	107	29
Berwick	44	49	11
Kirkcudbright	129	197	53

In addition, the following counties showed increases over 10 per cent., but in these cases either the census coverage was poor or the figures are regarded as suspect from other knowledge, and the figures must be treated with caution: Durham (51 per cent.), Yorkshire, North Riding

(230 per cent.), Shropshire (41 per cent.), Stafford (55 per cent.), Essex (53 per cent.), Somerset (27 per cent.), Cornwall (136 per cent.), Inverness (59 per cent.), Kincardine (200 per cent.), Stirling (183 per cent.), Kinross (100 per cent.), Lanark (209 per cent.), Dumfries (160 per cent.).

Washington, Easington and Aycliffe

55. **Mr. Boyes** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the future of Washington, Easington, and Aycliffe new towns.

Mr. Patrick Jenkin: I refer the hon. Member to the answer which I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Bishop Auckland (Mr. Foster).

Olympic Games

56. **Mr. Denis Howell** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent discussions he has held with the British Olympic Association about a bid to hold a future Olympic Games in the United Kingdom; and what financial commitment will be made by the Government in support of any such bid.

Mr. Macfarlane: I asked officers of the British Olympic Association for their assessment of the likelihood of staging the games in this country between now and the end of the century. I have made no offer of financial resources.

Departmental Achievements

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list his Department's principal achievements since 1979.

Mr. Patrick Jenkin: I have today placed in the Library copies of a detailed report which brings together accounts of the various measures taken by my Department between April 1984 and March 1985. This report supplements the earlier documents covering the periods May 1979 to April 1983 and April 1983 to April 1984 which were provided pursuant to the replies to my hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Murphy) on 3 May 1983 and 9 May 1984 respectively; all three documents should be read together for the full list of measures since 1979. The principal achievements since April 1984 have been:

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

— the passing of the Rates Act 1984 and the subsequent protection of ratepayers in 18 local authorities from high rate increases;

— the continuation of downward pressure on high spending authorities in the rate support grant settlement for 1985-86. Rate increases in 1984-85 were the lowest for 10 years and are likely to average single figures again in 1985-86;

—the passing of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act, paving the way for the abolition of the GLC and metropolitan county councils in 1986. The Local Government Bill, containing the main abolition provisions, completed its Commons stages on 28 March;

—the setting up of an inquiry into the conduct of local authority business and the undertaking of new studies into the system of local government finance.

HOUSING

—a continuing rise in owner-occupation—an increase of more than 1·5 million between May 1979 and March 1985;

— further encouragement of council house sales and the introduction of a new system of building control in the Housing and Building Control Act 1984. 814,000 council, new town and housing association dwellings have now been sold under the Government's right-to-buy and voluntary sales schemes;

—more than 71,000 low-cost home ownership sales by public authorities;

—£740 million is expected to be spent on home improvement grants in 1984-85, a total of 200,000 grants; 85,000 local authority and new town dwellings renovated in 1984-85.

INNER CITIES

— continued support for inner area renewal and the encouragement of enterprise, with £338 million devoted to the urban programme in 1984-85;

—the approval of projects worth nearly £365 million in capital investment for urban development grant: grant offers of £67·89 million have attracted £295 million of private sector investment, since 1983-84;

— rapid progress by the London Docklands and Merseyside Development Corporation in the regeneration of their areas. By end 1985-86 some £360 million of public money will have been spent. LDDC has so far attracted £860 million of private investment. In Liverpool the successful International Garden Festival was held during 1984, attracting 3·3 million visitors;

—further increases in the resources for the reclamation of derelict land which have tripled from £23·5 million in 1979-80 to £76·4 million in 1985-86. Schemes have been approved for the reclamation of about 1,500 hectares in 1984-85.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

—following a United Kingdom initiative, agreement was reached in the EC Environment Council in March 1985 on a directive requiring the introduction of unleaded petrol by 1 October 1989. The Department reached an agreement with the Paintmakers' Association to eliminate lead additives from their decorative paints;

—agreement to two EC directives on combating air pollution from industrial plants and on air quality standards for nitrogen dioxide; the publication of a White Paper on acid rain;

—enactment with other members of the European Community of a directive to control transfrontier movements of hazardous wastes;

—decision taken on major capital investment to achieve large reduction in radioactive discharges from Sellafield.

PLANNING AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

—further steps proposed to simplify and improve the operating efficiency of the town and country planning system;

—record level of grant commitment secured in 1984 from the quota section of the European regional development fund (£181 million) for English local and public authorities which provide infrastructure services.

THE RURAL AND BUILT HERITAGE

—major increases announced in the level of grant aid to be made available in 1985-86 to the Nature Conservancy council and the Countryside Commission — a measure of the high priority attached by the Government to nature and countryside conservation;

—a further £25 million given to the National Heritage Memorial Fund to secure the future of Kedleston hall, Weston park and Nostell priory, and their contents, for the nation.

WATER

—increased investment by regional water authorities projected to increase from £799 million in 1984-85 to £964 million in 1987-88, a rising proportion to be directed towards the repair and restoration of underground assets;

—extension of water pollution controls to protect all inland, esturial, coastal and underground waters.

GOVERNMENT ESTATE

—an increase in the extent to which the Property Services Agency has its work undertaken by the private sector. All new construction, 85 per cent. by value of maintenance and 60 per cent. of new design work are now placed with private contractors and consultants.

EC Directives

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in the *Official Report* the details of each directive from the European Economic Community relevant to his Department for each year since and including 1979; and what subsequent action he took in respect of each.

Mr. Patrick Jenkin: My Department has the primary responsibility for the following directives which have been adopted since 1979. They have been, are being, or will be implemented by administrative or statutory means as indicated.

Number	*Subject matter*	*Method of implementation*
79/409	Conservation of wild birds	The Nature Conservancy Council has identified some 150 sites which might qualify for listing as special protection areas under Article 4. An initial list of seven areas was forwarded to the Commission on 31 August 1982 and a further batch of sites will be forwarded for listing shortly. Bird protection measures in Great Britain under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 comply with the Directive. Orders in Council to implement the Directive in Northern Ireland were laid before Parliament on 22 November 1984. They will become effective on 14 April 1985.
79/869	Frequency of sampling and analysis of surface water intended for abstraction for drinking purposes	This Directive does not, save in certain minor respects, change existing practices, and was implemented in a circular letter to statutory water undertakers in March 1982.
79/923	Quality of shellfish waters	To date 29 waters have been identified under this Directive, and consideration is being given to identifying further waters in response to the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution's request. Arrangements are in hand for the preparation of reports on the quality of shellfish waters for the Commission of the European Communities.
80/68	Protection of groundwater	A Joint Circular (DOE 4/82, WO 7/82) was issued on 1 March 1982. The provisions of the Directive are being implemented by the use of the Control of Pollution Act 1974.
80/778	Quality of water for human consumption	This Directive is being implemented under existing legislation and reinforces existing policy and procedures. Circular letters have been issued to statutory water undertakers and two Departmental Circulars (DOE 20/82 and DOE 25/84) to local authorities explaining how the Directive is to be implemented in detail. Action is well in hand to ensure that all public water supplies comply with the terms of the Directive by 15 July this year when it comes into operation.
80/779	Air quality for SO2 and particulates	Ambient smoke levels, in areas of the country which have not, hitherto, introduced smoke control, need to be brought down by 1939, to comply with this Directive. My Department published a Circular in 1981 (DOE 11/81) on new procedures for smoke control, and has subsequently pressed relevant local authorities to introduce smoke control programmes.
82/176	Mercury discharges from chloralkali industry	This Directive has been implemented and in the United Kingdom consents to discharge have been set in accordance with the standards in the Directive.
82/242	Biodegradability of non-ionic surfactants Amending directive 73/404	This Directive is applied in the United Kingdom by Regulations (SI 1984/1369) made under the European Communities Act 1972.
82/243	Biodegradability of anionic surfactants Amending directive 73/405	This Directive permits the use of a new test method and is implemented by the same Regulations (SI 1984/1369) as those for the Directive on the biodegradability of non-ionic detergents.
82/883	Monitoring of wastes from Ti02 industry	This Directive sets out more explicitly the monitoring requirements of Article 7 of the 1978 Directive on waste from the titanium dioxide industry. The monitoring called for in the 1982 Directive is being carried out.
82/884	Limit value for lead in air	Evidence from earlier monitoring suggests that there are unlikely to be any breaches of the air quality standard imposed by this Directive. My Department has, however, purchased monitoring equipment complying with the Directive's specification, and is seeking the co-operation of local authorities in industrial areas, to monitor for lead in accordance with the Directive's requirements.
83/29	Amending 78/176 on Ti02 waste	This Directive is a procedural device for changing the time-limit by which the Commission of the European Communities might bring forward proposals under Article 9 of Directive 78/176/EEC.
83/129	Seal pup skins and products	The Directive is enforced in the United Kingdom through a Modification Order to the Endangered Species (Import and Export) Act 1976 which came into operation on 26 November 1983. As a result of the Directive, and other measures, very few young harp or hooded seal pups were taken in the Northern Atlantic during 1983 or 1984.
83/513	Cadmium discharges	This Directive was adopted in September 1983. It applies to discharges of sewage and industrial waste and is to be implemented by 1 January 1986. No delay is expected, although the number of individual discharges to be identified is large.

Number	Subject matter	Method of implementation
84/156	Mercury discharges other than from the chloralkali electrolysis industry	This Directive was adopted in March 1984 and is to be implemented by 1 July 1986. It completes the earlier Directive on discharge of mercury from the chloralkali electrolysis industry.
84/360	Air pollution from industrial plants	This Directive describes a system of air-pollution control broadly similarly to that already exercised by the Industrial Air Pollution Inspectorate, in respect of major industrial plants. The Directive, however, covers certain industrial plants within local authority control, and authorities will need new powers in order to ensure that the United Kingdom complies fully with the Directive. The question of new powers is being considered as part of the review of clean air legislation which is presently being undertaken.
84/491	Discharges of hexachlorocyclohexane	This Directive was adopted on 9 October 1984 and is due to be implemented by 1 April 1986. Work on its implementation is proceeding well and a Circular implementing this Directive and EC Directive 84/156 will be issued later this year.
84/631	Transfrontier shipment of hazardous waste	This Directive provides for pre-notification of intended transfrontier shipment of hazardous waste and for a consignment note to travel with the waste. It is to be implemented by 1 October 1985. A Working Group in Brussels has just finishing preparing the documentation which will be used. The Government intend shortly to consult on draft regulations which will designate the competent authorities involved define their duties and identify the materials which will be controlled.
85/ (not yet allocated)	Air quality standards for NO2	This Directive was adopted in January. My Department plans to extend monitoring of nitrogen dioxide in urban areas, to comply with the directive.

Non-Toxic Split Lead Shot

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he intends to take with manufacturers of non-toxic lead and representatives of angling bodies to ensure that suitable and effective non-toxic split lead shot is available to anglers before he considers legislation on this matter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Nature Conservancy Council held a meeting in January this year to review all recent evidence on swan deaths and populations and progress towards the development of alternatives to lead fishing weights. I am currently considering its report and I will make a statement in due course. Meanwhile, however, the NCC, together with representatives of manufacturers of alternatives to lead fishing weights and national angling organisations, has set up a small working group to look into the speeding-up of testing, developing and introduction of alternatives to lead fishing weights.

Horse Breeding and Rearing (Rating)

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) whether he will introduce legislation to reverse the decision in November 1984 of the Lands Tribunal in the case of Whitsbury manor stud so as to define that for the purposes of section 26 of the General Rate Act 1967 the breeding and rearing of horses is an agricultural operation on agricultural land; and whether he will make a statement;

(2) what representations he has received from the Thoroughbred Breeders Association to the effect that legal definitions of horse breeding and rearing on stud farms contained in rating law should be harmonised with the definitions for the purposes of capital transfer tax contained in the Finance Act 1984; and what reply he has given.

Mr. Waldegrave: I met a delegation, led by my hon. Friend the Member for Devizes, (Mr. Morrison) and including the chairman of the Thoroughbred Breeders Association, last December to discuss these issues and I am considering the representations they made. I understand that the ratepayers in the Whitsbury manor stud case intend to challenge the decision of the Lands Tribunal in the Court of Appeal.

Enterprise Zones

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what is the total average of Government direct and indirect expenditure per annum on enterprise zones; how many new firms now operate in such zones; and how many jobs have so far been created;

(2) by what percentage, in real terms, rate revenues from enterprise zones have risen since 1980;

(3) by what percentage, in real terms, rate revenues have risen annually since 1980 in areas *(a)* inside and *(b)* outside enterprise zones.

Sir George Young: The only enterprise zone measure for which the expenditure borne by central Government can be stated precisely is the exemption from rates. The cost of this (at outturn prices) has been:

1981-82 £3,508,770 (seven zones).
1982-83 £8,069,839 (eight zones).
1983-84 £10,377,343 (seventeen zones).
1984-85 £5,837,863 (advance payments as at July 1984) (seventeen zones).
Final figures for 1984-85 are not yet available.

The consultants who monitored progress in the first 11 zones reported that on the basis of surveys carried out between the date of designation of the zones and 31 May 1983 some 8,065 jobs had been created in the zones. In addition, they estimated that a further 2,885 jobs had been created in the period 31 May to 31 December 1983. During the whole period they reported that 1,024 firms had moved into the enterprise zones; 60 per cent. of the firms that moved in before 31 May 1983 were new ones.

The numbers of firms and jobs in all 17 English zones are being gathered but are not presently available.

The cost of rates revenue foregone from the first eight English enterprise zones has risen at the following rate:

	Percentage over previous year (at constant prices) percentage
1982-83	115·7
1983-84	23·2

For the same years, revenues from non-domestic rates increased by 6·8 per cent. and 2·4 per cent. in real terms respectively in all England.

No comparable figures can yet be produced for the 17 English zones now in existence. Nor is information available about the increase in general tax revenue in the enterprise zones.

Rate Support Grant

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how much in total the rate support grant was in 1983-84; and what percentage of this total went to the authorities in the 10 largest cities.

Mr. Waldegrave: The total of rate support grants payable under the Rate Support Grant Supplementary Report (England) (No. 3) 1983-84 is £9,075 million. 10·7 per cent. of this went to the 10 largest district councils outside London-Birmingham, Leeds, Sheffield, Liverpool, Bradford, Manchester, Bristol, Kirklees, Wirral and Coventry.

Urban Development

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how much Her Majesty's Government spent on urban development schemes in 1983-84; and if he will provide a detailed breakdown of this figure.

Sir George Young: My Department gave approval to urban development grant of £37 million in respect of 72 projects in 1983-84. The estimated total costs of these projects, including private sector investment, are more than £227 million and the expenditure, both private and public, will be spread over several years. These figures do not include offers of grant which have not been taken up. Lists of individual projects approved for UDG are regularly placed in the Library of the House, most recently last December. I am arranging for the list to be updated.

International Conference Centre, Westminster

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the latest estimated capital cost per square foot of the new international conference centre at Westminster.

Sir George Young: £146 per square foot. This is based on the current estimated cost of the construction of the centre, including fixed equipment. It does not include landscaping or fitting out the parliamentary telephone exchange.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for the Environment to what use the lowest of the three floors of the new international conference centre at Westminster will be put.

Sir George Young: The ICC's telephone exchange will be in the lowest of the three basements.

Space previously earmarked for an extension of the parliamentary telephone exchange may be used to provide storage for the conference centre.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimates he has made of the potential demand for facilities in the new international conference centre at Westminster; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: The centre's primary function will be to accommodate Government conferences of all kinds, national as well as international. At other times, its facilities will be made available to other users on commercial terms.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what are the estimated annual running costs of the new international conference centre at Westminister;

(2) which existing facilities the new international conference centre at Westminister is designed to replace or supplement; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what is the projected rate of return on capital of the new international conference centre at Westminister; and how this figure has been calculated.

Sir George Young: The new conference centre is being built to meet the Government's need for major international conferences for which existing facilities are inadequate. A business plan is being prepared which will include a detailed assessment of prospective revenue and costs and the opportunities for relinquishing any surplus property held on lease.

Non-Domestic Property (Rating Revaluation)

Mr. Roger King asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has now abandoned the proposals in the White Paper on rates issued in 1983 to undertake a revaluation of non-domestic property.

Mr. Waldegrave: No.

Sports Events (Violence)

Mr. Patchett asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a progress report with regard to steps being taken by his Department to reduce violence at football and other sporting events.

Mr. Macfarlane: I shall answer this question shortly.

Water Industry (Privatisation)

Mr. Eggar asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress he has made with his examination of the scope for introducing a measure of privatisation into the water industry.

Mr. Gow: On 1 April I sent a discussion paper to water authority chairmen. At this early stage I am anxious to obtain the initial views of the water authorities and water companies on the many complex issues that need to be addressed.

I am placing a copy of the discussion paper in the Library of the House. It is not a formal consultation document. Its purpose is to identify the issues which need to be considered on which the water authorities' views will be valued before I consult more widely.

Council House Sales

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will update the table giving information on sales of dwellings by each local authority in England,

which was referred to in the answer given to the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire on 19 February, *Official Report*, column *412*.

Mr. Gow: I have today placed in the Library the latest figures, to which my hon. Friend refers, giving information reported by each local authority in England on the progress of council house sales to the end of December 1984.

Rent Acts (Prosecutions)

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many private landlords have been prosecuted under the Rent Acts for each of the past 10 years; and under what sections.

Mr. Mellor: I have been asked to reply.

Records available to us may be incomplete because they cover only prosecutions by the police, and do not separately identify offences by private landlords. The available information is given in the following tables.

Defendants proceeded against under the Landlord and Tenant Act 1962, The Rent Act 1977 and the Protection from Eviction Act 1977 by Act and section
England and Wales

Year	Total proceedings under the Protection from Eviction Act 1977 sections 1(2) and 1(3) Number of defendants proceeded against	Proceedings under section 1(2) (Unlawful Eviction) Number of defendants proceeded against	Proceedings under section 1(3) (Harassment) Number of defendants proceeded against
1977	5	2	3
1978	70	45	25
1979	20	16	4
1980	131	94	37
1981	118	87	31
1982	115	84	31
1983	57	42	15

Year	Total proceedings under the Landlord and Tenant Act 1962 (Failing to provide rent book etc.) Number of defendants proceeded against
1977	18
1978	29

Year	Total proceedings under the Landlord and Tenant Act 1962 (Failing to provide rent book etc.) Number of defendants proceeded against
1979	52
1980	24
1981	23
1982	21
1983	19

Year	Total proceedings under The Rent Act 1979 Number of defendants proceeded against	Proceedings under section 57(4) (False entry in rent book) Number of defendants proceeded against	Proceedings under section 81 (Demanding Excess Rent) Number of defendants proceeded against	Proceedings under section 119 (Demanding premiums) Number of defendants proceeded against
1977	*	*	*	*
1978	4	—	2	2
1979	3	—	—	3
1980	2	—	—	—
1981	4	2	1	2
1982	4	1	1	2
1983	—	—	—	—

* Information not available.

Construction (Expenditure Statistics)

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has concerning per capita expenditure upon construction in the latest year for which figures are available in United States dollar equivalents in the following countries: United Kingdom, Canada, France, Japan, the Federal Republic of Germany and the United States of America.

Mr. Gow [*pursuant to his answer*, 29 March 1985, c. *397*]: The available information, in United States dollar equivalents* is given in the table:

New Construction† Per Capita in 1982

	$ per capita
United Kingdom	820
France‡	1,160
United States of America	1,200
Federal Republic of Germany	1,370
Canada	1,750
Japan	1,970

* Figures converted to United States dollar equivalents using purchasing power parities.
† Figures exclude repair and maintenance work. In the United Kingdom this would add substantially to the figure given above.
‡ 1981 figure.

It is difficult to make valid international comparisons of construction work because of different population densities; different rates of population growth; differing purchasing powers; different costs of construction; and differing rate of economic growth. These factors would all contribute to an apparent lower level of spending on new construction in the United Kingdom than in other countries.

In addition, the United Kingdom has a considerable legacy of housing and other infrastructure from the 19th and earlier 20th century, the substantial cost of whose repair and maintenance is not reflected in the figures given.

The Government's economic policies have, since 1981, contributed to an 8 per cent. growth in GDP; an 18 per cent. growth in total fixed investment; a 10 per cent. rise in total construction industry output; and a 15·6 per cent rise in output by the construction industry for the private sector—excluding housing repair and maintenance.

DEFENCE

Service Bands

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the number of engagements of each service band in 1984 together with the number which were (i) essential for reasons of state, (ii) reasonably necessary for strictly military duties, (iii) for public entertainment and (iv) for private entertainment, including performance at mess and on other service occasions;

(2) whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of the service bands together with the total number of bandsmen and the total number of military and other persons employed directly or indirectly in training, provisioning, transporting, housing and paying them, including the contingent liability to pension payment.

Mr. Lee: The following table lists all service bands and the personnel in each. Figures showing their engagements are not kept centrally in the form requested, but the number which were fee-paying are listed.

The number of individuals employed in training service bands is as follows:

Army	51*
RAF	Full time: 6
	Part time: 8
Royal Marines	Full time: 40
	Part time: 16

* Training also takes place at junior musician training units; those that can be accounted for in training bandsmen cannot be separately identified.

The number of individuals employed in provisioning, transporting, housing and paying bands personnel cannot be separately identified from those employed on these tasks for the benefit of service men as a whole in the units which they serve.

Royal Marines

Title of Band	*Number of Band Personnel*	*Number of Fee-Paying (public) Engage-ments 1983-84*
1. Royal Marine School of Music Band	66	58
2. Band of Commander-in-Chief, Fleet	66	40
3. Band of Commander-in-Chief, Naval Home Command	66	45
4. Band of Flag Officer Scotland and Northern Ireland	42	2
5. Band of Flag Officer Plymouth	42	16
6. Band of Commando Forces Royal Marines (disbanded 1 April 1985)	42	24
7. Band of Commando Training Centre Royal Marines	42	31
8. Britannia Royal Naval College	34	12
9. Band of Flag Officer, Third Flotilla (disbands 1 April 1987)	22	*n.a.

* The band spend most of its time embarked and apart from engagements during deployments undertakes very few engagements.

Army

Title of band	*Number of band personnel*	*Number of fee-paying (public) engage-ments 1983-84*
1. Life Guards	35	14
2. Royal Horse Guards and 1st Dragoons	35	30
3. Grenadier Guards	50	33
4. Coldstream Guards	50	50
5. Scots Guards	50	50
6. Irish Guards	50	77
7. Welsh Guards	50	65
8. Royal Artillery (Woolwich)	50	21
9. Royal Artillery (Alanbrooke)	35	31
10. Royal Engineers (Chatham)	50	12
11. Royal Signals	50	15
12. Royal Tank Regiment (Alamein)	22	16
13. Royal Tank Regiment (Cambrai)	22	19
14. Royal Tank Regiment (Rhine)	22	8
15. Brigade of Gurkhas	50	16
16. Royal Corps of Transport	35	27
17. Royal Army Ordnance Corps	35	10
18. Royal Electrical & Mechanical Engineers	35	12
19. Womens Royal Army Corps	35	8
20. Queen's Dragoon Guards	22	8
21. Royal Scots Dragoon Guards	22	9
22. 4/7th Dragoon Guards	22	2
23. 5th Royal Inniskillin Dragoon Guards	22	5
24. Queens Own Hussars	22	20
25. Queens Royal Irish Hussars	22	8
26. 9/12th Royal Lancers	22	14
27. Royal Hussars	22	12
28. 13th/18th Royal Hussars	22	12
29. 14th/20th Kings Hussars	22	9
30. 15th/19th Kings Hussars	22	3
31. 16th/5th Royal Lancers	22	22
32. 17th/21st Royal Lancers	22	4
33. The Royal Scots	22	3
34. Royal Highland Fusiliers	22	4
35. Kings Own Scottish Borderers	22	9
36. Black Watch	22	11
37. Queens Own Highlanders	22	8
38. Gordons	22	5
39. Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders	22	13
40. Queens Regiment—Albuhera Band	35	10
41. Queens Regiment—Quebec Band	35	9

Title of band	Number of band personnel	Number of fee-paying (public) engagements 1983-84
42. Royal Regiment of Fusiliers—St. Georges Band	35	1
43. Royal Regiment of Fusiliers—Duke of Kents Band	35	8
44. 1st Royal Anglian Regiment	22	23
45. 2nd Royal Anglian Regiment	22	20
46. 3rd Royal Anglian Regiment	22	13
47. Kings Own Border	22	11
48. Kings Regiment	22	16
49. Prince of Wales Own	22	7
50. Green Howards	22	7
51. 1st Royal Irish Rangers	22	3
52. 2nd Royal Irish Rangers	22	2
53. Queens Lancashire Regiment	22	9
54. Duke of Wellington's Regiment	22	11
55. The Devonshire & Dorset Regiment	22	2
56. 22nd Cheshire Regiment	22	5
57. Royal Welch Fusiliers	22	8
58. Royal Regiment of Wales	22	5
59. 1st Battalion Glosters	22	6
60. Worcestershire and Sherwood Foresters	22	18
61. Royal Hampshire Regiment	22	5
62. Staffordshire Regiment	22	13
63. Duke of Edinburgh's Royal Regiment	22	6
64. Light Infantry Corunna Band	35	2
65. Light Infantry Salamanca Band	35	9
66. Normandy Band Royal Green Jackets	35	8
67. Peninsula Band Royal Green Jackets	35	12
68. Regimental Band 1st Battalion The Parachute Regiment	35	10
69. Regimental Band of the Parachute Regiment	35	27

RAF

Title of band	Number of band personnel	Number of fee-paying (public) engagements 1983-84
1. Central Band	79	30
2. RAF College Band	42	20
3. RAF Regiment Band	42	10
4. Western Band	42	8
5. RAF Germany Band	42	49
6. Salon Orchestra	7	83

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the total direct and indirect costs of retaining service bands including the costs of accommodation, transportation, training, recruitment, victualling, pay and all allowances of any kind, and contingent pension cost; and how much of this cost is incurred overseas.

Mr. Lee: Costs are not available in the detailed format requested as many of the sub categories identified cannot readily be separated from amongst the overall costs of units of which the bands form but a part. However, the current costs for all service bands, in the following broad categories, can be estimated—primarily on the basis of present capitation rates—as follows:

	£ million
Personnel Costs (including Pay, ERNIC and Personal Allowances)	25·5
Support Costs (including movements, basic training and office support costs)	5·3

Contingent pension costs are estimated at £5·2 million.

Services (Musical Requirements)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will consider contracting out part of the services' musical requirements to colliery and other bands of high standing.

Mr. Lee: No.

Services (Catering)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Defence what progress he has made in contracting out the services' catering requirements; and if he will publish in the *Official Report* the total numbers employed directly and indirectly in catering now and when he took office; and if he will provide similar figures for the value of the catering contracted out.

Mr. Lee: Catering contracts have been let at nine static units, and more than 50 other service establishments and some staff restaurants are being considered for contracting out. Full details of the numbers of staff employed in catering are not available and cannot be provided without disproportionate effort, but more than 300 posts have been saved by contracting out. The cost of contracting out catering in 1979 was about £1 million and is now £4 million.

Services (Transport Requirements)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Defence what progress he has made in contracting out the transport requirements of the services where these are not part of the war establishment of field formations below corps, and so on level; and if he will publish in the *Official Report* the reduction in the numbers of such general service vehicles since he took office together with the increase in the value of transportation contracted out.

Mr. Lee: A number of feasibility studies are in progress for the contracting out of the transport requirements of the services, but the reduction in the numbers of vehicles and the value of transportation contracted out so far are minimal.

Royal Navy (Ships)

Mr. Garrett asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many Royal Navy ships will be taken out of service over the next 10 years; and how many will be replaced by new ships.

Mr. Lee: It is not the practice to give operational and planning details of this kind. However, I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) on 1 March at column 299, which outlined the Government's policy on the future strength of the Royal Navy.

Territorial Army

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list in the *Official Report* those Territorial Army

infantry units that do not have their own unit transport with the reasons in each case; what plans he has for changing the situation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: All Territorial Army infantry battalions have their own unit transport.

West German Border (Barrier)

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Defence when the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation last considered the possibility of the construction in peacetime of a physical barrier along the West German border with Eastern Europe; what forms of barrier were considered; what were the costings; what assessment was made of the potential impact of the construction of such a barrier on Union of Soviet Socialist Republics' policy regarding the use of nuclear weapons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: As I said in my reply to the hon. Member's question on 18 March, at column 407, no physical barrier along the West German border with East Germany could ever be certain to be impenetrable. Our researches have revealed no detailed consideration by NATO of the construction of such a barrier since the Alliance's present strategy of flexible response was adopted in 1967.

Naval Dockyards

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the number of naval dockyard employees during the period covering April to June 1982, July 1982 to December 1982, the whole of 1983 and 1984, respectively; and on what factors he has based his proposal to initiate a scheme of privatisation of the remaining naval dockyards.

Mr. Lee: During the periods in question the average numbers of civilian employees in the royal dockyards were as follows:

	Numbers
April-June 1982	29,638
July-December 1982	28,820
January-December 1983	27,038
January-December 1984	24,159

We are at present considering possible future arrangements for managing the royal dockyards. No decisions have yet been taken. A wide range of factors are involved, including national security and the need to ensure that the taxpayer receives best value for money.

Dockyards (Privatisation)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many civilian companies have expressed interest to his Department in administering the remaining dockyards which he intends to privatise; and what consultations he intends to seek with dockyard trade union labour representatives about the terms of employment and conditions they are willing to offer.

Mr. Lee: No such decision on future arrangements for the royal dockyards has been taken. However, of more than 20 companies approached in the course of studies last year, on an informal basis and without commitment, over half expressed initial interest in the concept of commercial operation of the dockyards. We have made it clear that there will be a period of consultation before any major decisions are taken.

Nuclear Weapons (Radioactive Fallout)

Mr. Norman Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has as to the known lowest altitude at which nuclear weapons can be safely detonated in space so as to avoid self-contamination by radioactive fallout.

Mr. Lee: I regret that it is not possible to answer this question since we have no definition of the phrase "safely detonated in space" nor the word "self-contamination". If the hon. Gentleman wishes to write to me, I will endeavour to send him a full reply.

Main Battle Tank

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to invite tenders to build models of the new main battle tank; and if this will take place within the next year.

Mr. Lee: The options on a new main battle tank continue to be the subject of study. It is highly unlikely that industry will be invited to tender for models of a new main battle tank within the next year.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence which companies will be invited to tender for the new main battle tank; and in which year he expects to announce a decision on the tenders.

Mr. Lee: It is too early to give any meaningful answer on this subject, but all firms with the necessary expertise will be considered.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence on what basis the Government invited private sector companies to submit evaluation studies for the new main battle tank.

Mr. Lee: In 1982-83 the Department invited companies concerned with armoured fighting vehicles building to submit their ideas on main battle tank concepts which should meet the possible requirements of the British Army from the mid-1990s into the next century, together with time and cost data. These inputs form part of the present studies in the Department.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence what he estimates to be the value of the final contract for the new main battle tank for the British Army.

Mr. Lee: It is far too early to give any meaningful answer on the subject.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence what role the defence procurement section is to have in the examination of the evaluation studies for the new main battle tank for the British Army.

Mr. Lee: The procurement executive will continue to fulfil its normal role of technical and procurement evaluation of options available.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence what role the defence procurement section is to take in the award of the final contract for building the new main battle tank; and in which year he expects to announce such a decision.

Mr. Lee: The procurement executive would carry out its normal role of technical and procurement evaluation of available options. It is too early to forecast any final contract time scales.

RAF Trainer

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether, before the announcement to the House on Thursday 21 March of the contract for the Royal Air Force trainer which had been awarded to Shorts, Belfast, he had received a tender price from British Aerospace £3·5 million or more less than the price accepted by him from Shorts, Belfast.

Mr. Butler: No.

RAF Molesworth

Mrs. Clywd asked the Secretary of State for Defence why permission has been refused for the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament to use fields surrounding RAF Molesworth for the forthcoming Easter demonstration.

Mr. Lee [*pursuant to his answer*, 18 March 1985, c. *412*]: It is not the Ministry of Defence's practice to make land or facilities available for the purpose of protest. However, in order to assist the civil police in their efforts to minimise the inconvenience to local people likely to be caused by demonstrations at Molesworth this Easter, some unfenced surplus land near Molesworth is being made available to the civil police at their request. The civil police have authority, should they decide it would assist them in controlling events, to allow CND organisers on to this land in the Easter period.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Banking Act (Short-term Securities)

Mr. Eggar asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he intends to introduce the secondary legislation that he announced in his Budget speech to remove the constraint under the Banking Act which at present prevents companies from financing themselves by a series of issues of short-term securities.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The necessary regulations under the Banking Act have today been laid before the House.

These regulations will facilitate issues of sterling bonds by companies whose shares are listed on the Stock Exchange or dealt in on the unlisted securities market. In the light of representations made since the Chancellor's announcement, issues by the wholly-owned financing subsidiaries of such companies (provided that the subsidiary in question is not a UK private company) will be treated in the same way, on condition that the parent company gives its guarantee. The regulations will permit such companies and subsidiaries to issue bonds in circumstances where they would at present be prevented by the Banking Act, subject to the bonds being offered by prospectus or having a full listing. Such bonds must be denominated in sterling; they must have a minimum maturity of one year; the minimum deposit accepted in respect of each bond should be £100,000, and the bonds should be transferable only in amounts with an aggregate redemption value of not less than £100,000; and any interest or dividend in respect of any bonds of this kind issued on or before 28 August 1985 must be payable not before 28 August 1985 and not later than six months from the date of issue. Bonds can carry either fixed or floating rates of interest and may be issued in either the domestic capital market or in the eurosterling market.

An order has also been laid today, further amending the Control of Borrowing Order 1958. This will require companies wishing to make issues of sterling bonds with a maturity of between one and five years to obtain the prior approval of the Bank of England for the timing of the issue, or the period during which such bonds are to be issued and the aggregate amount of the money to be raised during that period. The bank has indicated in a guidance notice issued to the market on 19 March that, in order to give companies maximum flexibility over timing, consent will normally be given for imediate issue of bonds in this maturity area.

The regulations and order will take effect on 24 April 1985. They will be published as statutory instruments Nos. 564 and 565 of 1985.

Public Sector Exchange Cover Scheme

Mr. Merchant asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he has made any amendments to the terms of the public sector exchange cover scheme.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The scope of official exchange risk cover available to eligible bodies on new floating interest rate foreign currency borrowing has been broadened. Cover is now available to eligible bodies on such borrowing at a ¼ per cent. discount to variable NLF and PWLB rates. The terms announced on 7 November 1983, at column 9, which allowed for floating rate borrowing to be covered at the same guaranteed benefit on fixed rate NLF/PWLB rates as is already available where borrowing is at fixed foreign currency interest rates, are unaffected.

Business Expansion Scheme

Mr. Alton asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total number of individual taxpayers to benefit by gaining tax relief under the business expansion scheme in 1983-84; and what was their average investment.

Mr. Moore: Almost 20,000 taxpayers made investments under the scheme in 1983-84. The average investment was about £5,000.

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will provide an estimate of the number of new jobs created by the business expansion scheme since its inception; and what is the cost of each new job created in this way.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 March 1985, c. *604*]: Further to my replies of 18 March 1985, at columns 395-96, it is now estimated that in 1983-84 about £100 million was invested under the scheme in over 500 companies. The direct revenue cost of tax relief was about £50 million. It is not possible to estimate how many new jobs were created as a result of business expansion scheme investments, though information about just over 300 of the companies receiving investments indicates that these employ a total of nearly 9,000 people. It is too early to provide information in respect of 1984-85 investments.

Income Tax

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish the figures tabulating the extra revenue obtained from the higher rate of income tax bands, in each year since 1978-79, at current and constant prices.

Mr. Moore: Estimates of the income tax due from the higher rate income tax bands in excess of basic rate liability are as follows. The figures exclude yield from the investment income surcharge.

	£ million	
	at Current Prices	*at 1978-79 prices**
1978-79	810	810
1979-80	780	675
1980-81	980	730
1981-82	1,350	900
1982-83	1,420	880
1983-84†	1,440	860
1984-85†	1,675	950
1985-86†	1,880	1,010

* The column has been expressed in 1978-79 prices using the retail price index.
† Provisional.

Mr. Maples asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the expected total of yield of the higher rates of income tax for 1985-86.

Mr. Moore: The yield of income tax at higher rates due in respect of 1985-86 incomes is estimated at £4,730 million (of which £1,880 million is in respect of liability in excess of the basic rate element).

Mr. Maples asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the expected yield in the 1984-85 tax year from higher rate income tax in respect of taxpayers whose highest marginal rate of tax is *(a)* 40 per cent. *(b)* 45 per cent., *(c)* 50 per cent., *(d)* 55 per cent. and *(e)* 60 per cent., respectively.

Mr. Moore: The yields of income tax, both at higher rates and at the excess of those rates over the basic rate element, due in respect of 1984-85 incomes are estimated as follows:

	Tax due	
Taxpayer's marginal rate of tax Per cent.	*at higher rates (£ million)*	*at excess over basic rate (£ million)*
40	180	45
45	500	140
50	680	230
55	520	200
60	2,330	1,060
Total	4,210	1,675

Each row of the table is independent and shows the yield of tax at all higher rates from taxpayers with the specified marginal rate.

Mr. Rooker asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will now update his answer to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr of 27 March 1984, *Official Report*, Column 109, by giving information about the reductions in the basic rate of income tax which would be necessary to restore tax payments to their 1978-79 levels in 1985-86.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 29 March 1985, c. *369*.]: Estimates for 1984-85 and 1985-86 are in the table. The figures for 1984-85 have been revised to include estimates of indirect tax payments based on the most recent family expenditure survey.

Real take home pay for these illustrative households will be over 11 per cent. higher in 1985-86 than it was in 1978-79.

Reductions in basic rate necessary to restore tax payments to their 1978-79 levels

	1984-85			*1985-86*		
	Single	*Married*	*Married plus 2 children*	*Single*	*Married*	*Married plus 2 children*
Percentages of average earnings						
(a) in real terms						
75	12·1	15·5	12·5	12·7	16·0	12·9
100	10·9	12·9	10·9	11·5	13·5	11·4
150	9·9	11·0	9·7	10·4	11·5	10·2
(b) as a percentage of gross earnings						
75	5·1	7·0	6·6	4·7	6·3	6·1
100	4·2	5·2	4·9	3·9	4·7	4·6
150	3·5	4·0	3·8	3·3	3·7	3·5

Notes to Tables
Average earnings are taken to be the average gross weekly earnings of all full time males on adult rates with pay unaffected by absence. Figures for 1984-85 and 1985-86 are illustrative and assume growth of 7½ and 7 per cent. respectively.
2. Income tax payments are calculated on the assumption that households have no other tax relief apart from the standard allowances. Earners are assumed to be contracted-in for NI purposes.
3. Indirect tax payments are estimates based on the 1983 family expenditure survey. Because of sampling variation, there can be substantial differences between the estimates obtained from different years' surveys.

Mr. Straw asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* tables showing *(a)* the proportion in percentage terms, *(b)* the amount in current prices, and *(c)* the amount in constant 1984-85 prices of personal income taken by taxation and rates for the year 1985-86, taking account of any changes announced in his Budget statement and any previously announced changes, and for each of the years, 1978-79, 1979-80, 1980-81, 1981-82, 1982-83, 1983-84 and 1984-85 for each level of average earnings, each category of taxpayer, and each category of taxation and rates, in the manner of the answer of 21 March 1984, *Official Report*, columns *480-86*.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 March 1985, c. 465]: Figures for all the years requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost. Figures for the years 1983-84 to 1985-86 are in the tables.

50 per cent. of average earnings

	Single			*Married both working*			*Married couple with two children*		
	£ per week	*£ per week 1984-85 prices*	*Per cent. of gross income*	*£ per week*	*£ per week 1984-85 prices*	*Per cent. of gross income*	*£ per week*	*£ per week 1984-85 prices*	*Per cent. of gross income*
1983-84									
(a) Income tax	15·35	16·12	18·0	—	—	—	9·53	10·01	9·8
(b) NIC	7·70	8·09	9·0	7·70	8·09	9·0	7·70	8·09	7·9
(c) (a) plus *(b)*	23·05	24·21	27·0	7·70	8·09	9·0	17·23	18·09	17·6
1984-85									
(a) Income tax	16·00	16·00	17·4	—	—	—	9·37	9·37	8·9
(b) NIC	8·27	8·27	9·0	8·27	8·27	9·0	8·27	8·27	7·9
(c) (a) plus *(b)*	24·27	24·27	26·4	8·27	8·27	9·0	17·64	17·64	16·8
1985-86									
(a) Income tax	16·79	15·91	17·1	—	—	—	9·57	9·07	8·5
(b) NIC	8·85	8·39	9·0	7·47	7·08	7·6	8·85	8·39	7·9
(c) (a) plus *(b)*	25·64	24·30	26·1	7·47	7·08	7·6	18·42	17·46	16·4

75 per cent. of average earnings

	Single			*Married both working*			*Married couple with two children*		
	£ per week	*£ per week 1984-85 prices*	*Per cent. of gross income*	*£ per week*	*£ per week 1984-85 prices*	*Per cent. of gross income*	*£ per week*	*£ per week 1984-85 prices*	*Per cent. of gross income*
1983-84									
(a) Income tax	28·18	29·59	22·0	12·05	12·65	9·4	22·35	23·47	15·9
(b) NIC	11·54	12·12	9·0	11·54	12·12	9·0	11·54	12·12	8·2
(c) VAT	5·04	5·29	3·9	5·91	6·21	4·6	4·51	4·74	3·2
(d) Other indirect taxes	10·27	10·79	8·0	15·52	16·30	12·1	11·71	12·30	8·3
(e) (a) plus *(b)* plus *(c)* plus *(d)*	55·03	57·79	42·9	45·02	47·28	35·1	50·11	52·62	35·7
(f) Domestic rates	4·82	5·06	3·8	5·63	5·91	4·4	5·36	5·63	3·8
(g) (e) plus *(f)*	59·85	62·85	46·7	50·65	53·19	39·5	55·47	58·25	39·5
1984-85									
(a) Income tax	29·79	29·79	21·6	11·59	11·59	8·4	23·15	23·15	15·3
(b) NIC	12·41	12·41	9·0	12·41	12·41	9·0	12·41	12·41	8·2
(c) VAT	5·68	5·68	4·1	6·62	6·62	4·8	5·28	5·28	3·5
(d) Other indirect taxes	10·76	10·76	7·8	16·37	16·37	11·9	12·51	12·51	8·3
(e) (a) plus *(b)* plus *(c)* plus *(d)*	58·64	58·64	42·5	46·99	46·99	34·1	53·35	53·35	35·3
(f) Domestic rates	5·68	5·68	4·1	5·77	5·77	4·2	5·50	5·50	3·6
(g) (e) plus *(f)*	64·32	64·32	46·7	52·76	52·76	38·3	58·85	58·85	38·9
1985-86									
(a) Income tax	31·54	29·90	21·4	11·60	11·00	7·9	24·33	23·06	15·1
(b) NIC	13·28	12·59	9·0	11·80	11·18	8·0	13·28	12·59	8·2
(c) VAT	6·07	5·75	4·1	7·24	6·86	4·9	5·62	5·33	3·5
(d) Other indirect taxes	11·49	10·89	7·8	17·65	16·73	12·0	13·27	12·58	8·2
(e) (a) plus *(b)* plus *(c)* plus *(d)*	62·38	59·13	42·3	48·29	45·77	32·7	56·50	53·55	35·0
(f) Domestic rates	5·24	4·97	3·6	6·15	5·83	4·2	5·84	5·54	3·6
(g) (e) plus *(f)*	67·62	64·09	45·8	54·44	51·60	36·9	62·34	59·09	38·6

100 per cent. of average earnings

	Single			*Married both working*			*Married couple with two children*		
	£ per week	*£ per week 1984-85 prices*	*Per cent. of gross income*	*£ per week*	*£ per week 1984-85 prices*	*Per cent. of gross income*	*£ per week*	*£ per week 1984-85 prices*	*Per cent. of gross income*
1983-84									
(a) Income tax	41·00	43·06	24·0	24·88	26·13	14·5	35·18	36·94	19·2
(b) NIC	15·39	16·16	9·0	15·39	16·16	9·0	15·39	16·16	8·4
(c) VAT	7·01	7·36	4·1	7·93	8·33	4·6	6·49	6·82	3·5
(d) Other indirect taxes	12·68	13·32	7·4	17·38	18·25	10·2	14·13	14·84	7·7
(e) (a) plus *(b)* plus *(c)* plus *(d)*	76·08	79·90	44·5	65·58	68·87	38·4	71·19	74·76	38·9
(f) Domestic rates	5·47	5·74	3·2	5·98	6·28	3·5	5·91	6·21	3·2
(g) (e) plus *(f)*	81·55	85·64	47·7	71·56	75·15	41·8	77·10	80·97	42·1

	Single			Married both working			Married couple with two children		
	£ per week	£ per week 1984-85 prices	Per cent. of gross income	£ per week	£ per week 1984-85 prices	Per cent. of gross income	£ per week	£ per week 1984-85 prices	Per cent. of gross income
1984-85									
(a) Income tax	43·57	43·57	23·7	25·37	25·37	13·8	36·94	36·94	18·7
(b) NIC	16·54	16·54	9·0	16·54	16·54	9·0	16·54	16·54	8·4
(c) VAT	7·88	7·88	4·3	9·10	9·10	5·0	7·48	7·48	3·8
(d) Other indirect taxes	13·25	13·25	7·2	18·24	18·24	9·9	14·98	14·98	7·6
(e) (a) plus (b) plus (c) plus (d)	81·24	81·24	44·2	69·25	69·25	37·7	75·94	75·94	38·5
(f) Domestic rates	5·60	5·60	3·0	6·12	6·12	3·3	6·05	6·05	3·1
(g) (e) plus (f)	86·84	86·84	47·2	75·37	75·37	41·0	81·99	81·99	41·6
1985-86									
(a) Income tax	46·29	43·88	23·5	26·36	24·99	13·4	39·08	37·04	18·5
(b) NIC	17·70	16·78	9·0	16·91	16·03	8·6	17·70	16·78	8·4
(c) VAT	8·43	7·99	4·3	9·82	9·31	5·0	7·97	7·55	3·8
(d) Other indirect taxes	14·14	13·40	7·2	19·61	18·59	10·0	15·91	15·08	7·6
(e) (a) plus (b) plus (c) plus (d)	86·56	82·05	44·0	72·70	68·91	37·0	80·66	76·45	38·3
(f) Domestic rates	5·95	5·64	3·0	6·52	6·18	3·3	6·42	6·09	3·0
(g) (e) plus (f)	92·51	87·69	47·0	79·22	75·09	40·3	87·08	82·54	41·3

150 per cent. of average earnings

	Single			Married both working			Married couple with two children		
	£ per week	£ per week 1984-85 prices	Per cent. of gross income	£ per week	£ per week 1984-85 prices	Per cent. of gross income	£ per week	£ per week 1984-85 prices	Per cent. of gross income
1983-84									
(a) Income tax	66·65	69·99	26·0	50·53	53·06	19·7	60·83	63·88	22·6
(b) NIC	21·15	22·21	8·2	23·09	24·25	9·0	21·15	22·21	7·9
(c) VAT	11·08	11·64	4·3	11·99	12·59	4·7	10·59	11·12	3·9
(d) Other indirect taxes	17·68	18·57	6·9	21·07	22·13	8·2	19·15	20·11	7·1
(e) (a) plus (b) plus (c) plus (d)	116·56	122·41	45·4	106·68	112·03	41·6	111·72	117·32	41·6
(f) Domestic rates	6·81	7·15	2·7	6·67	7·00	2·6	7·02	7·37	2·6
(g) (e) plus (f)	123·37	129·56	48·1	113·35	119·03	44·2	118·74	124·69	44·2
1984-85									
(a) Income tax	71·14	71·14	25·8	52·94	52·94	19·2	64·51	64·51	22·3
(b) NIC	22·50	22·50	8·2	24·81	24·81	9·0	22·50	22·50	7·8
(c) VAT	12·47	12·47	4·5	14·04	14·04	5·1	12·08	12·08	4·2
(d) Other indirect taxes	18·42	18·42	6·7	21·99	21·99	8·0	20·12	20·12	7·0
(e) (a) plus (b) plus (c) plus (d)	124·53	124·53	45·2	113·78	113·78	41·3	119·21	119·21	41·3
(f) Domestic rates	6·99	6·99	2·5	6·83	6·83	2·5	7·21	7·21	2·5
(g) (e) plus (f)	131·52	131·52	47·7	120·61	120·61	43·7	126·42	126·42	43·8
1985-86									
(a) Income tax	75·80	71·85	25·7	55·86	52·95	18·9	68·58	65·00	22·2
(b) NIC	23·85	22·61	8·1	26·55	25·17	9·0	23·85	22·61	7·7
(c) VAT	13·34	12·64	4·5	15·03	14·25	5·1	12·90	12·23	4·2
(d) Other indirect taxes	19·71	18·68	6·7	23·58	22·35	8·0	21·43	20·31	6·9
(e) (a) plus (b) plus (c) plus (d)	132·70	125·78	45·0	121·02	114·71	41·0	126·76	120·15	41·0
(f) Domestic rates	7·42	7·03	2·5	7·26	6·88	2·5	7·64	7·24	2·5
(g) (e) plus (f)	140·12	132·82	47·5	128·28	121·59	43·5	134·40	127·39	43·5

200 per cent. of average earnings

	Single			Married both working			Married couple with two children		
	£ per week	£ per week 1984-85 prices	Per cent. of gross income	£ per week	£ per week 1984-85 prices	Per cent. of gross income	£ per week	£ per week 1984-85 prices	Per cent. of gross income
1983-84									
(a) Income tax	94·99	99·75	27·8	76·18	80·00	22·3	87·22	91·60	24·6
(b) NIC	21·15	22·21	6·2	30·78	32·32	9·0	21·15	22·21	6·0
(c) (a) plus (b)	116·14	121·96	34·0	106·96	112·32	31·3	108·37	113·80	30·6
1984-85									
(a) Income tax	102·00	102·00	27·7	80·51	80·51	21·9	93·16	93·16	24·5
(b) NIC	22·50	22·50	6·1	33·08	33·08	9·0	22·50	22·50	5·9
(c) (a) plus (b)	124·50	124·50	33·9	113·59	113·59	30·9	115·66	115·66	30·4
1985-86									

	Single			Married both working			Married couple with two children		
	£ per week	£ per week 1984-85 prices	Per cent. of gross income	£ per week	£ per week 1984-85 prices	Per cent. of gross income	£ per week	£ per week 1984-85 prices	Per cent. of gross income
(a) Income tax	109·24	103·55	27·8	85·37	80·92	21·7	99·63	94·44	24·5
(b) NIC	23·85	22·61	6·1	35·41	33·56	9·0	23·85	22·61	5·9
(c) (a) plus (b)	133·09	126·15	33 8	120·78	114·48	30·7	123·48	117·04	30·3

500 per cent. of average earnings

	Single			Married both working			Married couple with two children		
	£ per week	£ per week 1984-85 prices	Per cent. of gross income	£ per week	£ per week 1984-85 prices	Per cent. of gross income	£ per week	£ per week 1984-85 prices	Per cent. of gross income
1983-84									
(a) Income tax	364·42	382·70	42·6	268·75	282·23	31·4	352·77	370·46	40·7
(b) NIC	21·15	22·21	2·5	42·30	44·42	4·9	21·15	22·21	2·4
(c) (a) plus (b)	385·57	404·91	45·1	311·05	326·65	36·4	373·92	392·67	43·1
1984-85									
(a) Income tax	392·88	392·88	42·8	289·09	289·09	31·5	379·61	379·61	40·7
(b) NIC	22·50	22·50	2·4	45·00	45·00	4·9	22·50	22·50	2·4
(c) (a) plus (b)	415·38	415·38	45·2	334·09	334·09	36·4	402·11	402·11	43·1
1985-86									
(a) Income tax	421·87	399·88	42·9	310·01	293·85	31·5	407·45	385·21	40·8
(b) NIC	23·85	22·61	2·4	47·70	45·21	4·9	23·85	22·61	2·4
(c) (a) plus (b)	445·72	422·48	45·3	357·71	339·06	36·4	431·30	408·82	43·2

700 per cent. of average earnings

	Single			Married both working			Married couple with two children		
	£ per week	£ per week 1984-85 prices	Per cent. of gross income	£ per week	£ per week 1984-85 prices	Per cent. of gross income	£ per week	£ per week 1984-85 prices	Per cent. of gross income
1983-84									
(a) Income tax	569·62	598·19	47·6	439·42	461·46	36·7	557·97	585·95	46·1
(b) NIC	21·15	22·21	1·8	42·30	44·42	3·5	21·15	22·21	1·7
(c) (a) plus (b)	590·77	620·40	49·4	481·72	505·88	40·2	579·12	608·16	47·9
1984-85									
(a) Income tax	613·44	613·44	47·7	473·37	473·37	36·8	600·17	600·17	46·2
(b) NIC	22·50	22·50	1·7	45·00	45·00	3·5	22·50	22·50	1·7
(c) (a) plus (b)	635·94	635·94	49·4	518·37	518·37	40·3	622·67	622·67	47·9
1985-86									
(a) Income tax	657·91	623·61	47·8	508·55	482·04	36·9	643·49	609·94	46·3
(b) NIC	23·85	22·61	1·7	47·70	45·21	3·5	23·85	22·61	1·7
(c) (a) plus (b)	681·75	646·21	49·5	556·25	527·25	40·4	667·34	632·55	48·0

1000 per cent. of average earnings

	Single			Married both working			Married couple with two children		
	£ per week	£ per week 1984-85 prices	Per cent. of gross income	£ per week	£ per week 1984-85 prices	Per cent. of gross income	£ per week	£ per week 1984-85 prices	Per cent. of gross income
1983-84									
(a) Income tax	877·42	921·42	51·3	730·97	767·63	42·7	865·77	909·19	50·3
(b) NIC	21·15	22·21	1·2	42·30	44·42	2·5	21·15	22·21	1·2
(c) (a) plus (b)	897·57	943·63	52·5	773·27	812·05	45·2	886·92	931·40	51·5
1984-85									
(a) Income tax	944·28	944·28	51·4	787·56	787·56	42·8	931·01	931·01	50·3
(b) NIC	22·50	22·50	1·2	45·00	45·00	2·4	22·50	22·50	1·2
(c) (a) plus (b)	966·78	966·78	52·6	832·56	832·56	45·3	953·51	953·51	51·5
1985-86									
(a) Income tax	1,011·97	959·21	51·4	845·17	801·11	43·0	997·55	945·54	50·4
(b) NIC	23·85	22·61	1·2	47·70	45·21	2·4	23·85	22·61	1·2
(c) (a) plus (b)	1,035·82	981·82	52·7	892·87	846·32	45·4	1,021·40	968·15	51·6

2,000 per cent. of average earnings

	Single			*Married both working*			*Married couple with two children*		
	£ per week	*£ per week 1984-85 prices*	*Per cent. of gross income*	*£ per week*	*£ per week 1984-85 prices*	*Per cent. of gross income*	*£ per week*	*£ per week 1984-85 prices*	*Per cent. of gross income*
1983-84									
(a) Income tax	1,903·42	1,998·88	55·7	1,754·84	1,842·85	51·3	1,891·77	1,986·64	55·1
(b) NIC	21·15	22·21	0·6	42·30	44·42	1·2	21·15	22·21	0·6
(c) (a) plus *(b)*	1,924·57	2,021·09	56·3	1,797·14	1,887·27	52·5	1,912·92	2,008·85	55·7
1984-85									
(a) Income tax	2,047·08	2,047·08	55·7	1,888·56	1,888·56	51·4	2,033·81	2,033·81	55·1
(b) NIC	22·50	22·50	0·6	45·00	45·00	1·2	22·50	22·50	0·6
(c) (a) plus *(b)*	2,069·58	2,069·58	56·3	1,933·56	1,933·56	52·6	2,056·31	2,056·31	55·7
1985-86									
(a) Income tax	2,192·7	2,077·89	55·7	2,023·94	1,918·43	51·4	2,177·75	2,064·22	55·29
(b) NIC	23·85	22·61	0·6	47·70	45·21	1·2	23·85	22·61	0·6
(c) (a) plus *(b)*	2,216·02	2,100·49	56·3	2,071·64	1,963·64	52·7	2,201·60	2,086·82	55·8

Notes:

1. Income tax payments are calculated on the assumption that households have no other tax relief apart from the standard allowances. Earners, including earning wives, are assumed to pay class 1 NI contributions at the contracted-in rate. The figures for NI contributions are financial year averages.

2. Average earnings are taken to be the average gross weekly earnings of all full time males on adult rates with pay unaffected by absence. Figures for 1984-85 and 1985-86 are illustrative estimates which assume growth of 7½ and 7 per cent. respectively.

3. In order to facilitate comparisons with the other household types, the working couple are assumed to have joint earnings of the various multiples of average male earnings. In calculating income tax and NIC payments it is assumed that the joint earnings are split between husband and wife in the ratio 60:40.

4. For the married couple with two children, the percentage column expresses taxes etc. as percentages of gross earnings plus child benefit. For this purpose, financial year averages are used for child benefit.

5. The figures for indirect taxes are estimates based on the 1983 Family Expenditure Survey. Estimates cannot reliably be made outside the income range for which figures are shown. In practice, there are quite wide variations in spending patterns between households with similar incomes and compositions and because of sampling variation, there can also be substantial differences between the estimates obtained from different years' family expenditure surveys. The category "other indirect taxes" includes the indirect effects of taxes levied on businesses, such as duty on derv and the national insurance surcharge.

Broad and Narrow Money

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer, further to his answer of 5 March, *Official Report*, columns 495-96, concerning the supply of broad money and narrow money in the United Kingdom and certain other countries, whether he will publish a table in the *Official Report* showing the figures deflated by the increase in output or money gross domestic product.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The money supply data underlying the growth rates given in the previous answer were taken from financial statistics—for the United Kingdom—and from the IMF's international financial statistics — for other countries. Precise definitions were given in the footnotes to the table. The data on money GNP needed to construct estimates of velocity can also be found in international financial statistics (line 99a).

Tax Revenue

Mr. Roy Hughes asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will show the estimated yield in 1985-86 from the following: *(a)* road fuel duty, *(b)* vehicle excise duty, *(c)* car tax, *(d)* value added tax on vehicle sales and *(e)* value added tax on petrol and derv sales.

Mr. Hayhoe: Estimates are as follows:

	1985-86 (£ million)
(a) Road fuel duty	6,300
(b) Vehicle excise duty	2,500
(c) Car tax	760
(d) Value added tax on vehicle sales	1,550
(e) Value added tax on petrol and Derv sales	1,050

Mr. Steen asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) by what percentage, in real terms, tax revenues from enterprise zones have risen since 1980;

(2) by what percentage, in real terms, tax revenues have risen annually since 1980 in areas *(a)* totally and *(b)* outside enterprise zones.

Mr. Moore: I regret that no information relating to the tax revenues from enterprise zones is available.

Mr. Steen asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the percentages of total tax revenue in 1982-83 and 1983-84 derived from income generated through the ownership of stocks, including shares, bonds and gilts.

Mr. Moore: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Bloodstock Breeders

Mr. Latham asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what action he intends to take to assist United Kingdom bloodstock breeders within the European Community regarding the method by which France treats bloodstock for the purposes of value added tax following infraction proceedings;

(2) whether he will place in the Library a copy of the letter sent by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on 30

August 1979 to the chairman of the Bloodstock and Race Horse Industries Confederation Ltd. in which he indicated that the Government would give further and urgent consideration to the problems of the bloodstock industry if early progress was not made within the European Community to harmonise the treatment of value added tax on bloodstock; and what action arose from that consideration;

(3) what action he intends to take to assist United Kingdom bloodstock breeders within the European Community regarding the continuing exemption by the Republic of Ireland of bloodstock sales from value added tax.

Mr. Hayhoe: A copy of the letter to which my hon. Friend refers has been placed in the Library. The VAT treatment of bloodstock is governed by the EC sixth directive on the harmonisation of VAT and the position in the United Kingdom conforms to the directive. Partly because of pressure from the United Kingdom Government, the EC Commission brought infraction proceedings before the European Court against France in respect of its system of charging VAT only on the carcase value of bloodstock. As a result, France is understood now to charge VAT on the full selling price, though at a reduced rate, which is permitted under the sixth directive. Ireland's exemption in respect of bloodstock is permitted under a temporary derogation from the directive. However, the EC Commission has recently published proposals for its abolition, along with other derogations, in the draft eighteenth directive on VAT. Customs and Excise is currently consulting bloodstock interests in order that the industry's views may be fully taken into account in EC discussions on the Commission's proposals, which would require the unanimous agreement of all member states before being adopted.

Economic Growth

Mr. Steen asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the average rate of economic growth in 1960, 1970, 1975, 1980, 1983 and 1984 in *(a)* Great Britain and *(b)* each of the 10 largest cities in Great Britain.

Mr. Peter Rees: Estimates of average growth rate for the United Kingdom, for each year from 1949 to 1983, were published in table 3.14 (page 33) in the 1984 edition of "United Kingdom National Accounts".

Estimates for 10 largest cities are not available.

Capital (Export)

Mr. Steen asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much capital was exported from Great Britain in each year from 1980 to 1984.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Net capital movements are identical in size to the total balance on the current account of the balance of payments, although they are recorded in the accounts with the reverse sign. The figures are as follows:

	£ million
1980	3,477
1981	6,929
1982	4,934
1983	2,543
1984	51

Positive figures here represent current account surpluses and net capital outflows.

Capital Investment

Mr. Steen asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the total level of capital investment in 1983-84.

Mr. Peter Rees: The latest national accounts statistics show total fixed investment in the economy of £50·9 billion in the financial year 1983-84.

Covenants

Mr. Freud asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will list in the *Official Report (a)* the cost of administering covenants to students and their parents, *(b)* the average repayment from his Department under the covenant system and *(c)* the annual amount paid out in total, and the number of payments, in each case for each of the last three years.

Mr. Moore: Estimates are available only for 1983-84.

The administrative cost of making income tax repayments in respect of covenants to students is estimated to have been about £3 million. The average repayment was about £280 per student. About 375,000 individual repayments were made, including interim payments, to a total of about 196,000 students. In all, about £55 million was repaid.

Advertisements (VAT)

Dr. Glyn asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received about the practical difficulties facing newspapers in adjusting their accounting system by 1 May to accommodate their liabilities for value added tax on advertisements; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: Several letters have been received and technical discussions have taken place between the Newspaper Society and Customs and Excise about the practical implications of implementing the Budget decision to extend VAT to newspaper advertising. The six-week period allowed for the implementation of this change should be sufficient.

Mortgage Interest (Wales)

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the average mortgage interest tax relief per owner-occupier by county in Wales.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 29 March 1985, c. *373*]: I regret that information is not available from which to provide sufficiently reliable estimates for each Welsh county. However, for the whole of Wales in 1982-83, the latest year for which information is available, the amount of tax relief on mortgage interest averaged over all owner-occupiers (with and without mortgages) resident in Wales would have amounted to about £130.

Personal Allowances

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many people have been lifted out of tax by the personal allowances above that increase required by indexation; and how many of them *(a)* have children and *(b)* are estimated to be caught in the poverty trap.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 28 March 1985, c. *325*]: Counting husband and wife as one, my right hon.

Friend's Budget measures will mean that some 260,000 fewer tax units will pay tax in 1985-86 than if allowances had only been indexed. Of these 260,000, some 40,000 have children and approximately 10,000 are in receipt of means-tested benefits.

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the cost to the Exchequer in 1985-86 of the married man's tax allowance in excess of the single person's allowance; how much of this cost is attributable to taxpayers aged below 65 years; and what is the weekly value of this extra relief to a married man paying income tax at the standard rate.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 28 March 1985, c. *325*]: The direct revenue cost of the married man's allowance, in excess of the single person's allowance, is estimated to be £4·4 billion in a full year at 1985-86 income levels. Of this, some £3·9 billion is in respect of those aged under 65. The extra relief is worth £7·21 a week in 1985-86 to a non-aged basic rate taxpayer.

Agricultural Land and Buildings

Mr. Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the value of agricultural land, including buildings, in the United Kingdom; and how this figure compares with the figure for 1970.

Mr. Jopling: I have been asked to reply.

The following table gives the average prices of land (and buildings), for each country in the United Kingdom by type of tenure, in 1970 and 1983; estimates are shown for 1984. Information on the price of land (and buildings) is collected on a continuous basis by the Inland Revenue.

Average prices of agricultural land (and buildings) in the United Kingdom

£ per hectare

	1970	*1983*	**1984*
England			
with vacant possession	526	3,789	3,820
tenanted	372	2,404	2,250
Wales			
with vacant possession	311	2,737	2,760
tenanted	247	688	710
Scotland			
with vacant possession	240	1,991	2,030
tenanted	166	1,043	1,090
Northern Ireland			
with vacant possession	413	2,866	2,800

* Estimated

Unemployment Costs

Mr. Beith asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the latest estimated cost to the Exchequer of the average unemployed person, including all benefits and the cost of lost taxes and national insurance contributions.

Mr. Whitney: I have been asked to reply.

The estimated average cost per beneficiary of benefits paid in respect of unemployment is £2,300 for 1984-85. Changes in tax revenue and income from national insurance contributions depend on the causes of unemployment and there is a wide range of possible effects. No single estimate can be given.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 4 April 1985

ENERGY

Point of Ayr Colliery (Liquefaction Scheme)

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he expects the construction of the Point of Ayr colliery coal liquefaction pilot scheme to begin and to be operating; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: The National Coal Board expects, in a few months' time, to place a civil engineering contract for the 2½ tonne per day coal liquefaction project at Point of Ayr. This contract will cover site preparation and erection of main buildings. A general construction contract for process plant is scheduled for the end of 1985, after completion of the current work on detailed engineering design. In the meantime, advanced orders are being planned for key plant items.

Completion of construction is expected in 1987 and will be followed by a phased start-up of process equipment.

The board's commitment to construction was triggered by the award of £4·8 million support from the European Economic Community and was not conditional on further direct support from the Government. However, the £2·5 million balance of the Department of Energy's contribution remains on offer and is subject only to NCB securing suitable participation from the private sector. The chairman and the board are continuing their discussions with interested parties.

Nuclear Safeguards

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to his answer on nuclear safeguards, *Official Report*, 18 February, column *353*, if he will set out ways in which his Department's safeguards office ensures that operators of United Kingdom nuclear facilities undertake nuclear material accountancy required by the United Kingdom and European Economic Community legislation to which he refers.

Mr. Goodlad: Officials of my Department's safeguards office participate in negotiations with the United Kingdom nuclear operators and the Directorate of Euratom Safeguards to draw up the "particular safeguards provisions" called for under Commission Regulations (Euratom) No. 3227/76. In these provisions are requirements to determine the flow and stocks of nuclear materials in nuclear facilities and for procedures to determine the physical inventories of nuclear materials for accounting purposes. To ensure that these provisions are implemented effectively the safeguards office maintains liaison on a routine basis between the United Kingdom nuclear operators and the Directorate of Euratom Safeguards to resolve any difficulties which may arise. In addition the Directorate of Euratom Safeguards regularly send inspection teams to civil nuclear facilities in the United Kingdom to examine accounting records and to verify the physical presence of nuclear material. In many cases the safeguards office has a representative at these inspections as allowed for under the Euratom treaty.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to his answer about Euratom inspectors at Sellafield and Springfield on 18 February, *Official Report*, columns *355-356*, if he will set out the texts of the two proposals made to the Commission.

Mr. Goodlad: No. These proposals are the subject of continuing confidential negotiations with Euratom.

Israeli Minister of Energy

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether he will make a statement on his recent meeting with the Israeli Minister of Energy; and what discussions took place regarding the supply of coal by the United Kingdom to Israel.

Mr. Peter Walker: We had a useful exchange on energy trade opportunities. I was able to tell the Minister that the United Kingdom has large reserves of coal and that the National Coal Board remains a real competitor in export markets.

Fishermen (Fuel Costs)

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Energy what was the change in the cost of marine gas oil to fishing vessels in the years 1983, 1984 and the latest date in 1985.

Mr. Peter Walker: Information is not available for the use of gas oil in the fishing industry. The latest information for the price of gas oil to large industrial customers, the only figures for which information is readily available, showed the following changes:

	per cent
1982 (average) to 1983 (average)	+3·5
1983 (average) to 1984 (average)	+2·6
1984 (average) to fourth quarter 1984	+5·6

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

High Technology (Graduates)

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether the additional £40 million announced in the Budget for the expansion of the number of graduates in high technology applies to both universities and polytechnics.

Mr. Brooke: In his pursuant reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) on 3 April, my right hon. Friend announced those institutions which had been selected to participate in phase 1 of the Engineering and technology programme. All the institutions concerned are universities.

The Government are at present considering which institutions should participate in phase 2 of the programme, and will consider in this context whether institutions not within the responsibility of the UGC should be included.

Expenditure

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for

Billericay on Thursday 28 March, if he will give a breakdown for the year 1983-84 and for each local education authority of the amount of education expenditure supported by grant under section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966.

Mr. Dunn: Section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966 is administered by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department. Education expenditure in respect of which local education authorities claimed support under section 11 in 1983-84 broke down between authorities as follows:

Education expenditure in respect of which local authorities claimed support under section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966

1983-84

	Teachers £	*Heads, Deputies* £	*Ancillaries* £	*Welfare officers* £	*Total expenditure* £
NON-METROPOLITAN COUNTY COUNCILS					
Avon	2,064,317	—	147,143	30,049	2,241,509
Bedfordshire	1,039,151	—	113,330	75,988	1,228,469
Berkshire	1,001,613	—	59,435	35,703	1,096,751
Buckinghamshire	634,245	2,992	97,536	20,967	755,740
Cambridgeshire	531,573	1,351	45,433	5,264	583,621
Cleveland	201,056	—	19,327	—	220,383
Derbyshire	706,393	20,466	48,435	15,185	790,479
Essex	5,651	—	—	—	5,651
Gloucestershire	119,063	—	9,648	—	128,711
Hampshire	115,464	—	—	—	115,464
Hertfordshire	534,488	—	59,577	8,743	602,808
Kent	284,135	—	13,053	—	297,188
Lancashire	2,546,522	—	125,420	22,380	2,694,322
Leicestershire	2,322,820	—	71,385	16,199	2,410,404
Northamptonshire	326,490	—	4,335	—	330,825
North Yorkshire	2,915	—	—	—	2,915
Nottinghamshire	1,075,838	14,435	80,411	63,561	1,234,245
Oxfordshire	233,683	37,575	32,118	—	303,376
Shropshire	21,035	—	—	—	21,035
Staffordshire	157,704	—	26,501	—	184,205
Suffolk	69,833	—	5,738	—	75,571
Warwickshire	703,077	—	57,002	—	760,079
West Sussex	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil
Wiltshire	23,666	—	—	—	23,666
Surrey	Claim not yet received				
Total	14,720,732	76,819	1,015,827	294,039	16,107,417
METROPOLITAN AUTHORITIES					
Greater Manchester					
Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council	561,250	—	3,148	2,937	567,335
Bury	73,959	—	—	—	73,959
Manchester, City of	2,029,429	—	158,221	35,518	2,223,168
Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council	1,043,373	—	64,798	20,010	1,128,181
Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council	876,669	—	25,724	5,812	908,205
Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council	145,381	—	18,018	713	164,112
Trafford Borough	210,020	—	—	—	210,020
Merseyside					
Liverpool City	17,330	—	—	—	17,330
South Yorkshire					
Rotherham Borough	160,971	—	15,518	—	176,489
Sheffield, City of	709,326	—	63,941	—	773,267
Tyne and Wear					
Newcastle	10,394	—	—	—	10,394
Sunderland Borough	38,972	—	—	—	38,972
West Midlands					
Birmingham, City of	2,775,496	—	11,017,830	21,924	3,815,250
Coventry, City of	1,639,894	—	223,084	—	1,862,978
Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council	534,539	—	50,668	16,943	602,150
Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council	2,612,711	—	58,119	1,139	2,671,969
Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council	2,099,528	—	338,891	9,342	2,447,761
Wolverhampton Metropolitan Borough Council	1,987,382	217	228,121	—	2,215,720
West Yorkshire					
Bradford, City of	3,038,342	—	487,699	52,203	3,578,244
Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council	Claim not yet received				
Kirklees Metropolitan Council	1,312,913	—	55,564	37,576	1,406,053

	Teachers	Heads, Deputies	Ancillaries	Welfare officers	Total expenditure
	£	£	£	£	£
Leeds City Council	1,045,790	—	151,720	8,360	1,205,870
Wakefield Metropolitan District Council	5,831	—	—	—	5,831
Total	22,929,500	217	2,961,064	212,477	26,103,258
LONDON BOROUGHS					
Inner London					
ILEA	14,367,330	—	992,103	67,978	15,427,411
Outer London					
Barking	120,411	—	4,416	—	124,827
Barnet	625,742	—	23,947	—	649,689
Bexley	57,111	—	—	—	57,111
Brent	3,548,646	—	61,288	10,156	3,620,090
Croydon	888,221	—	51,820	—	940,041
Ealing	2,256,481	—	821,754	28,394	3,106,629
Enfield	324,557	—	18,473	7,912	350,942
Haringey	1,930,390	—	289,320	21,833	2,241,543
Harrow	438,610	637	6,788	—	446,035
Hillingdon	194,947	—	—	—	194,947
Hounslow	806,984	—	9,627	—	816,611
Merton	275,847	—	3,740	—	279,587
Newham	1,560,774	33,120	169,034	—	1,762,928
Redbridge	476,929	—	8,887	—	485,816
Richmond	38,139	—	—	—	38,139
Waltham Forest	1,106,117	135,332	43,908	32,876	1,318,233
Wales					
South Glamorgan	65,192	—	—	—	65,192
Total	29,082,428	169,089	2,505,105	169,149	31,925,771

Higher Education (National Insurance Contributions)

Mr. Sims asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what estimate he has made of the increased costs to *(a)* universities, *(b)* polytechnics and *(c)* colleges and institutes of higher education in England and Wales imposed by the changes in national insurance contributions; and if he will take steps to match these with an increase in grants.

Mr. Brooke: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Synoptic Geomagnetic Measurement

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received about the effect on the continuation of synoptic geomagnetic measurement in the United Kingdom of the reductions proposed in the Natural Environment Research Council's corporate plan in support for strategic research within its component bodies in favour of commissioned research and of the transfer of science budget funds from the institutes to universities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: I have received 60 letters about NERC's corporate plan.

The Natural Environment Research Council has recently, with the help of a special allocation from the Advisory Board for the Research Councils, invested additional funds in the geomagnetism unit of the British geological survey for the automation of three observatories at Lerwick (Shetland), Hartland (Devon) and Eskdalemuir (Dumfries and Galloway). This is part of a modernisation programme consistent with the council's corporate plan. Although the corporate plan proposes an increase in support for university research, as well as attempts to win more commissioned research, it is not intended that this should be at the expense of high-priority basic and strategic research.

New Blood Posts (Age Limit)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has had about the operation of the 35 year age limit for new blood posts in universities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The three year new blood programme, announced by my right hon. Friend in December 1982, is designed to give additional scope for institutions to recruit bright young researchers and lecturers who might otherwise not have had the opportunity of university employment. Both the Government and the University Grants Committee (UGC) have received a small number of representations about the 35 year age limit, particularly in relation to women. The UGC has reconsidered the limit but has concluded that generally it should be maintained, except in the case of clinically qualified appointments in 1985-86 (the final year of the programme), where the age limit has been extended to 38.

Tenured Appointments

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to the number of appointments of tenured academic staffs, such as lecturers at universities in each of the last four quarters for which figures are available; and, of these, how many were new blood posts.

Mr. Brooke: Figures are available only on a yearly basis. 230 of the 785 new academic appointments to universities in 1983-84 were made under the Government's "new blood" scheme. Figures for 1984-85 are not yet available. Information is not collected centrally about the terms of employment of particular academic staff.

Particle Physics Research (Review Group)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science from what outside sources the review group chaired by Sir John Kendrew examining British participation in particle physics research at CERN is seeking evidence.

Mr. Brooke: The review group chaired by Sir John Kendrew, which is concerned with all aspects of United Kingdom participation in particle physics, is an independent one commissioned jointly by the Advisory Board for the Research Councils and the Science and Engineering Research Council. For convenience, however, the group issued a general invitation for evidence through a departmental press notice dated 24 May 1984 and I understand that it has also specifically invited evidence from a number of organisations, including the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals and the Royal Society, and from scientists and others covering a range of interests.

Brixton Church of England School, Devon

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science, in view of the recent deterioration in the condition of Brixton Church of England-aided school, Devon, he will now approve the application by Devon county council for permission to provide 15 per cent. of the cost of rebuilding the school under its capital programme for 1987-88.

Mr. Dunn: The Devon local education authority has alerted the Department to the view of the local diocesan authorities that the replacement of this school should be regarded as a high priority in the 1986-87 school building programme. As in previous years capital expenditure allocations for 1986-87, naming those voluntary aided school projects on which a start can be made in that year, will not be announced until about December 1985.

Manchester (Capital Allocation)

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science, why he will not meet the chief education officer of the city of Manchester in connection with the capital allocation for 1985-86.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend has not received a request for such a meeting. The town clerk and chief executive of the city of Manchester wrote to him on 15 February requesting a meeting with officials of the Department; this was held on 28 February.

WALES

Departmental Legislation

Mr. Galley asked the Secretary of State for Wales, how many Acts of Parliament have been promoted and how many statutory instruments made by his Department, or predecessor Departments covering his areas of responsibility, in each of the last 20 years.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: As far as legislation relating solely to Wales is concerned, my Department promoted one Act of Parliament in each of the following four years: 1967, 1975, 1976, 1983. It also promoted one Act relating solely to Wales, jointly with the Cabinet Office, in 1978. Most primary legislation relating to Wales is, of course, promoted jointly with other Departments.

Her Majesty's Stationery Office publishes annually "Lists of Statutory Instruments". This is currently up to date to the end of 1983.

Given the changes to the machinery of Government over the last 20 years, apportionment of statutory instruments to the areas of present ministerial responsibility could be carried out only at disproportionate cost.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. Gwilym Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what advice he is issuing to health authorities in Wales regarding the need to identify the shortest available hospital waiting lists following the comment of the Deputy Health Commissioner that authorities which fail to do so could be guilty of maladministration

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Guidance was issued to health authorities commending the advice of a working party that information on waiting lists should be exchanged between hospitals and made available to general medical practitioners so that patients may be given the opportunity to be referred to hospitals with a shorter wait, though further from their homes. The most recent edition of the Welsh hospital waiting list bulletin covers a much larger number of hospitals than its predecessor and therefore provides more comprehensive information.

Hospitals (Vale of Glamorgan)

Sir Raymond Gower asked the Secretary of State for Wales what new developments are planned and at what approximate cost, at the hospitals within the area of the administrative Vale of Glamorgan, namely, Llandough hospital, Sully hospital, Barry Neale-Kent hospital and Barry community hospital; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: This is a matter for South Glamorgan health authority but I am aware of the following developments:

	£
Llandough hospital	
Obstetric block and associated works, a centrally funded scheme	7,718,000
Ward upgrading and new admission unit	200,000
Extension to outpatient department at the Pneumoconiosis Research Unit	200,000
Sully hospital	
Provision of day facilities for psychiatric patients	200,000
Neale Kent hospital, Barry	
Extension to provide day facilities	100,000

Unemployment Statistics

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many people in Wales are currently unemployed over the ages of 40, 45, 50 and 55 years, respectively;

(2) what are the present numbers of people who have been unemployed for one year or more in Wales; and what was the comparable figure for April 1979;

(3) what are the numbers of 16 to 24-year-olds in *(a)* Wales, *(b)* Clwyd and *(c)* Mid Glamorgan who have been unemployed for more than one year.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: This information is available in the House of Commons Library.

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he proposes a domestic and business rates revaluation in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Responsibility for rating rests with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. The White Paper on Rates in August 1983 announced our intention to set in train the work required for a non-domestic revaluation and to issue a consultation document on a domestic revaluation. Action on these fronts is proceeding.

Forestry Land

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the total acreage of forestry land sold by the Forestry Commission in Wales over the last 12 months; and if he will estimate the value of these estates and represent the total acreage sold as a percentage of Welsh Forestry Commission land.

Mr. John Stradling Thomas: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Private Schools

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the total amount of money given to and provided by his Department to private schools in Wales between 1982-83 and 1985-86.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The only expenditure has been under the assisted places and direct grant schemes. In the financial years 1982-83 to 1984-85 it has totalled £295,181, £515,963 and £637,560, respectively. The total estimated cost for the current financial year is £854,066.

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list all those private schools in Wales which will be in receipt of grants from public funds in 1985-86; if he will indicate in the case of each school the amount of grants proposed: *(a)* under the assisted places scheme and *(b)* under all other headings; and if he will provide equivalent information for each year since 1982.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The only payments made by the Welsh Office are reimbursement for remitted fees under the assisted places scheme and grants under the direct grant scheme; details are in the following tables. Some schools will have received payments from boarding school allowances paid to some members of the Armed, Diplomatic and Civil Services or from local authorities in respect of children assisted by them

Assisted places scheme: payments to schools financial years 1981-82 to 1985-86

School	*Actual*				*Estimated (at September 1984 prices*
	1981-82 £	*1982-83* £	*1983-84* £	*1984-85* £	*1985-86* £
Christ College, Brecon	7,986·23	21,443·90	36,063·63	48,289·45	62,676
Howells School, Denbigh	11,011·65	37,883·95	70,107·35	96,156·03	128,017
Howells School, Llandaff	17,774·38	57,094·30	106,799·85	144,940·27	203,359·18
Llandovery College	3,737·60	9,217·81	19,615·84	31,013·22	39,144
Monmouth School (for boys)	18,515·90	52,035·40	92,610·93	134,170·47	190,505·36
Monmouth School (for girls)	9,644·70	21,677·09	37,072·44	52,598·51	66,666
Penrhoa College, Colwyn Bay	5,168·80	21,973·10	38,989·50	62,843·75	86,776
Rydal School, Colwyn Bay	4,194·13	38,206·67	*53,896·86	56,864·75	65,527
Lowther College†	23,709·08	15,244·92	—	—	—
Total	101,742·47	274,777·14	455,156·40	626,876·45	842,670·51

* £58,366·86 was paid out by the Welsh Office but £4,470 of it went into the Consolidated Fund as the school was over reimbursed in previous years.

† Lowther College closed in July 1982.

Direct grant scheme: payments to schools financial years 1981-82 to 1985-86

School	*Actual*				*Estimated (at September 1984 prices*
	1981-82 £	*1982-83* £	*1983-84* £	*1984-85* £	*1985-86* £
Monmouth School (for boys)	15,778·40	—	*50,897·99	—	—
Monmouth School (for girls)	21,030·00	5,398·25	—	—	—
Howells School, Llandaff	22,433·50	5,623·50	—	—	—
TS Indefatigable	7,950·77	9,382·46	9,909·00	10,684	11,395
Total	67,192·67	20,404·21	60,806·99	10,684	11,395

* Arrears relating to the previous 6 years due to, but not claimed by, the school.

M4

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many miles of the M4 motorway in Wales are lit, in which county areas the lit sections are; and what further plans he has to light sections of the M4 motorway.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: A total of some 18 miles of the M4 in Wales are lit. The lit sections are mainly in Gwent and west Glamorgan with an additional small section in south Glamorgan. I have no current plans to light further sections.

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will estimate the cost of lighting the stretches of the M4 motorway so far unlit.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: About £4·5 million at current prices.

DEFENCE

British Aerospace plc

Mr. Robert Atkins asked the Secretary of State for Defence what advance warning of an announcement on the Royal Air Force trainer was given to British Aerospace plc, its bankers, brokers and other professional advisers involved in the offer for sale of the Government's shareholding.

Mr. Butler: No advance warning was given. The company, along with the other three contestants, was officially informed at the time of my right hon. Friend's statement to the House.

Test Ban Treaty

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Defence why it would not be in the national interest to disclose details of research and development effort devoted to verification of a comprehensive test ban treaty; and what advantage could be gained by other countries if this information was published.

Mr. Butler: The United Kingdom has published information about verification techniques in relation to a comprehensive test ban in the context of this issue at the Geneva conference on disarmament. Full details of the United Kingdom research and development effort devoted to this subject, however, might provide information about certain aspects of United Kingdom capabilities in this area which we would not wish to reveal, as well as assisting evasion techniques of others.

Departmental Staff

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the total number of civil servants who have been employed by his Department in each year since 1979.

Mr. Butler: I refer the hon. Member to table 5.1 in volume 2 of the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1984 (Cmnd. 9227-II).

Departmental Legislation

Mr. Galley asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many Acts of Parliament have been promoted and how many statutory instruments made by his Department, or predecessor Departments covering his areas of responsibility, in each of the last 20 years.

Mr. Stanley: HMSO publishes annually "Lists of Statutory Instruments" and "Tables and Indices to Public and General Acts and General Synod Measures". Both of these are currently up to date to the end of 1983. Such information as is readily available about the Acts of Parliament promoted by the Ministry of Defence in the last 20 years is as follows. There may however be other Acts relating to other defence topics which, having regard to the changes in the organisation of the Ministry, cannot be so readily identified.

Year	
1965	1
1966	3
1967	1
1968	1
1969	2
1971	1
1973	1
1976	1
1980	1
1981	1
1982	1
1984	1

Given the changes to the machinery of government over the last 20 years apportionment of statutory instruments to the areas of present ministerial responsibility could only be done at disproportionate cost.

Research Contracts

Mr. Hill asked the Secretary of State for Defence if, in the next two months, he will be conferring with representatives of the aerospace industry of the United Kingdom with a view to seeking to gain strategic defence initiative research contracts for the United Kingdom.

Mr. Butler: I refer to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Elmet (Mr. Batiste) and the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) on 26 March at column *178*. We are now considering our response to the formal invitation from the United States Secretary of Defence to indicate, within 60 days, areas of research in which the United Kingdom would be interested in participating. It remains our intention to keep closely in touch with United Kingdom industries, including aerospace industries, which have relevant expertise to offer.

Soviet Union (Nuclear Forces)

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has about recent changes in the level of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics' nuclear forces; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: Information on Soviet nuclear forces at the beginning of 1984 was contained in annex A of the Statement of Defence Estimates 1984. This data will be revised in the Statement of Defence Estimates 1985. Over the past year the Soviet Union has continued to expand and modernise its nuclear forces. Two new Soviet inter-continental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) are in an advanced

stage of development. New strategic ballistic missile submarines (SSBNs) have been launched, and a new submarine launched ballistic missile flight tested.

Another strategic bomber is under development and a new variant of the BEAR bomber designed to carry cruise missiles is operational; additional BACKFIRE bombers have been deployed. Long range cruise missiles for launch from ground, sea and air platforms have been or are about to be deployed. A large number of new SS20 bases in both the Eastern and Western USSR are under construction. Improved versions of the shorter range SCALEBOARD, SCUD and FROG missiles have been developed and during 1984 for the first time SCALEBOARD missiles were deployed into Eastern Europe. Soviet nuclear capable artillery is being improved and additional weapons are being deployed.

HM Vessels (Log Books)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) whether the log books of HMS Superb, HMS Warspite and HMS Courageous for the period March to July 1982 are *(a)* in the possession of his Department and *(b)* intact;

(2) whether the signals to and from HMS Superb, HMS Warspite and HMS Courageous for the period March to July 1982 are *(a)* in the possession of his Department and *(b)* intact.

Mr. Heseltine: I will write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Peter Levene

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence with which company or companies he has had discussions over the possible secondment of Mr. Peter Levene to the Ministry of Defence.

Mr. Butler: I have nothing to add to the reply my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister gave the hon. Member on 29 March at column *365*.

Nimrod Aircraft (Servicing)

Mr. Favell asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the major servicing of the Nimrod aircraft.

Mr. Butler: Subject to the satisfactory completion of contractual negotiations, the major servicing of two Nimrod aircraft will in the near future be allotted to British Aerospace at Woodford. It remains our intention that the major servicing of Nimrods should be opened to competition.

Harrier GR5 Aircraft

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about orders for the Harrier GR5 aircraft.

Mr. Butler: I have recently authorised my Department to enter into commitments progressively in 1985-86 for some long lead materials and equipment for a possible purchase of Harrier GR5 aircraft beyond the 62 (including two prototypes) already on contract. A final decision on this purchase will not however need to be considered until the latter part of next year and major commitments on the aircraft themselves would not be incurred until then.

Chemical Weapons

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Defence what monitoring has been conducted in the vicinity of the disposal sites for British chemical weapons stocks in the 1950s; and what results there have been.

Mr. Butler [*pursuant to the reply*, 12 March 1985, c. *56*]: Disposal of chemical weapons and agents began shortly after World War II and involved both sea and land disposal. Disposal at sea was carried out well offshore and in very deep water. Disposal on land was principally by burning or chemical neutralisation. Periodic monitoring of the land disposal sites has been conducted according to the particular circumstances at each site. A review of a small number of sites, which may remain contaminated and which remain in Ministry of Defence ownership, is currently in hand in order to assess the present degree of hazard, if any, and the feasibility, where appropriate, of decontamination.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Child Benefit

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the distribution of the increased expenditure which would follow an increase in child benefit of £3 per week; and, in particular, how much of this would be spent on manufactures.

Mr. Peter Rees: An increase in child benefit of £3 per week (taking effect in November 1985) would increase public expenditure by about £1½ billion in a full year. The economic effects would depend on how this was financed. Information on the distribution of any additional consumers' expenditure which might result is not readily available.

Expenditure and Taxation

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will state *(a)* total public expenditure as a percentage of gross domestic product and *(b)* total taxation revenue as a percentage of gross domestic product, for each of the years 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983 and 1984 and projectd for 1985, calculated on the basis used for the figures quoted in the speech of 10 May 1982 to the Institute for Fiscal Studies by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury.

Mr. Peter Rees: The figures are as follows:

	1979-80	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*
Public expenditure as a percentage of GDP*	39½	42	43¼	43	42½	43¼	41½
Taxation as a percentage of GDP	35	36½	39	39	39	39	39

* As shown in Chart 1.3 in Cmnd. 9428, updated by Table 5.1 in the 1985-86 Financial Statement and Budget Report.

Negative External Financing Limits

Mr. Deakins asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer why he uses the term negative external financing limits in the context of the nationlised industries; and what is its economic rationale.

Mr. Peter Rees: An industry's external financing requirement is the difference between its capital requirements and its internal resources. It is similar in concept to sources and applications of funds statements in company accounts which are intended to show net cash flows to and from a company. Where an industry is generating a positive cash flow, ie internal resources exceed capital requirements, the external financing requirements will be negative. External Financing Limits (EFLs) are control limits and have been set by successive Government as a basis for monitoring industries' financing requirements and regulating flows of finance to and from an industry.

Value Added Tax (Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act)

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent representations he has received from organisations seeking an extension of zero-rating for value added tax to cover all expenditure on building alterations certified by local authorities as necessary under the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act.

Mr. Hayhoe: My Treasury colleagues and I have received four such representations from one organisation, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities.

Tax Relief (Charities)

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the total cost of tax relief for giving to charities.

Mr. Moore: In the year to 30 September 1984 the Inland Revenue repaid to charities tax of some £250 million, of which repayments in respect of deeds of covenant amounted to some £110 million. Following the introduction by the Government of legislation in 1980, reducing the qualifying period of such deeds from 7 years to 4 years, and the introduction of higher rate tax relief for charitable payments, tax repayments have increased by 93 per cent. Repayments in respct of deeds of covenant have increased by 15½ per cent. over the last year.

No exact information is available about the cost of exempting charities from tax on income which they receive without deduction of tax; nor about the cost of other exemptions or reliefs to which they are entitled. However it is unlikely that the cost of all direct tax concessions is less than £400 million a year.

To give further help to charities, the Chancellor announced in his Budget that he proposed to increase, from £5,000 to £10,000, the limit to which relief at the higher rates of tax is allowed for covenants.

Nationalised Industries (Financing Limits)

Mr. Bright asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will make a statement on the effects of the miners' strike upon the external financing limits of the nationalised industries.

Mr. Peter Rees: The National Coal Board, electricity supply industries, British Rail and the British Steel Corporation are expected to exceed their external financing limits for 1984-85 as a direct result of the coal strike. No change in external financing limits for these industries is proposed to accommodate this development, but, in the exceptional circumstances, the Government accepts that overshoots directly attributable to the coal strike which cannot be offset through savings by the industries concerned should be a charge on public expenditure in 1984-85. Provisional EFL outturn figures for all industries will be published later this year in the cash limits 1984-85 provisional outturn White Paper. Estimated strike costs have been taken into account in the 1984-85 public expenditure planning total outturn shown in the Financial Statement and Budget Report.

Taxation Policy

Mr. Hill asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it is his policy to reduce personal and corporate taxes in favour of indirect taxes.

Mr. Moore: It is our policy to reduce overall burden taxation, resources permitting. We are also concerned with the balance of taxation. In both the 1984 and 1985 Budgets my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer proposed measures which shifted some of the burden of personal taxation from earnings to spending.

Customs and Excise (Industrial Action)

Mr. Greenway asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the proposed industrial action by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise staff.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret that union leaders are seeking to persuade staff in Her Majesty's Customs and Excise to take industrial action which they claim will disrupt the travelling public and I deplore these cynical and wholly unjustified manouuvres.

However, the red/green system of passenger clearance is designed to ensure that undue delays do not occur. Senior staff will be in attendance at ports and airports over the holiday period to ensure that passengers do not experience abnormal delays.

EC (Finances)

Mr. Foulkes asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the maximum rate of increase in expenditure other than that necessarily resulting from the treaty fixed by the European Economic Community under article 203 for each year since 1972.

Mr. Ian Stewart [*pursuant to his reply*, 20 March 1985. c.522]: The maximum rate increases in non-obligatory expenditure for the years 1972-1974 are not readily available. Figures for the years 1975-1983 are set out in the table:

	Commitment Appropriations per cent.	*Payment Appropriations per cent.*
1975	—	40·77
1976	—	44·29
1977	—	28·67
1978	23·35	56·04

	Commitment Appropriations per cent.	Payment Appropriations per cent.
1979	35·02	3·50
1980	22·77	12·70
1981	13·86	16·23
1982	29·13	42·43
1983	33·52	38·67

Before 1978 the maximum rate was set only on payment appropriations.

Income Tax

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will update, to take account of the 1985 Budget, the information on income tax reductions provided in his reply of 4 April 1984 to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), *Official Report*, columns *542-44*.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 28 March 1985]: The table shows the reductions in income tax liabilities at 1985-86 income levels of the proposed 1985-86 allowances, thresholds and rates compared with an indexed 1978-79 regime. For the comparison, the 1978-79 allowances and thresholds have been indexed in line with the increase in the RPI between December 1977 and December 1984. As child tax allowances were being phased out in 1978-79 they have been excluded from the comparison.

It is not possible to provide useful estimates of the liabilities in 1985-86 for the 1978-79 regime without indexation since Inland Revenue records do not cover many of the people who would be brought into tax by such low levels of personal allowances. A partial analysis with incomplete coverage would be misleading.

Range of total income in 1985-86*	Number of units paying tax in 1985-86	Reductions in income tax compared with 1978-79 indexed regime	
		Amount	Average per tax unit
£	(million)	£ million	£
Under 5,000	3·9	250	†55
5,000-10,000	8·4	1,270	150
10,000-15,000	4·6	1,300	280
15,000-20,000	1·8	770	435
20,000-30,000	1·0	820	845
30,000-50,000	0·3	690	2,380
Over 50,000	0·09	1,150	12,780
Total	20·1	6,250	300

* All information is in terms of tax units—that is, married couples are counted as one and their incomes combined.

† By reference to the estimated numbers who would be liable to pay tax under the indexed 1978-79 regime; this number is some 850,000 greater than the numbers paying tax in 1985-86 under the Budget proposals.

The levels of the main allowances and thresholds, compared with the proposed 1985-86 values, would be:

Personal allowances	Indexed 1978-79 regime	1985-86
	£	£
Single and wife's earned income allowance	1,875	2,205
Married man's allowance	2,925	3,455
Additional personal allowance	1,050	1,250
Aged single allowance	2,480	2,690
Aged married allowances	3,955	4.255
Aged income limit	7,700	8,800

Rate of tax (percentage)	Bands of taxable income (£)	
	Indexed 1978-79 regime	1985-86
25	0-1,450	—
30	—	0-16,200
33	1,451-15,300	—
40	15,301-17,300	16,201-19,200
45	17,301-19,300	19,201-24,400
50	19,301-21,300	24,401-32,300
55	21,301-24,200	32,301-40,200
60	24,201-27,100	Over 40,200
65	27,101-31,000	—
70	31,001-35,800	—
75	35,801-46,300	—
83	Over 46,300	—

Investment Income Surcharge: Indexed 1978-79 regime

Bands of net investment income (£)		
Non-aged	Aged	Rate of surcharge (percentage)
0-3,250	0,4,800	Exempt
3,251-4,300	4,801-5,800	10
Over 4,300	Over 5,800	15

Investment income surcharge was abolished in 1984-85.

PRIME MINISTER

Rates

Mr. Winnick asked the Prime Minister whether, in the consideration she has given to changes in the rating system, she has taken fully into account recent reports on this matter; and if she will make a statement on the outcome of this consideration.

The Prime Minister: The local government finance studies currently in progress are taking into account all reports which appear to be relevant to their work. There is still further work to be done over the next few months and there will be opportunity for wider public discussion before final decisions are made.

EC Reports

Mr. Foulkes asked the Prime Minister if she will place in the Library copies of the reports submitted to the European Council on 29 to 30 March by *(a)* the ad hoc committee for a people's Europe and *(b)* the ad hoc committee on institutional affairs.

The Prime Minister: Both documents were placed in the Library of the House on 2 April, in connection with my statement to the House on the European Council.

Scotland-England Football Match

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Prime Minister if she will meet representatives of Scottish football fans to discuss the decision to play the Scotland *v.* England match in Glasgow.

The Prime Minister: No.

Engagements

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 4 April.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 4 April.

Mr. Parry asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 4 April.

Mr. John M. Taylor asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 4 April.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Gentlemen and my hon Friends to the reply that I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright).

Civil Service (Secondments)

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Prime Minister how many secondments have been made to the Civil Service without satisfying the legal requirements of the Civil Service Order in Council 1982 in 1984-85, and in each of the preceding five years; and if she will list the secondments.

The Prime Minister: As I explained to the House on 18 March in the answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Erith and Crayford (Mr. Evennett) at column *366-67* measures are being taken to ensure that secondments to the Civil Service from outside organisations are made in compliance with the Civil Service Order in Council. Details of the number of secondments to Government Departments in the period up to 1983 were published in a Report by the Management and Personnel Office, a copy of which was placed in the Library of the House. In 1984 (the last full year for which figures are available) there were 116 such secondments as follows:

	Number
MAFF	2
Cabinet Office (including Management and Personnel Office)	9
MOD	14
DES	2
Employment	7
Energy	12
DOE/DTp/PSA	15
ODA	4
OFT	1
Scottish Office	2
DTI	40
HM Treasury	5
Welsh Office	2
Registry of Friendly Societies	1

Secondments were made by the following organisations:

Armitage & Norton

Balfour Beatty
Bank of England
Barclays Bank
Binder Hamlyn
Boots
British Aerospace
British Gas
British Petroleum
British Rail
British Telecom

Building Societies Association

CAA
Cable & Wireless
CAP Scientific
CBI
Central Electricity Generating Board
Cleanaway
Consep Ltd.
Coopers & Lybrand
Costains

Dearden Farrow
Deloitte Haskins & Sells
Drivers Jonas

Engineering Industrial Training Board

Ferranti Electronics
Fibreglass
Financial Times
Robert Fleming & Co.

GEC
Grimley & Son

Hill Samuel & Co.

IBM(UK)
ICI plc
ICL
IMI plc
Inco Europe

King & Co.

Lloyds Bank International
Logica
Lucas Industries

Marconi: Underwater Systems
Midland Bank
Morgan Grenfell and Co.

National Coal Board
National Westminster Bank
NIAB

Pannell Kerr Forster
Peat Marwick & Mitchell
Phillips Industries
Plessey Radar
Price Waterhouse

Racal Microsystems
R H M Research
Rolls Royce
Rothschild & Sons

Safety Reliability Directorate
SC/CON
Shell
Smiths Industries
W H Smith & Sons
Software Sciences
Spicer & Pegler
Standard Chartered Merchant Bank
Standard Telephones & Cables
STL
Swire and Sons

Thomson McLintock & Co.
Thornton Baker
Touche Ross

Vickers
VSEL

S G Warburg
Westland

Ernst Whinney

Arthur Young McClelland & Moore & Co.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Prime Minister if she will list the measures now being taken in respect of secondments to the Civil Service to ensure compliance with the Civil Service Order in Council 1982; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: As I made clear in my reply of 18 March to my hon. Friend the Member for Erith and Crayford (Mr. Evennett), the Civil Service Commissioners are devising procedures to ensure that future secondments are made in compliance with the Civil Service Order in Council 1982 and any regulations made thereunder. Secondments that are currently in train are being referred to the Civil Service Commissioners on an individual basis and they will consider all such cases against the background of the provisions and discretionary powers contained in the Civil Service Order in Council 1982.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Prime Minister who has been appointed to the Civil Service under section 1(2)*(g)* of the 1982 Order in Council in the current year and in the preceding six years.

The Prime Minister: The Commissioners approved the following appointments under article 1(2)*(g)* of the Civil Service Order in Council 1982 or the corresponding article—1(2)*(f)*—of the 1978 Order in Council:

Year and Department*	*Appointment*
1979	
DTI	Regional Industrial Adviser
DES	Chairman, University Grants Committee
Cabinet Office	Research Officer
FCO	Head of Dependent Territories Section
Cabinet Office	Research Assistant
FCO	Specialist Supervisor
Transport	Four Highways Engineers from China
Treasury	Chief Economic Adviser
1980	
MOD	Telecommunications Traffic Officer A
GCHQ	A Director of Communications
MOD	Principal Professional and Technical Officer
MOD	Resident Judge Cyprus
ODM	Senior Scienctific Officer at Centre for Overseas Pests Research
1981	
MOD	Principal—Defence Sales
MOD	Director General of Intelligence
MOD	Head of Defence Sales
DHSS	Deputy Chief Scientist
1982	
FCO	Senior Research Officer
DHSS	Director Of Rickets Campaign
DHSS	Research Officer
Departments of Industry and Trade	Civil Aviation Safety Adviser
Home Office	Communications Officer
MOD	Chief Scientific Adviser
MOD	Chief Executive—Royal Ordnance Factories
MOD	Marketing Director—Royal Ordnance Factories
1983	
MOD	Chief Executive—Royal Dockyards
MOD	Six HEO/SEO Posts—Royal Ordnance Factories
DOE/PSA	Director General of Design Services
1984	
DHSS	Computer Auditor
Energy	Chinese Linguist with Petroleum Experience
1985	
MOD	Chief of Defence Procurement

* In which appointment approved under Article 1(2)*(g)* or 1(2)*(f)*.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Prime Minister how many appointments to the Civil Service have been made without the issue of a certificate of qualification in each year since 1979; and under what provisions.

The Prime Minister: Article 1(2) of the Civil Service Order in Council 1982 (a copy of which is in the Library) lists seven categories of appointment in the Home Civil Service or Diplomatic Service which do not require the prior issue of a certificate of qualification by the Civil Service Commissioners. The categories are:

(a) Crown appointments;
(b) Appointments filled by the transfer of staff by or in pursuance of an Act of Parliament which exempts such staff from the requirement to be certificated;
(c) Appointments which terminate at the end of an Administration;
(d) Part-time appointments normally involving less than 15 hours a week;
(e) Appointments of one year or less;
(f) Appointments in the grades included in the Schedule to the Order in Council;
(g) Appointments not exceeding five years which the Civil Service Commissioners are satisfied it is desirable should be made without the issue of a certificate of qualification.

Details of special advisers appointed under 1(2)*(c)* were given to the hon. Member in my reply of 10 April 1984, since when there have been a further 10 such appointments. No appointment under 1(2)*(b)* has been made since 1979. Those appointments made under 1(2)*(g)* have been listed in a separate reply to the hon. Member. The remaining categories cover a wide range of circumstances, including many thousands of staff recruited locally by Departments, including casual and part-time staff, on which information is not held centrally.

Mr. Peter Levene

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Prime Minister if she will publish the evidence presented to the Civil Service Commissioner demonstrating the desirability of the appointment of Mr. Peter Levene without the issue of a certificate of qualification.

The Prime Minister: It is a principle of long standing not to publish such detailed information about individuals being considered for particular appointments.

Football Matches

Mr. Boyes asked the Prime Minister if she will list the association football matches she has watched in her official capacity since May 1979.

The Prime Minister: I attended the final of the FA cup at Wembley in 1980 and 1981.

Argentina

Mr. Dalyell asked the Prime Minister whether Her Majesty's Government have been informed by the United States Government of the content of President Reagan's discussions with President Alfonsin of Argentina between 1 and 20 March.

The Prime Minister: It is not our practice to discuss our confidential exchanges with other Governments.

Voluntary Bodies (Grants)

Mr. Pawsey asked the Prime Minister if she will publish figures showing expenditure by Government Departments on grants to voluntary bodies during the financial year 1983-84; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Wilkinson asked the Prime Minister if she will publish figures showing expenditure by Government Departments on grants to voluntary bodies during the financial year 1983-84; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The figures are shown in the table attached. The total amount provided in 1983-84 represents a cash increase of 20·5 per cent. (in real terms 14·5 per cent.) on the level of grant-giving in the previous year. In the period between 1979-80 and 1983-84 the level of Government grant-giving to voluntary bodies has risen by over 95 per cent. (or in real terms 35 per cent.)

	£'000
Agriculture, Fisheries and Food	99,400
Defence	2,643,990
Education and Science	14,317,606
Employment	*27,720,000
Energy	91,000
Environment Direct Grants	1,219,888
Urban Programme	‡46,500,000
FCO (including ODA)	†11,519,597
Health and Social Security	23,122,709
Home Office	16,890,250
Lord Chancellor's Department	604,160
Northern Ireland Department	12,091,327
Scottish Office—	
Direct Grants	‖6,823,494
Urban Programme	‖6,750,000
Trade and Industry	6,221,000
Transport	509,000
Welsh Office—	
Direct Grants	3,821,203
Urban Programme	1,325,000
Total	182,269,624

* This figure does not include estimated payments made by the MSC for work under the following programmes:

Voluntary Projects Programme	4,300,000
YTS/YOP	81,000,000
Community Programme	200,000,000
	285,300,000

† ODA total (£10,771,960) to British voluntary organisations only.
‡ Includes contributions from Department of Education and Science, Department of Health and Social Security and Department of Transport.
‖ Estimate only.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Family Court

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Attorney-General what is the nature, composition, terms of reference and time scale of the review being undertaken of proposals for a family court; and whether its terms of reference extend to a consideration of the nature of the court or tribunal which sentences young offenders.

The Attorney-General: A was announced by the Lord Chancellor's Department in July 1984, the terms of reference of the committee set up by the Lord Chancellor and the Home Secretary are as follows:

"To examine the feasibility of the establishmnt of a unified court for the exclusive exercise of jurisdiction in family and domestic matters below the level of the Court of Appeal, to identify the main options for such a court and to assess the resources implications of each of these options."

The committee consists of officials of the Lord Chancellor's Department, the Home Office, DHSS and the Treasury. They plan to issue a consultation paper describing possible options later this year. It is hoped that a final report will be made in 1986. The committee will consider whether and to what extent the present jurisdiction of the juvenile court might be included within a unified family court.

Vaccine Damage Claims (Legal Aid)

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Attorney-General how many applications for legal aid have been made since the passing of the Vaccine Damage Payments Act 1979 by those claiming compensation for brain damage caused by the whooping cough vaccine; and how many such applications have been granted.

The Attorney-General: Since 1979, the Law Society has received 265 applications for legal aid to bring proceedings related to vaccine damage. It is not possible, except at disproportionate cost, to identify how many of those relate specifically to whooping cough vaccine, though the majority do. Of the 265, legal aid certificates (some of which may have been limited in scope) have been issued in 193 cases; 33 applications are still pending; 16 have been abandoned by the applicant; 16 have been refused on legal grounds; 4 have been refused on grounds of financial ineligibility; and in 3 cases an offer of legal aid was made but not taken up by the applicant.

Agricultural Holdings

Mr. Colin Shepherd asked the Attorney-General if Her Majesty's Government have any plans to introduce a Bill consolidating the statute law on agricultural holdings; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: Work is proceeding on a consolidation of the law relating to agricultural holdings in England and Wales. Consultation will be carried out and it is hoped to introduce a Bill next session.

Dangerous Dogs

Mr. Galley asked the Attorney-General how many civil actions have been brought relating to dangerous dogs under the Animals Act 1971 or other relevant legislation in each of the last five years; and in how many cases the plaintiff has been successful.

The Attorney-General: The information sought is not available.

Departmental Legislation

Mr. Galley asked the Attorney-General how many Acts of Parliament have been promoted and how many statutory instruments made by the Lord Chancellor's Department in each of the last 20 years.

The Attorney-General: Her Majesty's Stationery Office publishes annually "Lists of Statutory Instruments" and "Tables and Indices to Public and General Acts and General Synod Measures". Both of these are currently up to date to the end of 1983. Nearly all of these, if not all, contain enactments prepared by the Lord Chancellor's Department of the day.

Given the changes to the machinery of government over the last 20 years, apportionment of the Acts or statutory instruments to the areas of present ministerial responsibility could be done only at disproportionate cost.

Liquidators (Reports)

Mr. Gould asked the Attorney-General, in respect of each year since 1975, how many reports the Director of Public Prosecutions has received from liquidators in accordance with the duty imposed by section 334(2) of the Companies Act 1948, now section 632(3) of the Companies Act 1985.

The Attorney-General: The number of reports received by the Director of Public Prosecutions from liquidators and specified to be pursuant to the duty imposed by section 334(2) of the Companies Act 1948 for each year since 1975 is as follows:

Year	*Number*
1975	12
1976	44
1977	28
1978	45
1979	26
1980	28
1981	43
1982	16
1983	32
1984	30

The director also receives each year a number of reports drawing attention to matters giving cause for general concern without referring specifically to matters reportable under section 334(2). The number of such cases is not available and could only be obtained at disproportionate expense.

SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND

Coal Industry Dispute

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland if he will list for each region of Scotland his most recent information on the number of arrests, cases where proceedings have been instituted, and convictions arising from the miners' strike; and if he will list the offences for which persons have been: *(a)* charged and *(b)* convicted.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The most readily available information is set out in the following tables.

The first table details for each local authority region in Scotland the most recent information on, the number of persons arrested in relation to incidents arising from the miners' strike; the number of persons proceeded against by procurators fiscal in respect of offences arising out of the miners' strike and the number of persons convicted in respect of such offences. There are a number of such cases which have still to come to trial.

The second table details the most recent information on the nature and number of charges brought by procurators fiscal which have resulted in conviction. A large number of those persons brought to trial were convicted of two or more charges.

Table No. 1

Local Authority Region	*Number of Persons Arrested*	*Number of Persons Proceeded against by Procurators Fiscal*	*Number of Persons Convicted*
Dumfries and Galloway	3	2	2
Central region	44	39	17
Fife region	225	216	148
Grampian	0	0	0
Lothian region	474	436	272
Borders region	0	0	0
Strathclyde region	745	309	151
Highland region	0	0	0
Tayside region	13	13	13

Table No. 2

Nature of the Charge	*Number of Charges*
Breach of the peace	569
Police (Scotland) Act 1967 section 41	220
Bail Etc. (Scotland) Act 1980 section 3	51
Vandalism and malicious mischief	27
Assault	6
Possession of an offensive weapon	5
Conspiracy and Protection of Property Act 1875	4
Careless driving	1
Reckless conduct	1

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland how many police complaints have been recorded in the course of the miners' industrial dispute.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The information requested is not readily available and I will publish the information in the *Official Report* later.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland if he will list for the duration of the miners' dispute: *(a)* the number of people arrested and charged with an offence, *(b)* the number of people convicted and *(c)* the number of people acquitted, stating in each case the nature of the offence.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: Pursuant to my reply on 11 March 1985 at column *17*, the information for the period to 22 March 1985 is as follows:

1,483 persons were arrested and charged by the police in connection with incidents arising out of the miners' strike. This figure cannot be broken down to reflect the nature of the alleged offence involved in each case. Of those persons prosecuted in respect of offences arising out of the miners' strike whose cases have been disposed of, 603 persons were convicted and 140 persons were acquitted. Information on the nature and number of the charges brought by procurators fiscal is set out in the following table. A large number of the persons brought to trial in respect of such offences faced two or more charges.

Nature of Charge	Convictions	Acquittals
Breach of the peace	569	109
Police (Scotland) Act 1967, section 41	220	29
Bail Etc (Scotland) Act 1980, section 3	51	2
Vandalism and malicious mischief	27	3
Assault	6	1
Possession of an offensive weapon	5	6
Conspiracy and Prootection of Property Act 1875	4	0
Theft	0	3
Explosive Substances Act 1883, section 2	0	2
Reckless conduct	1	0
Careless driving	1	1

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland what proportion of convictions in Scotland as a result of offences during the miners' dispute are for *(a)* breach of the peace offences, *(b)* obstruction or other offences under the Police (Scotland) Act 1967 and *(c)* offences under the Bail (Scotland) Act 1980.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: Pursuant to my reply on 18 March 1985 at column *363-364*, the information, based upon statistics for the period to 22 March 1985, is as follows:

(a) approximately 64 per cent.
(b) approximately 25 per cent.
(c) approximately 6 per cent.

Family Law (Representations)

Mr. Robert Hughes asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland what representations he has had on the implementation of the Law Commission and Scottish Law Commission report, "Family Law — Custody of Children, Jurisdiction and Enforcement within the United Kingdom" (Cmnd. 9419).

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I have received representations on several occasions from the hon. Gentleman himself, as have my noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate and my right hon. Friend, the Lord Privy Seal. My noble and learned Friend has also received representations in another place from the noble and learned Lord, Lord Elwyn-Jones.

The representations are for early implementation of the recommendations contained in the commission's report. My noble and learned Friend and I have already explained that we see no prospect of implementation in this Parliamentary Session.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prisons (Health and Safety)

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether a prisoner may ask for an inspection visit to a prison by the Health and Safety Executive in order to investigate a possible health and safety hazard or other problem; what matters a prisoner is permitted to raise with the Health and Safety Executive; what procedure a prisoner who wishes to contact the Health and Safety Executive should adopt; and whether the same rules apply to such a communication as apply to letters between prisoners and their solicitors on legal matters.

Mr. Mellor: Inspectors from the Health and Safety Executive have the right of access and pay regular visits to Prison Department establishments. Once an inmate had raised his complaint through the prescribed internal channels it would be open to him to write to the Health and Safety Executive to ask that it investigate an aspect of his imprisonment. It would be for the Health and Safety Executive to decide whether or not the matter was within its remit and what action to take. A prisoner's correspondence with the Health and Safety Executive would be examined and read by prison staff in accordance with standing order No. 5, which is published and a copy of which is in the Library.

Prisoners (Statistics)

Mr. Eldon Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the number of persons serving prison sentences who at the time of their conviction were in the United Kingdom on visitors' visas.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is not recorded centrally.

Civil Defence

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will allow elected members of councils and officers to attend civil defence courses at Easingwold together.

Mr. Giles Shaw: While there is no bar against elected members and officers attending courses at the Civil Defence College, Easingwold, together, the specialised nature of the courses usually makes it inappropriate.

Strip Searches

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many British citizens were strip-searched by officials on arrival in Britain from overseas in 1984.

Mr. Waddington: No British citizens arriving in the United Kingdom in 1984 were subjected to a strip search by Home Office officials.

I am advised by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer that no central record is kept of strip searches carried out by customs officers.

Television Licence Fee

Mr. Wheeler asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the estimated cost of exempting by category *(a)* pensioners, *(b)* those in receipt of unemployment benefit, and *(c)* those receiving supplementary benefit from payment of the television licence at the £58 rate; and, in each category, what would be the cost of transferring the funding of each to the Treasury or to the other licence payers.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The estimated annual loss of revenue from exempting all households in the United Kingdom containing persons in those categories from payments of the current television licence fees and the associated increases in the fees required to recoup this lost revenue are as follows:

	Loss of revenue	Additions to licence fees necessary to recoup loss*	
		monochrome	colour
	£ million	£	£
Households with one or more pensioners	325	10	30
Households with one or more persons in receipt of unemployment benefit	50	1	3
Households with head of household in receipt of supplementary benefit	100	2	7

* Assuming that the increases are applied to monochrome and colour licences in proportion to the current levels of these licences.

The estimates (particularly for those in receipt of unemployment and supplementary benefit) have been prepared using a number of assumptions and should therefore be taken as indicative of the amounts involved.

Mr. David Steel asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether, when considering the arrangements for paying the increased television licence fee, he will consider introducing a provision enabling refunds to be obtained on unexpired months within a year.

Mr. Giles Shaw: We have no present plans to do so.

Draize Tests

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the estimated number of Draize tests carried out on the eyes of conscious rabbits in each of the past five years in the testing of pesticides, herbicides and industrial chemicals.

Mr. Mellor: This information is not available. But a breakdown of the number of experiments which involved the technique of applying substances to the eye in order to select, develop or study the use, hazards or safety of plant pesticides including fungicides, herbicides or substances modifying plant growth and substances used in industry, is given in table 11 of the "Statistics of Experiments on Living Animals Great Britain", for the years 1979-83. Copies of the statistics for these years are in the Library.

Although the information collected for statistical purposes does not identify Draize eye tests separately, all the tests in table 11 are probably modified Draize tests, all carried out on conscious animals but using either the small volume method or the wash-out method, both of which restrict the damage the test may inflict on the experimental animal. In all cases the animal must be immediately and painlessly killed if it is found to be suffering severe and enduring pain, whether or not the object of the experiment has been achieved.

Immigrants (Grants)

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will set out in the *Official Report*, in each of the last five years, expenses under section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: The amount of grant paid under section 11 by the Home Office in respect of the financial years 1979-80 to 1983-84 is shown as follows. Certain claims are subject to final settlement and audit. Figures for 1984-85 are not yet available.

	£
1979-80	34,569,234
1980-81	45,752,723
1981-82	54,427,547
1982-83	65,861,308
1983-84	75,193,737

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will set out in the *Official Report* the main headings of expenditure in 1983-84 under section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: The main headings under which grant was claimed for the financial year 1983-84 are as follows. The figures represent the amount of grant aid (at 75 per cent. of total expenditure) claimed.

A *Direct Expenditure on the employment of staff*

	£
1 Education, including teachers, ancillary staff and education welfare officers	55,602,335
2 Social workers	1,859,220
3 Liaison officers	884,916
4 Interpreters and interviewing staff	235,136
5 Clerical staff for 3 and 4 above	102,579
6 Other	5,092,280

B *Expenditure determined by the formula referred to in paragraph 21 of Home Office evidence to the Home Affairs Committee, printed as HC 424-II 20 July 1981*

	£
1 Children in care	7,697,330
2 Local authority day nurseries	3,457,746
3 Environmental health officers	262,196

Notes:

1. Three local authorities have yet to submit claims.
2. The formula arrangements came to an end on 31 March 1984.

Betting Shops

Mr. Golding asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to obtain the views of users of betting shops on his consultation document, "Possible Changes in the Law Affecting Betting Shops."

Mr. Giles Shaw: We have distributed about 550 copies of the consultation document to about 100 interested parties since its publication on 28 February, and, in order to obtain the views of users of betting shops we have publicised the issue of the consultation document stressing our interest in receiving comments from all quarters. The consultation document is available on request from the Home Office and some of the views already received appear to have come from users of betting shops.

Football Hooliganism

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what technological aids are available to the police to seek to prevent football hooliganism constituting a threat to public order.

Mr. Giles Shaw: In addition to equipment available to the police for general purposes, such as personal radios,

use is also made of closed circuit television at some grounds. The Home Office is also experimenting with a van equipped to take good quality still and video pictures outside and inside grounds. The van is intended to assit in crowd control and also to gather evidence for use in court proceedings. It has been deployed in two matches to date, and it is planned to use it at a number of matches in April.

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions have taken place arising from incidents at or after football matches in the last year in Wales.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) on 3 April at column *627*.

Pensioners (Television Licence)

Sir Anthony Kershaw asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will add to the terms of reference of Professor Peacock's inquiry the consideration of entitling retirement pensioners on supplementary benefit who do not have in their household a person below retirement age to a free colour television licence.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The task of the committee is to consider possible ways of financing the BBC, in whole or in part, by means other than the licence fee, rather than to examine modifications to the licence fee system itself. I therefore do not think it is appropriate for this issue to be included in the terms of reference.

Her Majesty's Prison, Stafford

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will list those companies which have had commercial contract work carried out by prisoners at Her Majesty's prison, Stafford, over the last three years, together with the nature of such work, and the value of each contract; on what basis payment to prisoners is set; how much they are paid; how many prisoners are engaged in such work; and when was the last time payment was increased.

Mr. Mellor: The following firms have had major contracts undertaken at Stafford prison over the last three years:

Britwood Toys Ltd.
Polyfit Ltd. (Pazzity Ltd.)
Promar Ltd.

Minor work has also been undertaken for a number of other commercial firms. Information on prices and quantities is commercially confidential.

Over 150 inmates have been engaged on this work and were paid on the standard piecework scheme, the average payment currently being £2·45 per week. Inmates' earnings rates are reviewed annually, the last increase taking effect from 1 October 1984.

Prison Population

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the latest figure for the prison population.

Mr. Mellor: On 29 March 1985 the total prison population in England and Wales was 46,215.

Metropolitan Police (Identification Parades)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his reply of 28 March, *Official Report*, column 283, if he will identify the range of public places used by the Metropolitan police for informal identification parades in 1982 and 1983.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the identification parades surveyed in 1982 and 1983 took place either on London Transport or British Rail escalators, or on British Rail platforms or concourses.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will take steps to seek the ending by the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis of the practice of the Metropolitan police of holding informal identification parades in public places; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: No. As I told the hon. Member in the reply I gave to his question on 6 December 1984, at columns *281-82*, it is the practice of the Metropolitan police (and other forces) to adopt informal procedures when it is not practicable to arrange a formal identification parade. This might, for example, be where the suspect refuses or there are insufficient people of similar appearance willing to take part. The procedure by its very nature has to be held in a public place.

Local Government Reform (Fire Boards)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if non-uniformed staff will be transferred automatically with the uniformed staff to the proposed fire boards in the event of the abolition of the Greater London council and the metropolitan county council;

(2) what provisions the proposed fire boards will be obliged to make for redundancy payments to long-serving staff who are not re-employed, in the event of the abolition of the Greater London council and the metropolitan county councils.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The paper "Abolition of the Greater London Council and the metropolitan county councils: arrangements for staffing the new structure" issued by the Department of the Environment in November 1984 announced the Government's intention that the uniformed and non-uniformed members of fire brigades in London and the metropolitan councils would be transferred to the proposed fire joint authorities by statutory order. Redundancy payments to Greater London council and metropolitan county council staff who are left without a job at abolition will be a matter for the appropriate residuary body.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether obligations will be imposed on the proposed fire boards to employ non-uniformed staff currently on the Greater London council's and metropolitan counties' disabled persons list in the event of the abolition of the Greater London council and the metropolitan county councils.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Disabled people who are currently members of the brigades in London and the metropolitan county councils fire brigades will suffer no disadvantage in transfer terms on the abolition of the Greater London

council and the metropolitan county councils. The proposed joint fire authorities' employment policies will have to comply with the quota scheme for the employment of disabled people.

Nuclear Winter

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list those representations and submissions which he has received *(a)* in support of and *(b)* critical of the nuclear winter hypothesis; when he expects to complete his evaluation of the subject; if he will make the submissions he has received available to local and civil defence authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: We have not received any representations or submissions as such although the nuclear winter hypothesis has featured in general correspondence. The Government's position remains as described in the reply I gave on 20 December to the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Robertson) at column *284*.

Prisons (Categorisation)

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what criteria have been adopted following the Chief Inspector of Prisons' recommendation in his report on prison categorisation procedures that security requirements should be determined by applying objective and explicitly stated criteria;

(2) what criteria have been laid down following the Chief Inspector of Prisons' recommendation that there should be standard recategorisation procedures and criteria;

(3) if the recommendation of the Chief Inspector of Prisons in his report on prison categorisation procedures that all four regional offices should, in co-operation with headquarters, develop a common approach has been inplemented;

(4) what action has been taken to implement the recommendations of the Chief Inspector of Prisons that the work of observation, classification and allocation units in local prisons should be accorded priority by *(a)* improving the availability of prison files and lists of previous convictions, *(b)* not moving observation, classification and allocation staff to other duties except in an emergency, *(c)* having observation, classification and allocation units deal with long-term prisoners rather than transferring them to long-term allocation centres, and *(d)* reducing the range of cases in which headquarters or regional office must confirm the decision.

Mr. Mellor: A study of categorisation systems in the USA and Canada which we commissioned from an outside consultant has recently been completed and is now being considered. Revised guidelines on categorisation, allocation and recategorisation are being produced taking into account the recommendations of the chief inspector and of the control review committee.

Suicides (Statistics)

Mr. Corrie asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will give details of all recorded suicide verdicts by coroners' courts involving deaths of girls under 16 years of age in Derbyshire between 20 December 1984 and 11 January 1985; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will give details of all recorded suicide verdicts by coroners' courts involving deaths of girls under 16 years of age in Lancashire between 20 December 1984 and 11 January 1985; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will give details of all recorded suicide verdicts by coroners' courts involving deaths of girls under 16 years of age in Staffordshire between 20 December 1984 and 11 January 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. White asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give details of all recorded suicide verdicts by coroners' courts in Leicestershire, Warwickshire and Worcestershire involving deaths of girls under 16 years between 20 December 1984 and 11 January 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Campbell asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give details of all recorded suicide verdicts by coroners' courts in Durham, Northumberland and Greater London involving deaths of girls under 16 years between 20 December 1984 and 11 January 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. I refer the hon. Members to the reply given to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North, (Mr. Corrie) on 27 March at column *247*.

TGWU (Ballot Rigging)

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Avon on allegations of ballot rigging in the Transport and General Workers Union in Bristol, currently under investigation by his force; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the chief constable of Avon and Somerset constabulary that his officers are investigating reports of alleged criminal offences associated with voting irregularities in the Bristol branch of the Transport and General Workers Union and that a report of their investigations will be submitted to the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Injured Police Officers (Civil Remedy)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to provide a civil remedy for a police officer who, whilst searching, with his consent, an individual who is suspected of possessing drugs or offensive weapons, sustains serious injury or contracts a contagious disease.

Mr. Giles Shaw: We have no plans to do so.

Stop and Search Powers

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if he will introduce legislation to amend the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 so as to provide the police with the power to stop and search persons who are reasonably suspected of having alcohol in their possession at or in the immediate vicinity of sports stadiums.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Government intend to introduce legislation similar to that which now applies in Scotland which makes it an offence to attempt to enter a designated sports ground while drunk or possessing alcohol. This legislation also gives the police power to search persons reasonably suspected of such offences.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received from the Association of Chief Police Officers regarding the provisions of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 on the power of police officers to conduct blanket searches at or in the immediate vicinity of sports stadiums; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I will reply as soon as possible.

Drugs (Hot Line)

Mr. Sackville asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police forces are operating a drugs hot line.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Two police forces, the Metropolitan police and Greater Manchester police, each operate a telephone answering service for the receipt of information on drug misuse from members of the public: the numbers are 01-230 2121 and 061-228 3276 respectively. Such information may be given anonymously if preferred.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Housing Executive (Staffing Report)

12. **Rev. Martin Smyth** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he expects to receive the report of the Fair Employment Agency on staffing within the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

Dr. Boyson: The report is a matter between the Fair Employment Agency and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

Political Reform

13. **Mr. Dubs** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the progress in current discussions between political parties in Northern Ireland and the Department; and if he will indicate which political groupings are involved and which Ministers are taking part.

17. **Mr. Flannery** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on any discussions currently taking place or proposed between political groupings in Northern Ireland and the Department; and if he will indicate which political groupings are involved and which Ministers are taking part.

Mr. Hurd: At my request, my hon. Friend the Member for Bath (Mr. Patten) has begun to talk to the main constitutional political parties to investigate and clarify their positions. In due course, he will help me assess the prospects for progress towards new devolved arrangements for Northern Ireland.

Community Enterprise Scheme

14. **Mr. A. Cecil Walker** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will consider funding the community enterprise scheme for 18 to 19-year-olds at 100 per cent., where the sponsor has set a maximum of £50 per week.

Dr. Boyson: I have no plans to alter funding arrangements under the action for community employment (ACE) scheme.

Noraid

15. **Mr. John Mark Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what evidence he has that funds provided by Noraid are being used to support terrorism in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: In April 1982 Noraid was found by a United States court to be an agent of the Provisional IRA. While the House would not expect me to go into detail, all the information available to the Government since then confirms that Noraid directly or indirectly helps to finance the IRA's terrorist campaign. During my recent visit to the United States I took every opportunity to condemn Noraid activities and urge the people of the United States not to contribute to them.

Prevention of Terrorism Act

16. **Mr. Corbyn** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people were questioned in Northern Ireland under the Prevention of Terrorism Act in each year since 1976; and what was the number of orders issued as a result.

Mr. Scott: Records are not maintained of how many people were questioned under the Prevention of Terrorism Act or with what results, but since 1976 my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has made 29 orders under the Act excluding persons from Northern Ireland.

19. **Mr. Allan Roberts** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make available to Members of Parliament retrospective access to details concerning application of powers under the Prevention of Terrorism Act in specific cases, outlining factors such as reasons for arrest and detention, and outlining the procedural standards used after each arrest.

Mr. Scott: No.

Rubber and Plastic Bullets

18. **Mr. Canavan** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many complaints he has received about the use of rubber or plastic bullets.

Mr. Scott: Since September 1984, my right hon. Friend has received 52 letters commenting unfavourably on the use of baton rounds in Northern Ireland.

Higher Education (Report)

20. **Mr. Sean Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what action he proposes to take on the joint report by the Northern Ireland Economic Council and the National Economic and Social Council on higher education in Ireland.

Mr. Scott: I have welcomed this report and its recommendations are now being considered by the Department of Education for Northern Ireland and other interested parties.

Baker Report

21. **Mr. Bell** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he proposes to introduce legislation to implement the recommendations of the Baker report.

Mr. Hurd: I hope to announce my proposals in the next few months and to introduce amending legislation as soon as parliamentary time allows.

Lignite

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will place in the Library a map of the Province showing the known deposits of lignite; and if he will make a statement about their exploitation.

Dr. Boyson: Until further work has been done by the private sector it will not be possible to provide a precise estimate or a definitive map of all the lignite deposits in the province. I have asked the Geological Survey of Northern Ireland to prepare for the Library a broadly indicative map which will show the general areas in which deposits have been located. In addition to the Crumlin deposit, for part of which a mining licence was issued in May 1984, further deposits were identified during an exploratory shallow drilling programme commissioned by the Department of Economic Development. The results of that programme were made available in November 1984 for purchase by the mining industry so that it can apply for prospecting licences by 28 June 1985 and undertake the detailed investigation and further exploration work that is now necessary to evaluate the precise size of deposits and their economic and commercial potential.

Abortion

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many women have been discharged from hospital following diagnosis of septic abortion in each year since 1955 in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Chris Patten: The information requested is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Housing Executive (Modernisation Schemes)

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what has been the total amount of money spent by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive on modernisation schemes each year since 1980 in *(a)* Newry and Mourne district council area and *(b)* in Armagh district council area;

(2) what is the proposed expenditure by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive on modernisation schemes during 1985-86 in *(a)* Newry and Mourne district council area and *(b)* Armagh district council area.

Mr. Chris Patten: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, but I understand from the chairman that the information is not readily available; I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Housing Executive (Contracts)

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many contracts advertised by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive during the financial year 1983-84 were cancelled after tenders were received; and if he will list them;

(2) how many contracts advertised by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive during the financial year 1984-85 were cancelled after tenders had been received; and if he will list them.

Mr. Chris Patten: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, but I understand from the chairman that the information is not readily available; I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Northern Ireland (American Investment)

Q96. **Mr. Kilfedder** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's Government will discuss with the United States Government greater American investment in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: We welcome further investment in Northern Ireland from the United States as from other countries. We take every opportunity to brief Governments as well as individual companies about the advantages of such investment.

Plutonium

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what safeguards exist to ensure that non-nuclear weapons states acquiring reprocessing facilities do not use plutonium for military purposes.

Mr. Rifkind: Non-nuclear weapon states parties to the non-proliferation treaty undertake not to manufacture or otherwise acquire nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. This obligation is verified by the acceptance of safeguards supervised by the International Atomic Energy Agency on all source or special fissionable material in all peaceful nuclear facilities within the territory of the state or under its control. In the case of non-nuclear weapon states not parties to the NPT, safeguards agreements with the IAEA are in force in respect of reprocessing facilities in two countries.

Moreover, 20 states have adopted the nuclear suppliers guidelines which establish the principles for safeguards and export controls which apply to nuclear transfers to any non-nuclear weapon state for peaceful purposes.

The guidelines specify that restraint should be exercised in transferring reprocessing facilities and that such exports should be subject to certain conditions, including the application of safeguards.

Falkland Islands

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what specific steps he has taken to explore possible ways in which to establish a multilaterally based conservation and management regime for fisheries in the waters round the Falklands.

Mr. Renton: It would not be helpful at this stage to go into detail concerning specific steps taken towards the possible establishment of a multilaterally based fisheries regime in the area of the Falkland Islands.

President Belaunde Terry (2 May Press Conference)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs at what time the telegram from Her Majesty's ambassador in Lima, of the press conference held in Lima by President Belaunde Terry on 2 May 1982, sent at 01.44 Greenwich mean time on 3 May 1982 was received in London; at what time it was available in a form suitable for assessment by Ministers and officials; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: The telegram was received in London by 0200 GMT on 3 May, and was processed immediately in the normal way under the arrangements that were in place during the conflict.

El Salvador

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when it was decided to appoint Mr. White and Mr. Ridgeway as official observers to the recent elections in El Salvador; what were their terms of reference; and if he will make public their report.

Mr. Renton: As I told the hon. Member on 2 April at columns 558-59, our decision was publicly announced on 22 March. Our observers covered the elections during the normal course of their functions as members of the Diplomatic Service.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information is available to him concerning the sending of observers to the recent elections in El Salvador by other European Economic Community countries.

Mr. Renton: The Federal Republic of Germany, the Netherlands and Belgium also decided to nominate observers to the El Salvador elections.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps have been taken by the European Commission, following the decision of the European Parliament on 25 October 1984 to make 3 million European currency units available to El Salvador in the form of emergency aid; and through whom such aid will be directed.

Mr. Raison: The European Commission has made no proposals concerning emergency aid to El Salvador since the resolution of the European Parliament of 25 October last.

Poor Regions

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the 50 poorest regions in the European Economic Community as defined by the European Commission.

Mr. Rifkind: The Commission's second periodic report on the social and economic situation and development of the regions of the Community, published in March 1984, lists the following 50 regions as having the most serious regional problems in the Community. The regions of Greece are not included because detailed statistics are still being compiled by the Commission and the Greek authorities. Greece is the member state with the lowest GDP per head in the present Community.

Calabria*
Northern Ireland
Sardinia
Ireland
Merseyside
Campania
Basilicata
Sicily
Dumfries and Galloway, Strathclyde
Northumberland, Tyne and Wear
Corsica
Cleveland, Durham
Puglia
Abruzzi
Molise
Hainaut
Lazio
Limburg (Belgium)
Gwent, West, Mid and South Glamorgan
Cornwall, Devon
West Midlands
Umbria
Clwyd, Gwynedd, Dyfed, Powys
Limburg (Netherlands)
Humberside
Liége
Languedoc-Roussillon
South Yorkshire
Borders, Central Scotland, Fife, Lothian, Tayside
West Yorkshire
Lancashire
Greater Manchester
Ost for Storebaelt
Lincolnshire
Cumbria
Salop, Staffordshire
Vest for Storebaelt
Poitou-Charentes
Britanny
Hereford and Worcester, Warwickshire
Nord-Pas-de-Calais
Midi-Pyrénées
Basse-Normandie
Namur
Avon, Gloucestershire, Wiltshire
Aquitaine
Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire
Leicestershire, Northamptonshire
Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur
Marche

* Regions with the most serious problems are at the beginning of the list.

European Council (Votes)

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the number of votes which will be given to each EEC member state when the Council is required to act by a qualified majority, including those assigned to Spain and Portugal; and how article 148 of the treaty is to be amended with the accession of Spain and Portugal.

Mr. Rifkind: The detailed arrangements for voting in the Council after the enlargement of the Community will be set out in the draft treaty which will be placed before the House after signature. It is agreed, however, that the proportion of votes required for a qualified majority in the enlarged Community will be the same as in the present Community. The intention is that article 148 of the treaty will be amended to give 8 votes to Spain and 5 to Portugal, raising the number of votes in the Council from 63 to 76. The qualified majority will go from 45 to 54.

Superphenix Reactor

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the policy of

Her Majesty's Government towards the French Government's plans to use the Superphenix fast breeder reactor to create plutonium for the warheads for a Western European Union nuclear force.

Mr. Rifkind: We are not aware of any such plans.

Spain and Portugal

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement outlining the basic features of the interim agreement by the Council of Ministers on the admission of Spain and Portugal to the European Economic Community.

Mr. Rifkind: I refer my hon. Friend to the speech I made today in the Adjournment debate on the enlargement of the European Community.

Sudan

Mr. Haynes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement concerning United Kingdom relations with the Sudan.

Mr. Rifkind: We have a good relations with Sudan. There is a long and friendly association between our two countries. We have made a substantial contribution to the economic development of Sudan and are doing all we can to help resolve her refugee and drought problems. We hope that the Sudanese authorities will take practical steps to resolve their difficulties peaceably and thus restore stability and prosperity to their country.

Saudi Arabia

Miss Boothroyd asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether, in the course of his discussions in Saudi Arabia, the Minister of State made representations about *(a)* the banning of Christmas festivities, *(b)* the flogging and public humiliation of British subjects and *(c)* discriminatory restrictions against women; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: As my hon. Friend the Member for Shoreham (Mr. Luce) said on 20 March 1985, he made clear to his Saudi hosts that differences of culture, law and tradition could give rise to strong feelings in both countries which they and we should work to overcome. We acceplt that there is concern in Britain over the methods of punishment employed in Saudi Arabia against British citizens who have transgressed Saudi law. The Saudi authorities have been made aware that caning is abhorrent to British opinion.

As for reports of the banning of Christmas festivities, my hon. Friend the Member for Shoreham said on 12 December 1984 that the difficulty was not widespread. But of course we are concerned that British subjects in all countries should be able to worship in private groups in accordance with their conscience at Christmas as at other times. In places where problems may occur, Her Majesty's embassy monitors the situation closely in consultation with members of the British community, and endeavours to ensure that suitable arrangements for worship are made.

The question of the treatment of women in Saudi Arabia is a matter for the Saudi authorities.

Human Rights

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the forthcoming conference on security and co-operation in Europe meeting on human rights and fundamental freedoms in Ottawa.

Mr. Rifkind: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson) on 20 March at column *533*.

Antarctica

Sir Bernard Braine asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether, having regard to the United Nations study on the question of Antarctica and the United Nations resolution adopted on the subject in December 1984, he envisages any enlargement of the Antarctic treaty system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: We welcomed the United Nations Secretary-General's study on Antarctica and believe it demonstrates the value and benefits of the Antarctic treaty system. The treaty is open to accession by any member of the United Nations. We believe this is the right basis for any enlargement of the treaty system.

Sir Bernard Braine asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made in the recent Antarctic minerals regime negotiations; what is the likely date of conclusion of current talks; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton The recent informal consultations in Rio de Janeiro built upon discussions at the earlier meetings at Wellington, Bonn, Washington and Tokyo. Further progress was made although no final conclusions were reached. There will be a further meeting later this year. It is not possible to predict when the current negotiations will come to an end.

SCOTLAND

Voluntary Conservation Bodies

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if, in relation to the special grants programme operated by his Department, he has authorised a review of the exercise of powers to grant-aid to voluntary conservation bodies in Scotland.

Mr. Ancram: Yes. It should be noted, however, that the Scottish Development Department does not operate a special grants programme of the kind described by the hon. Member.

Workers' Educational Association

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will make a statement about additional financial support for the activities of the Workers' Educational Association in Scotland.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Levels of grant for 1985-86 to voluntary and other community education organisations have not yet been decided but continued financial support for the activities of the Workers' Educational Association in Scotland is not in doubt.

Protected Fauna (Control)

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland has developed detailed guidelines for the issue of licences under section 16 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 to allow the control of protected fauna doing serious damage; and whether it is normal practice for the Nature Conservancy Council to be consulted on each such licence application and for each damage site to be visited by his Department's technical staff before any licences are issued.

Mr. John MacKay: The Department has guidelines for the use of its staff in considering applications for the issue of licences under section 16 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

In regard to applications relating to the protection of crops, where there is likely to be evidence of damage, it is the normal practice to consult the Nature Conservancy Council in each case; and a visit is usually made by a member of the Department's technical staff, though in some instances recommendations are made on the basis of their knowledge of the local situation.

In regard to the issue of licences for the protection of fisheries, my right hon. Friend has decided that it would be impracticable to consult the NCC about individual applications, or to visit each site. Decisions are taken in accordance with general advice given by the council.

Fishermen (Fuel Costs)

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will estimate the cost of cutting the present price of marine gas oil charged to fishing vessel owners in order to reduce that cost by 25p per gallon;

(2) if he has any information on the weekly fuel bill cost of a fishing vessel of 80 ft in length;

(3) what information he has as to the cost of one gallon of marine fuel oil for fishing vessels in the years 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984, and the latest available figures for 1985.

(4) what is the amount of rebate granted to fishing vessels when purchasing marine gas oil; and whether value added tax on the purchase of this commodity is recoverable by the vessel owner.

Mr. John MacKay: I am inquiring into the matters raised by my hon. Friend and I shall reply as soon as possible.

Coal Industry Dispute

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate the final costs incurred in policing the miners' industrial dispute in Scotland; and if he will list the costs by region.

Mr. Ancram: The information is set out in the following table:

Police Authority Area	*Estimated final cost (£'000)*
Central	573
Dumfries and Galloway	Nil
Fife	729
Grampian	Nil
Lothian and Borders	1,540
Northern	Nil
Strathclyde	2,095
Tayside	66
Total	5,003

Note: These figures represent the extra costs incurred during the coal dispute.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many miners brought to court during the industrial dispute received legal aid.

Mr. Ancram: Such information is not available centrally, and could not be obtained either readily or without disproportionate cost.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many policemen were involved in other areas of Scotland as a result of decisions on mutual aid during the miners' industrial dispute; and how many police forces were involved in the provision of mutual aid.

Mr. Ancram: Three Scottish police forces had occasion to deploy officers outwith their area in connection with the coal dispute. The forces, occasions and numbers of officers involved are shown in the table. Generally the deployments were for only very limited periods, sometimes less than an hour, during the week in question.

Week Commencing 1984	*Total Number of Officers Deployed During Week*
Central Scotland Force	
27 August	411
3 September	91
1 October	15
8 October	48
12 November	109
26 November	120
3 December	219
10 December	48
1985	
11 February	80
1984	
Fife Force	
11 June	41
20 August	219
10 September	31
12 November	78
19 November	111
26 November	161
3 December	55
1985	
21 January	105
4 February	60
18 February	80
1984	
Lothian and Borders Force	
20 August	65
1 October	113
8 October	87
5 November	36

Note:
Individual officers may have been deployed more than once during the weeks in question.

Teacher Training

Mrs. McCurley asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has reached decisions on the arrangements for intake to teacher training courses at Scottish colleges of education in session 1985-86; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Younger: Provisional arrangements suggested in a discussion paper issued by my Department have been the subject of consultation with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, the General Teaching Council for Scotland and the joint committee of colleges of education in Scotland. In the light of views expressed by these bodies, comments from individual colleges of education and other organisations, and education authorities' estimates of their future secondary school staffing requirements, I have now decided that the total numbers of students to be admitted to pre-service teacher training courses in session 1985-86 should be 600 to the four year primary BEd degree course, 200 to the one year primary postgraduate curse and 570 to secondary courses (on the basis that this last figure may be exceeded, if necessary, in order to admit any additional suitable applicants in business studies).

I am seeking the comments of the governing body of each college on the following proposed quotas within the aforementioned overall levels.

College	*Primary Intake*		*Secondary Intake*
	Proposed BEd Degree Course Quotas	*Proposed Postgraduate Course Quotas*	*Proposed Quotas*
Aberdeen	95	30	65
Craigie	70	20	—
Dundee	50	20	45
Dunfermline	—	—	40
Jordanhill	150	50	245
Moray House	120	45	90
St. Andrew's	115	35	85
Total	600	200	570

In regard to secondary intake I am advising the colleges to give priority in session 1985-86 to students applying for admission to courses leading to a teachig qualification (secondary education) in business studies, mathematics, physics and religious education6; and in regard to business studies in particular I am asking the colleges concerned to admit within their quotas the same numbers as in the current session and advising them that thereafter any additional numbers admitted will be over and above their quotas. I am also reminding each college of the need to consult the education authorities which it mainly serves in order to ensure that the numbers admitted both in individual priority subject and in other subjects appropriately reflect regional needs.

TRANSPORT

Fishing Industry (Research Awards)

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list for the years 1975 to 1985, respectively, the amount of money, expressed both as a total figure and as a percentage of total research awards made by his Department, allocated by his Department to universities or other research institutions for research into the following: *(a)* the occupational health and safety of United Kingdom fishermen and *(b)* the safety of United Kingdom fishing vessels.

Mr. David Mitchell: Statistics are not readily available in the form requested: moreover, research into marine safety is in general applicable also to fishing vessels and fishermen. However, the approximate value of some research projects applicable to the fishing industry is as follows:

Year	*Research*	*Cost £*
1975-78	Loss of the Gaul	65,000
1975, 1983	Buoyancy clothing	1,970
1979	Safety of gutting shelters	79,000
1978-81	Noise in fishing vessels	23,000
1979-84	Liferafts	104,000
1981-85	SAFESHIP (Survival in extreme seas)	800,000
1982	Navigation lights for fishing vessels	1,000
1983-84	Roll tests on fishing vessels	65,000
1983-85	Ship motion studies	202,000

The total funds spent by the Marine Directorate of the Department on research into marine safety and pollution control and prevention over the last six years was:

Year	*Amount £ million*
1979-80	1·7
1980-81	1·9
1981-82	2·0
1982-83	2·334
1983-84	2·866
1984-85	*2·600

* Provisional.

Estimated total expenditure on external research contracts by the Department of Transport was £9·8 million in 1984-85.

Motorways (Litter)

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for Transport on how many occasions in the latest period of time for which figures are available sections of each motorway have been closed in order to collect litter from the verges, central reservations and slopes.

Mrs. Chalker: I regret that the information requested is not available.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will take steps to clear the litter from the verges on the M4 between junctions 2 and 3.

Mrs. Chalker: As I told the hon. Member on 15 March, priority is given to work necessary to ensure safety. Our agent, the London borough of Hounslow, has told us it will be clearing up the litter on the verges after Easter.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for Transport when was the last occasion litter was cleared from the verges, central reservations and slopes of each of the motorways; how much litter was collected in each case; and at what cost and to whom.

Mrs. Chalker: I regret that the information requested is not available.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any evidence about the effect of litter on the wildlife inhabiting motorway verges, embankments and central reservations.

Mrs. Chalker: No. I am not aware of any harmful effects on wildlife.

Motorways (Accidents)

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many accidents on motorways in 1984 were caused by obstacles lost or discarded on the carriageways.

Mrs. Chalker: Causes of accidents are not identified on road accident reports. However, in 1984 it is provisionally estimated that 23 motorway accidents involved a dislodged vehicle load and 184 motorway accidents involved some other object in the carriageway.

Airports Policy

Mr. Haselhurst asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list his powers to determine policy on airports by way of special development orders.

Mr. Michael Spicer: None. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has the power under section 24 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 to make special development orders (subject to annulment by either House of Parliament) which may provide for the grant of planning permission for the developments specified in the orders.

Mr. Hirst asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on his policy on Scottish Lowlands airports.

Mr. Ridley: Last summer, in consultation with the Secretary of State for Scotland, I commissioned a review by officials of the two Departments of policy for the use of the Scottish lowland airports (Edinburgh, Glasgow and Prestwick). Treasury officials and staff of the British Airports Authority and the Civil Aviation Authority also took part in the review.

I am placing in the Library of the House copies of the report of the working group which carried out the review. The report identifies econonic benefits to airlines and their customers, the financial effects on the BAA, and the social and environmental disadvantages to others which a change could entail, but does not make any recommendation for a change in the policy.

The Government have decided that for the present there should be no change in the policy under which Prestwick is designated as the gateway for long haul air services to and from Scotland. This is in line with the recommendation of the Scottish Affairs Committee in its first report of the 1984-85 session. At the same time we are very concerned at the decline in traffic at Prestwick in recent years and at the level of operating losses which have been experienced there. We are anxious tht the situation should not continue indefinately and therefore wish to see every effort made by those who want to preserve Prestwick to improve its economic performance. We look for a steady improvement in the airport's financial results as a result of such efforts, and to this end the freeport should help.

If however a change in the fortunes of Prestwick does not come about by 1989, the decision to maintain the existing policy will have to be reconsidered.

Roads (London)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport what factors were considered in his decision not to make the extra 65 miles of London roads, proposed to be trunked, the responsibility of the appropriate borough councils as with designated roads.

Mrs. Chalker: I will answer this question shortly.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many posts are to be filled following his Department's advertisement in the *New Civil Engineer* and elsewhere for civil engineers in London to be involved in the preparation and design of major road schemes.

Mrs. Chalker: The Civil Service Commission regularly recruits professional civil engineers for my Department to fill vacancies caused by internal promotions and natural wastage. It is hoped that some 30 grade I and grade II civil engineers will join my Department through the current competition advertised in the *New Civil Engineer* on 14 February 1985.

I anticipate that roughly half of these will be deployed in various of the Department's regional offices on the management of the engineering aspects of the preparation and design of major road schemes, as set out in successive roads White Papers. The remainder will be in the London headquarters providing advice on aspects of engineering policy to local authorities and to the Department's regional offices.

Hayes Bypass

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport in the event of the abolition of the Greater London council what additional cost there will be to Hillingdon ratepayers arising from expenditure on the Hayes by-pass.

Mrs. Chalker: The Government have made it clear that they expect the overall effect of the abolition of the GLC to be broadly neutral for ratepayers in different areas. The detailed financial arrangements are under discussion with representatives of the local authority associations.

Traffic Signals (London)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he intends that highway powers in respect of traffic signals, and the ownership of the signals, should be retained centrally, in the event of the abolition of the Greater London council.

Mrs. Chalker: As has been made clear in our published consultation documents and most recently in the debate of the Report stage of the Local Government Bill — on 28 March at columns 609 and 611 — the Bill provides for the transfer of the relevant powers to the London borough councils and it will be for them to make suitable arrangements for these functions. Only if these are not agreed in good time would the Secretary of State activate his reserve power to ensure that the urban traffic control system and the services of the expert staff who support it, continue to be available to help meet the needs of road users in London.

A40 (Enlargement Schemes)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport why the royal borough of Kensington and

Chelsea and City of Westminster council were not informed about the public exhibitions and consultation exercises in April 1983 and February 1985 on road enlargement schemes on the A40 in Acton, West London.

Mrs. Chalker: Our usual publicity was given to the arrangements for these informal consultations, which were concerned with getting local views on alternative ways of laying out two junctions on the A40. Once the best layout has been chosen, there will be ample opportunity through the statutory procedures for any LA or other interested party to offer their views.

Driving Test

Mr. Waller asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the current waiting time for a driving test at the Bradford, Keighley and Skipton test centres.

Mrs. Chalker: There are three driving test centres serving Bradford, and Skipton is an occasional centre served from Keighley. The information is as follows:

Test centre	*Waiting time as at 29 March (latest available date)* *Weeks*
Bradford (Brownroyd Hill road)	21
Bradford (Victoria road)	24
Bradford (Farfield street)	18
Keighley/Skipton	23

Waiting times for driving tests are far too high and the Department is recruiting and training new examiners as quickly as possible to reduce them to reasonable levels.

Mr. Watson asked the Secretary of State for Transport what was the average length of waiting time experienced by driving test applicants between the receipt of their applications and the date of their tests, in January for each of the following years *(a)* 1979, *(b)* 1980, *(c)* 1981, *(d)* 1982, *(e)* 1983, *(f)* 1984 and *(g)* 1985.

Mrs. Chalker: The figures were:

Mid-January	*National* *(Weeks)*	*North Eastern Traffic Area (Leeds)* *(Weeks)*
1979	22	24½
1980	26	21½
1981	19	16½
1982	11½	7
1983	9	3½
1984	10½	5½
1985	15½	18½

Examiners are being recruited to bring the waits down to acceptable levels.

Roads (Statistics)

Mr. Roy Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for 1985-86 taxation revenue and public road cost figures and also a table showing taxation revenue, attributed costs, revenue-to-cost ratios and numbers of vehicles.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Information in the form requested is as follows:

Table 1
Taxation Revenue and Public Road Costs, 1985-86—United Kingdom

Vehicle category	*Vehicle numbers*	*Estimated Taxation Revenue*					*Costs attributed*	*Revenue (excluding car tax) minus costs*	*Revenue to cost ratios*	
		VED	*Fuel tax*	*Total*	*Car tax*	*Total (including car tax)*			*Excluding car tax*	*Including car tax*
	000s	*£ million*	*£ million*	*£ million*	*£ million*	*£ million*	*£ million*	*£ million*		
Cars, light vans, taxis	19,308	1,975	5,075	7,050	760	7,810	2,145	4,905	3·3:1	3·6:1
Buses and coaches	73	5	*165	170	—	170	185	−15	0·9:1	0·9:1
Goods vehicles 1525 Kg unladen:										
Not over 3·5 tonnes GVW and non-plateable vehicles	119	15	30	45	—	45	15	30	2·7:1	2·7:1
Over 3·5 tonnes GVW	450	435	835	1,265	—	1,265	1,035	230	1·2:1	1·2:1
All vehicles	19,950	2,430	6,100	8,530	760	9,290	3,380	5,150	2·5:1	2·7:1
							245	Pedestrians		
							30	Motorcyclists		
							3,655			

* Fuel tax rebate on stage services (£115 million) not deducted.

Table 2
Taxation revenue, attributed costs, revenue to cost ratios and numbers of vehicles in selected classes of HGV

	GVW Over	(Tonnes) not over	Taxation revenue, per vehicle	Attributed costs per vehicle	Amount by which tax exceeds costs: per vehicle	Revenue to costs ratio	Estimated Number of vehicles at September 1985 '000
			£	£	£		
Rigid Vehicles							
2 axles	7·5	12	950	520	430	1·8:1	34
	12	13	1,300	790	510	1·6:1	23
	15	17	2,500	2,190	310	1·1:1	80
3 axles	15	17	1,360	950	410	1·4:1	1
	23	25	3,740	3,650	90	1·0:1	27
4 axles	23	25	2,640	2,130	510	1·2:1	*
	29	31	6,080	5,330	750	1·1:1	17
Articulated Vehicles							
3 axles	12	14	1,530	680	850	2·3:1	*
	16	18	2,270	1,110	1,160	2·0:1	2
	23	25	3,820	2,660	1,160	1·4:1	2
4 axles	23	25	3,170	2,080	1,090	1·5:1	*
	31	33	7,110	5,840	1,270	1·2:1	49
5 axles							
2 axle tractor with	31	33	6,340	4,880	1,460	1·3:1	1
3 axle trailer	36	38	9,910	8,740	1,170	1·1:1	19
3 axle tractor with	31	33	5,860	4,450	1,410	1·3:1	*
2 axle trailer	36	38	9,880	8,420	1,460	1·2:1	4
6 axles							
3 axle tractor with	31	33	5,330	3,970	1,360	1·3:1	*
3 axle trailer	36	38	8,390	6,840	1,550	1·2:1	1

* Less than 500 vehicles.

Rail Services (Timekeeping)

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will ask the chairman of British Rail to take steps to ensure the reliability of the published timetables for Sunday services.

Mr. David Mitchell: I am sure the chairman of British Rail is already well aware of the need to ensure that Sunday services should run wherever possible to the published timetable.

Liverpool Airport

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 25 March, *Official Report*, column *30*, how long a period he proposes to allow the district councils in Merseyside to try to reach agreement on the future operation of Liverpool airport before making an order to transfer the interests in the airport formerly held by the metropolitan county council to the passenger transport authority.

Mr. Michael Spicer: On the assumption that the Local Government Bill receives the Royal Assent by the summer we shall wish to know by 1 September 1985 whether district councils have been able to reach agreement.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Departmental Achievements

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list his Department's principal achievements since 1979.

Mr. Tebbit: Since June 1983, the Department of Trade and Industry has added to the achievements since 1979 of what were previously the Department of Trade, the Department of Industry, and the radio regulatory department of the Home Office.

2. In its support of industry and commerce the Department has contributed to the formulation of the Government's economic policy which has brought about a substantial improvement in the operating environment for United Kingdom companies. The reforms of business taxation in the 1984 Budget are progressively helping to strenghen the competitive base of British industry by encouraging investment in projects which offer the prospect of good pre-tax profitability. The 1985 Budget continues this strategy, while offering a number of detailed improvements and a major restructuring of national insurance contributions to reduce employment costs and encourage the creation of sustainable new jobs.

In 1984 the gross trading profits of industrial and commercial companies were 22 per cent. higher than in 1983. Manufacturing output in 1984 rose by 3½ per cent., the largest rise in any one year since 1973. Output per head in manufacturing rose by 4½ per cent. over the same

period. Confidence in the prospects for United Kingdom industry as measured by CBI surveys has continued at a high level. The volume of manufactured exports rose last year by 10 per cent., the largest annual increase for some ten years. Investment in manufacturing and service industries has also risen sharply, by about 13 per cent. in 1984.

3. Progress has been made in transferring publicly-owned industries to the private sector. British Telecom was successfully privatised in the largest, and most international, primary share offering ever made, with more than two million members of the British public applying for shares. Other successful transfers to the private sector have been Scott Lithgow, Jaguar and INMOS.

4. Further improvement has also been made in the performance of the state-owned industries for which the Department remains responsible. Over the last two years, the Post Office has increased its efficiency and productivity and more than met its financial targets while reducing the price of basic letter post service in real terms. After excluding the serious effects of the miners' dispute, the British Steel Corporation has made good progress towards achieving viability, with dramatic reductions in losses and external financial requirements since 1980-81 and a doubling of productivity, from 1979, to 271 tonnes per man-year by 1984, and in returning certain of their activities to private ownership through outright disposals and joint ventures. British Shipbuilders has continued to make substantial progress in restructuring its business to enable it to concentrate its resources on a stable cost-effective merchant shipbuilding business. To this end it is disposing of its other business including its warshipbuilding interests.

5. A new framework for telecommunications in the United Kingdom has been created. The Telecommunications Act 1984, which was passed in April 1984, established a regime designed to encourage competition in telecommunications and set up a new body —the Office of Telecommunications—as the regulatory body. Public telecommunication operator licences have been granted to British Telecom, Mercury and the Hull Telephone Company.

6. The Department has continued to offer practical and realistic support for industrial research and development. Some £300 million will be spent in 1984-85 to help with the costs of innovative projects and the introduction and application of new technologies. Policy in this area has been the subject of a major review, the outcome of which I announced on 25 March. This will result in a shift of emphasis in the Department's support towards advisory services, the encouragement of best practice, improvement in the supply of key skills, and collaborative research.

7. Well over 400 applications have now been received for the Alvey programme for research into advanced information technology, and some 80 cooperative projects involving companies and universities have been approved. The Department has also acted as a national focus to spread industrial and technological awareness in schools and to devise new ways of meeting the information technology skills shortages. The micros in schools programme has been successfuly completed. The British schools technology unit has been established to provide a mobile means of in-service teacher training and the Department has been promoting the establishment of mini-enterprises in schools. The Butcher committee's recommendations of a partnership for change between industry and the higher education system are now being implemented.

8. A series of policy decisions affecting the future product strategy of the aerospace industry have been taken. Agreement has been reached to the advance of £250 million launch aid to BAe in support of the company's participation in the Airbus A 320 project; to the advance of £70 million launch aid to Rolls Royce to assist with the development of the RB211-535E4 engine, and of £60 million to Westland towards its civil costs in developing the Anglo-Italian EH101 helicopter. Approval has been given for Rolls Royce to participate in the V2500 international engine project (with £60 million launch aid) to power the A320 and other aircraft, and for the company to collaborate with General Electric of the United States on larger civil engines.

9. Following the publication of a White Paper on regional industrial development in December 1983, decisions on the revised structure of regional industrial incentives were announced on 28 November 1984. The major changes from the previous structure affect the Assisted Areas map and regional development grants, and are designed to concentrate the Department's regional assistance where it can be most effective in creating new jobs.

10. The findings of the major review of tourism policy, which were announced in November 1983, are being implemented by the Department and the tourist boards.

11. The Department's small firms service continues to meet strong demand for information and counselling. In 1984 it handled more than 279,000 enquiries and provided counselling for about 25,000 firms. The loan guarantee scheme has been extended until the end of 1985 to cover up to a further £50 million of lending. Under its provisions almost 6,000 guarantees have been issued since June 1983 for over £191 million of bank lending. In November 1984 Business Improvement Services was launched to help small firms in English areas affected by job losses in the steel, shipbuilding and textile industries. Some £63 million is available to provide grants for business consultancy advice.

12. The Department has published a White Paper announcing the outcome of the review of policy on the film industry, and the Films Bill has been introduced to make the necessary legislative changes.

13. Within the European Community, the Department has continued to press for the consolidation of the internal market and to seek greater European industrial cooperation. The Department has also played its part within the European Community in urging international support for open trading policies, and for a new round of multilateral trade negotiations in the GATT; while continuing to defend vigorously those sectors of United Kingdom industry facing foreign competition recognised as unfair by the GATT.

14. Export volume grew last year by 8½ per cent. and for manufactures by 10 per cent. The Department helped industry to achieve this largest increase for some 10 years through a wide range of Ministerial visits, trade policy work, and the export promotion programme, under the guidance of the British Overseas Trade Board, which included 6,000 new contacts with firms interested in exporting.

15. The Department has continued to support British companies pursuing major project business overseas. Since June 1983 contracts worth about £3 billion with a United Kingdom content of just under £2 billion have been won. The Aid and Trade Provision was used to help obtain contracts with a United Kingdom content worth more than £400 million.

16. The Department has played an increasing role in attracting a growing volume of inward investment in the United Kingdom. 1984 was the best year for inward investment since IBB was founded 8 years ago. In 1984 projects handled and projects successfully landed increased respectively by 17 per cent. and 36 per cent. The projects successfully landed involved capital expenditure of about £3 billion and will create over 28,000 jobs and safeguard nearly 18,000 existing jobs.

17. In 1984 agreement was reached on the Nissan proposal to start production of cars in Britain, and Yamazaki Machinery Works Ltd. announced its intention of building at Worcester what will probably be the world's most advanced factory for the production of machine tools. However, inward investment from the USA remained predominant, with major companies such as Hewlett Packard establishing in the United Kingdom.

18. Royal Assent was obtained to the Trade Marks (Amendment) Act 1984 which provides for extension of the registered trade mark system to include marks used in relation to services. The Department has published a Green Paper on the recording and rental of audio and video copyright material as part of the consultative process leading to reform of copyright law.

19. The Department has pursued a wide range of matters of concern to consumers. For example, new safety regulations and prohibition orders have helped reduce the sale of dangerous goods to the public. Reviews of safety laws and the law on false and misleading pricing have been concluded and new legislations planned.

20. In December 1984 the Department introduced into the House of Lords an insolvency Bill following a White Paper in February 1984.

21. In the last twelve months, the massive task of consolidating the Companies Acts has been completed. The new consolidated Acts set out in clearer and more convenient form provisions previously contained in six major Acts and will be of direct benefit to both the professions and the business community as a whole.

22. Royal Assent was obained to the Restrictive Trade Practices (Stock Exchange) Act 1984 which removed the Stock Exchange from the ambit of the Restrictive Trade Practices legislation. This opened the way for radical changes in its dealing practices and admissions policies and to major innovations in the organisation of financial services in London.

23. Following Professor Gower's report on investor protection, the Department has published a White Paper on financial services in the United Kingdom, with a view to the introduction of legislation in the 1985-86 Parliamentary session to reform the law on investor protection.

24. Further progress has been made implementing the Financial Management Initiative in my Department. Details were set out in Cmnd. 9297.

Net Book Agreement

Mr. Arnold asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what assessments the Director General of Fair Trading has made of the implications for the net book agreement of the decisions of the European Court in *(a)* VBVB and VBBB *v.* the Commission and *(b)* Association Leclerc *v.* SA Thouars Distribution; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what assessment he has made of the implications for the net book agreement of the judgments of the European Court in VBVB and VBBB *v.* the Commission and Association Leclerc *v.* SA Thouars Distribution; and if he will make a statement;

(3) pursuant to the answer of 19 December 1984, *Official Report*, column *247*, what aspects of the net book agreement the Director General of Fair Trading keeps under review and with what considerations in mind; and if he will make a statement;

(4) if the Director General of Fair Trading will make it his policy to review the net book agreement when relevant developments occur in Community law; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon: Under the legislation, the Director General of Fair Trading must demonstrate prima facie evidence of a material change in the relevant circumstances before he may apply to the Restrictive Practices Court to review its judgment on the net book agreement. The main consideration he has to bear in mind is whether there has been sufficient change in respect of those aspects of the operation of the agreement on which the court relied in reaching its judgment.

Relevant developments in the European Community are amongst the factors taken into account by the Director General, but it has to be borne in mind that the net book agreement is a voluntary arrangement operating principally within the United Kingdom, whereas VBVB and VBBB *v.* the Commission concerned trade between member states, Leclerc *v.* Thouars Distribution SA and Others involved statutory controls on book prices.

EC (Insurance)

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what efforts he is making in conjunction with his European Economic Community counterparts to remove barriers to the liberalisation of the insurance market throughout Europe; what information he has about the attitudes and proposals of the European Economic Community partners; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon: Freedom of establishment and services (that is, cross-frontier business) in respect of reinsurance were agreed in a Council directive in 1964. Barriers to freedom of establishment for direct insurance in the Community were lifted in further directives in 1973 and 1979. Unfortunately no progress has been made on dismantling the barriers to freedom of direct insurance services. Disagreement remains on the proposed directive on non-life insurance services because we want a liberal directive whereas the majority of our Community partners want a restrictive one. In an effort to make progress on freedom of insurance services, the Commission has brought cases in the European Court of Justice against four other member states in connection with the 1978 Co-Insurance Directive. We are intervening in support of the Commission.

Amateur Radio

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the reason for the refusal to allow class B radio amateurs to use all radio frequencies over 30 MHz.

Mr. Butcher: The class B amateur radio licence permits only the use of those frequencies about 144 MHz which are allocated to the amateur service in the United Kingdom. The only frequency between 30 and 144 MHz currently in the amateur licence schedule for use in the United Kingdom is 70 MHz, and this is not an exclusive allocation, has no international standing, and its use by amateurs is at the discretion of the primary user of the band (another Government Department), who has directed that it should be restricted to Class A licensees.

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the cost of administration of the amateur radio licence service and supervision.

Mr. Butcher: The estimated cost for 1984-85 is £0·57 million which includes a contribution to the costs incurred by my Department on national and international planning and other activities relating to radio regulation: such a contribution is required of all licensed services.

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to whom the licence fee paid by radio amateurs goes: and upon what purposes the money is spent.

Mr. Butcher: The radio amateur licence fee is collected on behalf of my Department by the Post Office. It serves to reimburse the costs incurred in administering the licensing of radio amateurs, and to make a contribution to the national and international planning and other costs relating to radio regulation.

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is his estimate of the cost involved in the issue of a gazetted notice concerning radio amateurs.

Mr. Butcher: The cost of gazetting such notices is largely dependent on the length of the notice and, as these vary greatly, it would be misleading to give the general estimate the hon. Member requires. However, to give an idea of the range of costs, during the last two years for notices concerning radio amateurs published in the three Gazettes costs varied from about £160 to £1,500. Staff time in the preparation of these notices has not been included.

Liverpool (Ministerial Visit)

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the visit of his noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State to Liverpool.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The visit was undertaken as part of the normal programme for Ministers to visit the region and my noble Friend Lord Lucas of Chilworth took the opportunity to visit Merseyside to see at first hand two successful companies operating in the area. The companies visited were:

1. CBS Automobile Batteries at Aintree. A leader in the production of automotive batteries employing 154 people and exporting 18 per cent. of their output.

2. Manesty Machines Ltd. Manufacturer of tablet making machines employing 460 people in the north-west region and exporting 75 per cent. of its products to over 100 countries.

Whilst in Merseyside Lord Lucas took the opportunity to visit the Merseyside Development Corporation and to review progress of the re-development of the Albert dock. He also made a brief visit to the new enterprise workshops —127 small units in a converted dock side warehouse which are managed by BAT Industries Small Businesses Ltd. in partnership with the Merseyside Development Corporation.

Ericsson Exchanges

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps he is taking to ensure that British manufacturers of telecommunications equipment will be given reciprocal access to the Swedish market following the proposed purchase of Ericsson exchanges by British Telecom.

Mr. Butcher: Suitable opportunities are taken to bring to the attention of other Administrations the advantages of a liberalised telecommunications equipment market and the merits of United Kingdom produced goods. As regards the AXE 10 equipment BT will be purchasing from Thorn Ericsson a high proportion will be manufactured in the United Kingdom, following an initial build up programme.

Post Office

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if he has any plans to suspend the monopoly of the Post Office in regard to the collection and delivery of letters; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he proposes to introduce legislation to introduce competitive services in the field of letter collection and delivery; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Pattie: Powers already exist in the relevant legislation to introduce competition in the provision of letter services through the granting of licences to permit activities which would otherwise infringe the Post Office's exclusive privilege in respect of letters, or through suspension of the privilege. There are no immediate plans to make further use of the powers.

Telecommunications Industry (Shares)

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will introduce legislation to prevent the sale of further shares of telecommunications operators in the United Kingdom to organisations or individuals based or resident in Japan.

Mr. Butcher: No. Such legislation would be contrary to this Government's belief in more open conditions of international trade and payments.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the negotiations between Her Majesty's Government and the Japanese Government regarding arrangements for access by United Kingdom organisations and individuals to the sale of shares in the Nippon Telegraph and Telephone Public Corporation in reciprocation of the access allowed to non United Kingdom organisations and individuals to the sale of shares in British Telecom.

Mr. Butcher: There have been no such negotiations.

Investment

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what percentage of United States and Japanese direct investment in the European Economic Community came to the United Kingdom in the most recent year for which figures are available; and what the comparable figures were in each of the years back to 1970.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The available information is given in the table. United States and Japanese net direct investment into the European Community*: United Kingdom as a percentage of EC.

	United States direct investment†	*Japanese direct investment‡*
1973	26·6	80·4
1974	31·4	79·1
1975	40·8	30·0
1976	27·8	14·3
1977	48·2	21·0
1978	39·4	16·8
1979	41·0	14·0
1980	44·5	42·4
1981	61·1	12·0
1982	‖	23·2
1983	54·6	—

* Nine member countries up to 1980. Greece included from 1981.

† Direct investment is the annual amount invested in unremitted profits, shares, loans and short term indebtedness by United States companies in their overseas subsidiaries, branches and associates.

‡ Direct investment includes only purchases net of disposals of share capital and long term loans by Japanese companies in their overseas subsidiaries, branches and associates. Unremitted profits, short term loans and trade credit are not included.

‖ In 1982 net investment was negative for the United Kingdom but not for the EC.

Sources: United States Survey of Current Business Japanese Balance of Payments monthly.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the total amount of United Kingdom direct investment in the rest of the European Economic Community and the amount of European Economic Community direct investment in the United Kingdom, respectively, in the most recent year for which figures are available; and what the comparable figures were in each of the years back to 1970.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The information is given in the table

	EC direct investment in the United Kingdom £ million	*United Kingdom investment in the EC £ million*
1970	61·5	94·4
1971	39·0	287·3
1972	43·6	244·3
1973	111·6	522·7
1974	75·5	363·7
1975	98·0	168·0
1976	176·4	497·4
1977	268·2	385·2
1978	290·9	584·8
1979	216·1	228·2
1980	0·5	365·2
1981	27·8	591·9
1982	139·1	40·3

Source: Business Monitor MA4.

Pesticides

Mr. Body asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the quantity of organophosporus pesticides imported into the United Kingdom for each of the last three years.

Mr. Channon: Organophosphor pesticides are not separately identified in the United Kingdom overseas trade statistics.

Textile Industry

Mr. James Lamond asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is his response to the report entitled "The Winding Down of Textiles", published by the board for social responsibility in the diocese of Manchester, a copy of which has been sent to him; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont I have only just received this report from the hon. Member and have not yet had the opportunity to consider it. My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State will write to the hon. Member.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Agricultural Holdings

Mr. Colin Shepherd asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any plans to introduce legislation which will include provisions consolidating the statute law relating to agricultural holdings; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Fenner: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to him by my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General on 4 April 1985.

Cheese Spread

Mr. Beggs asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will take steps to amend the food labelling regulations for cheese spread so as to enable cheese manufacturers in Northern Ireland to market products of less than 10 per cent. fat content as cheese spread.

Mrs. Fenner: Cheese spread is required by the 1970 Cheese Regulations to contain not less than 20 per cent. milk fat. These regulations were the subject of a report by the Food Standards Committee in 1982 and the Government are currently preparing proposals for revised regulations which would take into account the recommendations of the committee and of last year's COMA report on diet and cardiovascular disease.

EC (Spain and Portugal)

Mr. Harris asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will set out in full the agreement reached between the European Community and Spain on fishing rights in Community waters; and if he will give his assessment on how this will affect the south-west fishery.

Mr. MacGregor: As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made clear in her statement on 2 April about the recent European Council, the agreement reached between the Community and Spain is a very satisfactory one so far as the United Kingdom fishing industry is concerned, setting out as it does arrangements applicable for the whole duration of the present Common Fisheries Policy up to 2002. In particular:

(i) unless the Council should decide otherwise during a review provided for in 1993, Spanish vessels will be allowed to fish only in waters to which they currently have access and will in addition be excluded from the Irish box until the end of 1995;

(ii) only 150 standard vessels (ie vessels of 700 bhp) will be allowed to fish simultaneously at any one time, this figure being divided between the ICES Areas concerned in the same proportions as the licenses at present granted under the EC-Spain Fisheries Agreement;

(iii) Spain will receive 30 per cent. of the Total allowable catches (TACs) for hake in waters which she has traditionally fished which is the same as her average share for the years 1979-84, in addition to which she will be permitted to take up to 4,500 tonnes of hake outside the TACs for the first 3 years only;

(iv) with the exception of megrim in area VII, Spanish shares of monkfish and megrim in areas of direct concern to UK fishermen will be those she currently receives under the EC-Spain fisheries agreement;

(v) Spain will also receive small share of nephrops and pollack, which she currently fishes under the by-catch provisions of the EC-Spain agreement, and for which TACs and quotas will be set for the first time for the Community as a whole in 1986; and she will receive flat rate entitlements for blue whiting and horse mackerel.

With the strictly limited exceptions I have instanced, which are of relatively minor significance to our fishermen, the agreement thus confines Spain to those waters and species for which she currently has access, in addition to which the number of Spanish vessels fishing in our waters will continue to be strictly controlled. As such, it preserves intact the effective fishing opportunities of United Kingdom fishermen and averts any question of a renegotiation of the CFP. These are factors which I know will be very welcome to our fishermen, including those in the south west.

Mr. Harris asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures he is taking to increase fishery protection off the south-west of England in the light of the new agreement between Spain and the European Community on fishing rights.

Mr. MacGregor: The nature of the agreement reached between Spain and the European Community on Spanish fishing in the waters of the existing member states after accession does not require any immediate increase in the resources devoted to fisheries protection, which are deployed flexibly in response to enforcement needs.

We have however impressed upon the Commission the need to ensure that the strength of the Community inspectorate is adequate to meet the increased demands that will be placed upon it after Spain and Portugal have joined the Community.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what information was supplied to the Council of Ministers concerning the admission of Spain and Portugal to the European Economic Community on the differences between the producer price levels and guarantees available in Spain and Portugal by comparison with those which will be available to them after entering the European Economic Community; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if the admission of Spain and Portugal to the European Economic Community will lead to an increase

or decrease in the production by these nations of foodstuffs covered by common agricultural policy intervention and guarantees; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: During the accession negotiations the Commission circulated information on price levels in Spain and Portugal which showed considerable variation from those in the Community. Trading arrangements also differed. Overall while prices in Portugal tended to be higher than those in the Community prices in Spain tended to be lower.

Changes in volumes of production following accession will depend on many factors including relative price levels. Existing state trading arrangements will have to be dismantled and the Spanish and Portuguese markets gradually opened to trade from the rest of the Community. Any overall assessment of whether there will be an increase or decrease in foodstuffs covered by the common agricultural policy in the acceding countries would be subject to a wide margin of error.

Potatoes

Sir Peter Mills asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has determined the market prices for potatoes to apply in Great Britain and Northern Ireland for the 1985-86 crop year beginning on 1 July 1985.

Mr. MacGregor: Following consultations with the farmers' unions I have decided to authorise the Potato Marketing Board, under the new market support arrangements to apply in 1985-86, to enter into contracts with producers to purchase up to 420 thousand tonnes of potatoes over the months November 1985 to May 1986 at a scale of prices not to exceed an average of £53 per tonne. This represents an increase of £2 per tonne over the average contract price in 1984-85. I have also agreed that the board can additionally intervene directly in the market throughout the season where this will ensure support more cheaply than purchases under contract, provided that the total intervention does not exceed 500 thousand tonnes. The target area for potato planting in Great Britain, another important factor in market stability, was of course fixed last July at 161 thousand hectares.

The maximum target price for Northern Ireland, under the arrangements agreed with the Ulster Farmers Union last autumn, will also be increased by £2 to £46 per tonne. The target area for Northern Ireland plantings is 13,000 hectares and the ceiling for any support operations is 60,000 tonnes.

This price determination must not be taken to indicate that producers can look forward to regular increases in support prices. Support prices must be set in relation to market conditions and with regard to the cost of market support operations to the Government and the Potato Marketing Board.

This decision marks the completion of the package of changes to the system of potato market support which were recently approved by Parliament. The objectives are to ensure an element of stability for the potato market in order to retain producer confidence in the crop and to give consumers some assurance of supply at reasonable prices, while transferring to producers a greater share of responsibility for the cost of market support.

ENVIRONMENT

Olympic Games

Mr. Arnold asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether it is his policy to encourage private enterprise to fund a bid from the British Olympic Committee to hold the 1992 Olympic Games in Manchester.

Mr. Macfarlane: Bids for staging the Olympic Games are the responsibility of the British Olympic Association and any interested city. It is for them to consider how a viable bid could be funded although I would not expect the public sector to bear the cost.

Football Hooliganism

Mr. Pendry asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met the officials of the Football Association and Football League on the question of football hooliganism; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Patchett asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a progress report with regard to steps being taken by his Department to reduce violence at football and other sporting events.

Mr. Macfarlane [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 April 1985]: I met representatives of the Football Association on 19 September 1984 and of the Football League on 25 September to discuss my Department's consultation document "Football Spectator Violence." Since then the Football Association has been represented at my meetings with 16 other interested bodies on that report.

I was present on 1 April when my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, together with my right hon. Friends the Home Secretary and Secretary of State for the Environment and other Ministerial colleagues, met representatives of the Football Association and Football League to discuss soccer spectator violence.

It is clear from that meeting that the football authorities share the Government's commitment vigorously to combat violence at football matches. They agreed to:

- re-examine urgently the FA rules governing discipline and the responsibilities of clubs, with a view to changing and strengthening them;
- accelerate the introduction of CCTV especially at grounds where problem matches may be played;
- ensure that perimeter fencing is in place and effective in those grounds;
- investigate a practical scheme of membership cards for Football League, FA and European/international matches, in discussion with UEFA as necessary, reporting back within six weeks;
- introduce more restrictions on the issue of tickets for problem matches (which should be ticket only);
- encourage more and better family enclosures at League grounds;
- deal severely with any bad example set to supporters by players' behaviour on the pitch;
- in advance of the legislation we propose, to take action under existing powers to deal with the problem of alcohol at matches.

The Government hope that significant progress can be made before the start of the season.

The Government will support the football authorities. We are prepared to take action in the following ways:

- legislation will be introduced in England and Wales to control the sale of alcohol at grounds, and on transport to grounds along lines that have been successful in Scotland. The powers would be used selectively;

under the Safety of Sports Grounds Act, designation will be extended to clubs in divisions 3 and 4 of the Football League, initially to grounds with a record of violence, and the guidelines in the green code will be reviewed;
the White Paper is to be published shortly on our conclusions following our public order review and our proposals for legislation in the autumn. Some of the new provisions will assist in preventing and controlling football hooliganism;
my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary will be discussing with the police what improvements can be made to their effectiveness in dealing with football violence, particularly in obtaining evidence to bring more serious charges, where appropriate;
my right hon. and learned Friend is encouraging magistrates to make full use of their powers, including detention and attendance centre sentences and bail conditions forbidding attendance at matches; and is drawing attention to the Court of Appeal guidelines on sentencing violent offenders;
for matches abroad, we will consult other Governments about publicising better and perhaps strengthening last years Council of Europe Recommendation on Football violence. We will review how the Diplomatic Service can help in identifying troublemakers. We are considering arrangements for people convicted for offences overseas to serve their sentences in this country. We will seek to discourage travel agents setting up special schemes for problem matches.

I believe this represents a substantial package of new measures from the Government to support the new tough line the Football Association and the Football League have agreed to take.

Overseas Ministerial Visits

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list, pursuant to the reply of 28 March, the individual countries visited by Ministers in his Department in the years 1983-84 and 1984-85 to date, and the costs thereof.

Sir George Young: The table shows the countries visited by DOE Ministers in 1983-84 and 1984-85 and the costs thereof.

DOE Ministerial Visits Overseas

Countries Visited	*Cost* £
1983-84	
France and Holland	845
France and Luxembourg	1,072
Germany	981
Spain	798
Belgium (three visits)	1,365
Greece	1,283
Luxembourg	521
Cyprus	630
Yugoslavia	1,939
13 Countries Visited	9,434
1984-85	
Germany (three visits)	1,824
Luxembourg and Germany	604
Italy (two visits)	2,349
France (two visits)	400
Norway	777
Belgium	331
Bahrain and Gulf States	3,069
Malta	1,087
USA	5,009
Malaysia, Hong Kong and USA	8,991
17 Countries visited	24,441

Notes:
1. The costs cover both Ministers' costs and those of private secretaries accompanying them.
2. They include all travel expenses and where relevant hotel subsistence and official entertainment.

Sports Competitors (Drug Abuse)

Mr. Evennett asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has held any discussions with representatives of sporting organisations concerning drug abuse by sports competitors; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Macfarlane: Yes, but action lies primarily with the Sports Council on the Government's behalf. The council has given and continues to give a positive and firm lead in combating drug abuse in sport. The Sports Council's drug abuse advisory committee is designated the United Kingdom anti-doping committee and brings together a unique blend of sporting and medical expertise in drugs and sport. In March 1984 the council, with my full support, adopted a resolution obliging all sports to introduce random drug checks, and at a recent symposium on drug abuse for governing bodies of sport the Council announced that it was stepping up its campaign to stamp out this pernicious practice.

I supported the adoption of a European anti-doping charter for sport at a meeting of European Sports Ministers in May 1984. Other countries and international sports organisations must follow the examples set by the Sports Council and the Council of Europe if sport is to rid itself of drug abuse. I also look to sports organisations in this country to comply fully with the Sports Council's resolution and to make sport in the United Kingdom an example to the rest of the world.

Private Sector Rented Accommodation

Mr. Evennett asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he intends to introduce any measures aimed at increasing the amount of private sector accommodation available for rental; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer which my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Construction gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Chope) on 13 March at column *144*.

Litter

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what grants he has given to those organisations concerned to prevent the discarding of litter in public places.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Keep Britain Tidy group receives a grant (approximately £½ million annually) from my Department under section 3 of the Litter Act 1983 in support of its wide range of litter abatement activities.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will initiate a national anti-litter campaign.

Mr. Waldegrave: There are no plans to initiate a specific new national anti-litter campaign. The Government believe that the long term solution to the problem of litter must lie in educating the public.

To this end, we give financial support to the Keep Britain Tidy group which campaigns continuously against littering in collaboration with local authorities, voluntary groups, industry and commerce.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the annual cost of collecting litter.

Mr. Waldegrave: I cannot estimate the annual cost of collecting litter.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent steps he has taken to abate litter.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Government believe that the long-term solution to the problem of litter must be in educating the public not to drop litter. To this end we give financial support to Keep Britain Tidy group, which campaigns continuously against litter in collaboration with local authorities, voluntary groups, industry and commerce.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will initiate a public campaign to discourage the dropping of litter on motorways.

Mr. Waldegrave: There are no plans to instigate a specific campaign to discourage the dropping of litter on motorways. The Government believe that the long term solution to this aspect of the problem of litter lies in education of the public.

To this end we give financial support to the Keep Britain Tidy group which campaigns continuously against littering in collaboration with local authorities, voluntary groups and industry.

Local Government Reform

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what consultations his Department has had with the Epping Forest district council and neighbouring local authoriries about the future management of Hainault forest, at present the responsibility of the Greater London council.

Mr. Macfarlane: None, but on 29 March my Department issued a memorandum on the transfer of property, rights and liabilities' to bodies affected by transfers. This states that, in the case of cross-boundary properities such as the Hainault forest, successor bodies will be invited to agree a solution for inclusion in subsequent transfer orders.

Royal Parks Constabulary

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many houses are available to the royal parks constabulary;

(2) what increase there has been in the last decade in the use of motor vehicles by police and other services in the royal parks; and if he will require it to be kept to a minimum for the avoidance of pollution.

Mr. Macfarlane: I will answer these questions shortly.

Commercial Properties and Hospitals (Waste)

Mr. Silvester asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to bring into operation section 1 of the Control of Pollution Act 1974 relating to the removal of waste from commercial properties and hospitals.

Mr. Waldegrave: It would not be appropriate to appoint a day for the coming into operation of section 1 of the Control of Pollution Act 1974 until the bulk of waste disposal plans required under section 2 of that Act have been completed. To date, 16 English waste disposal plans have been completed, and a further 12 are understood to be at an advanced stage of preparation. My right hon. Friend continues to urge the remaining authorities to make progress as soon as possible.

London Planning Commission (Staff)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many staff will be employed by the proposed London planning commission; whether it will meet in public; and whether it will publish its proceedings.

Mr. Macfarlane: Decisions on the detailed arrangements for the London planning commission remain to be taken.

Civil Servants (Extra-departmental Work)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements are made to log the work of civil servants undertaken outside his Department.

Sir George Young: I will answer this question shortly.

Greater London Council

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment why requests for consents from the Greater London council for the provision of vehicle hire services and printing were refused; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: I will answer this question shortly.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will define an inequitable shift of burden between London ratepayers and those in the rest of the United Kingdom as referred to in paragraph 5 of his consultation paper dealing with the effects of the disappearance of the Greater London council precept.

Mr. Waldegrave: Our intention is to ensure as far as possible that the financial effects of abolition itself are fair as between ratepayers in different areas. The detailed financial arrangements to achieve this are being discussed with representatives of local government in the London working party of the grants working group.

London Docklands Development Corporation

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will list the sites referred to in paragraph 5.2.1 of the London Docklands development corporation 5-year operational plan, published in January, that the corporation has identified for possible acquisition, and identify the sites that are regarded by the corporation as high priority sites;

(2) what is *(a)* the cost of acquisition, *(b)* infrastructure and reclamation costs and *(c)* the disposal price of each site, listed separately, so far disposed of by the London Docklands development corporation;

(3) if he will list the consultants and consultancy fees used by the London Docklands development corporation in the 1984-85 financial year.

Sir George Young: I will answer these questions shortly.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, in the event of abolition of the Greater London council, London boroughs will be able to give assistance to industry outside their boundaries.

Sir George Young: Yes. Using existing powers, the London boroughs acting either alone or in voluntary co-operation with other boroughs will be able to assist industry outside their own boundaries provided they are satisfied such expenditure will be of benefit to their area or its inhabitants.

Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act (Guidelines)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidelines he has issued to civil servants in his Department in respect of the powers granted to him under sections 7, 8 and 9 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act.

Mr. Waldegrave: Other than those cases covered by the general consents the Department has issued, each application is treated on its merits.

Superstores (Planning Permission)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the locations in London of multiple-impact superstores with outstanding planning permission, and give details of those such stores where an application for planning permission has been made but is still under consideration.

Mr. Macfarlane: This information is not available in my Department.

GLC (Historic Buildings)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment which of the listed historic buildings owned by the Greater London council will be transferred to the London boroughs in the event of the abolition of the Greater London council.

Mr. Macfarlane: The destination of each GLC property will depend on the purposes for which it is held, irrespective of whether it is listed or not; listed buildings could, therefore, go to any of the successor bodies, including London borough councils. I refer the hon. Member to the document "Abolition: Property Memorandum" issued by my Department on 28 March, a copy of which has been placed in the Library of the House.

Rate Equalisation Scheme (London)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the contributions to the extended London rate equalisation scheme will be reduced in real terms in the years following the financial year beginning 1 April 1986.

Mr. Waldegrave: No decisions have yet been taken about the level of contributions to the proposed extended London rate equalisation scheme either for 1986-87 or for subsequent years. These matters are under discussion with representatives of local government in the London working party of the grants working group.

Environmental Organisations (Departmental Patronage)

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list for each of the Ministers in his Department the environmental organisations of which they are the patrons.

Mr. Patrick Jenkin: My hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave) is patron of the Avon Wildlife Trust threatened habitat appeal fund.

Local Government Reform

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the number of civil servants working in his Department on *(a)* duties associated with the abolition of the Greater London council and metropolitan county councils and *(b)* rates limitation, listing in each case the numbers and ranks of officers and the estimated cost per year of each group.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: On 1 March, the number of staff working on abolition of the GLC/MCCs in my Department, including those administering the controls in sections 7 to 9 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act 1984 and the new control proposed in the Local Government Bill, was as follows:

Grade	*Estimated full-time equivalents*
Grade 2	0·2
Grade 3	1·9
Grade 5	9·0
Grade 6	2·6
Principal	15·2
Principal engineer	0·8
Principal information officer	0·1
Principal planning officer	0·7
Principal research officer	0·7
Economic adviser	1·2
PPTO estates officer	0·1
Senior executive officer	4·1
Senior planning officer	0·4
Senior research officer	1·0
Senior scientific officer	0·1
Higher executive officer/HEOD	16·0
Research officer	0·1
Executive officer/administration trainee	10·0
Clerical officer/assistant	11·4
Senior personal secretary	1·7
Personal secretary	6·3
Typist	2·0
Total	*85·0

* Does not sum owing to rounding.

The cost, including accommodation, of employing these staff for a whole year would be approximtely £1·9 million (1984 prices).

In relation to rate limitation, the work load for my Department has recently passed through a peak period. Within the existing commitment of staff resources, as my hon. Friend described in the answer to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West on 28 November 1984, the maximum number of staff engaged during this period on rate limitation work was:

Grade	Estimated full-time equivalents
Grade 3	0·25
Grade 5	2·2
Grade 6	0·4
Principal	3·7
Higher executive officer/HEOD	1·8
Executive officer/administration trainee	2·8
Clerical officer/assistant	3·0
Senior personal secretary	0·25
Personal secretary	1·5
Typist	0·5
Total	16·4

The cost of this level of input, including accommodation, on an annual basis would be approximately £0·36 million (1984 prices).

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he has any arrangements in mind to deal with single holdings of land which straddle boundaries between two or more transferee authorities in the event of the abolition of the Greater London council and the metropolitan county councils;

(2) what arrangements will be made to ensure that the property service for the London probation service and the London ambulance service is maintained in the event of Greater London council abolition.

Mr. Macfarlane: The Government's proposals for the transfer of property rights and liabilities of the Greater London council and metropolitan county councils are contained in a memorandum that was issued on 29 March, as announced in the reply given by my right hon. Friend to my hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire) on that day at column *397*.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how he envisages, in the event of the abolition of the Greater London council, that open space replacement lands or other works of environmental reinstatement or consequential local replanning following a new highway scheme will be planned and implemented; and how he will ensure that consistent standards of environmental reinstatement and remedial measures are adopted from borough to borough.

Mr. Macfarlane: In so far as these matters are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend, I envisage no change in current policy and practice.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements he will make to ensure that the proposed London Fire Brigade Board has appropriate land management facilities available in the event of the Greater London council being abolished.

Mr. Waldegrave: It will be for the London fire and civil defence authority to consider appropriate arrangements for land management. The need for architectural and valuation expertise to be available to it is referred to in the advisory memorandum on the establishment of police joint authorities and fire service joint authorities under the Local Government Bill issued by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary on 2 April.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Harlow on 16 November 1984, *Official Report*, column 378, about data collection, which information it is envisaged boroughs will *(a)* still want to collect and *(b)* will not wish to collect; and which information he will request of the London boroughs, in the event of the Greater London council being abolished.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: It will be for the borough councils to decide what use to make of the powers in clause 86 of the Local Government Bill. My right hon. Friend will take account of their decisions in considering the use of the powers conferred on him by the clause, which reproduce those in section 71 of the London Government Act 1963.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements, in the event of the abolition of the Greater London council to ensure [illegible] participation and involvement in pension matters through the residuary body of receiving authorities.

(2) if he will make arrangements in the event of the abolition of the Greater London council to ensure that any new residuary body continues the practice of full public disclosure of its superannuation fund investment policy and performance;

(3) in the event of the abolition of the Greater London council what arrangements will be made for the investment of the charitable, voluntary, trust and special funds presently invested by the investment management staff of the Greater London council superannuation fund.

Mr. Waldegrave: Regulations will be made to require the London residuary body to manage and administer the superannuation fund in accordance with the Local Government Superannuation Regulations 1974 (as amended). It will be for the residuary body to decide how this can best be achieved and to what extent it should continue the practices presently adopted by the GLC.

Fairhazel Co-operative, London

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has now received all the information he requires in respect of the application for the latest phase of funding for the Fairhazel Co-operative, NW3; when he expects to announce his decision; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: The Department received esential information about the revised costs of the scheme from the London borough of Camden on 1 April. A decision will be announced very shortly.

Enterprise Zones

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many jobs were created at each of the enterprise zones in the United Kingdom during 1984.

Sir George Young: I refer to my answer to the right hon. Member's question on 13 February this year. Figures on employment in enterprise zones are not yet available.

Birds of Prey

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many registered keepers of birds of prey bred or attempted to breed the following species in 1983 *(a)* the golden eagle, *(b)* the goshawk, *(c)* the merlin, *(d)* the peregrine and *(e)* other raptores.

Mr. Waldegrave: 1983 was the first year of the bird registration scheme and the initial records were not in a form which enables this information to be obtained. The number of birds registered as bred in captivity in 1983 is:

	Number
Golden Eagle	None
Goshawk	46
Merlin	26
Peregrine	71
Other raptors	903
Total	1,046

Nuclear Fuel

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he proposes to investigate a study into the comparative merits of dry storage of spent nuclear fuel as against reprocessing.

Mr. Waldegrave: The environmental implications of the long-term management of spent nuclear fuel are currently being considered by the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee. It is taking account of studies carried out by the industry, and the position in other countries, where that is relevant.

Radioactive Waste Disposal

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to publish the special development orders for the Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executive investigation of potential land sites for the disposal of radioactive waste.

Mr. Waldegrave: A special development order will be laid before the House once Nirex have announced alternative possible sites for a particular type of land disposal facility. For sites for consideration alongside Elstow for shorter-lived wastes, I expect an announcement to be made within the next few months.

North Pennine Area of Outstanding Beauty

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he intends to hold a public inquiry into the proposed designation of the North Pennine area of outstanding natural beauty; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: I will answer this question shortly.

Conservation (Special Grants)

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will outline the source or sources of funds made available to voluntary organisations in the conservation field in relation to his Department's special grants programme; and if he will list the extent of each of the contributions.

Mr. Waldegrave [*pursuant to his answer*, 1 April 1985, c. *432-3*]: Funds for the special grants programme are drawn from DOE Vote VIII 2 subhead C9. The following grants were awarded under the programme in 1984-85 to voluntary organisations concerned with conservation:

	£
British Trust for Conservation Volunteers	100,000
Byways and Bridleways Trust	4,000
Cathedral Camps	10,000
Conservation Foundation	25,000
Conservation Trust	8,250
Council for Environmental Conservation	32,600
Council for National Parks	7,620
Ecological Parks Trust	14,200
International Waterfowl Research Bureau	2,000
Kennet and Avon Canal Trust	5,000
Open Spaces Society	4,500
Pennine Heritage	23,000
Royal Society for Nature Conservation	41,135
Rural Preservation Association	11,536
Tree Council	13,000
Wildfowl Trust	2,600
Wildlife Link	8,000
World Wildlife Fund UK: Youth Education Work	18,000

SOCIAL SERVICES

Benefits

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he proposes any changes affecting the benefit entitlements of 16 and 17-year-olds.

Mr. Fowler: I have no proposals at present for changes in benefit entitlement as part of the current plans for expanding the youth training scheme. It is, however, the aim of this expansion to provide a guaranteed opportunity of appropriate training for young people of this age who are not in work or in full-time education. The benefit position will be given further consideration in the light of progress towards this objective, taking into account also any wider changes in the benefit system which may follow from the present social security review. The Government's objective is to ensure that unemployment need not be an option for this age group.

Health Authorities (Declarations of Interest)

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if declarations of interest by members and staff of health authorities are available to the public.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Chairmen and members of health authorities are required to declare any pecuniary interest they may have in all matters considered at authority meetings. These meetings are normally open to the public. Health authority staff are required to disclose any pecuniary interest they may have in contracts considered by the authority.

National Health Service (Internal Audit)

Mr. Galley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how far tenders and contracts for laundry, catering and other ancillary services in the National Health Service are subject to internal audit.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: All health authorities must have arrangements for internal audit. The extent to which these arrangements are applied to tenders and contracts for these services is decided locally.

Departmental Legislation

Mr. Galley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many Acts of Parliament have been

promoted and how many Statutory Instruments made by his Department, or predecessor Departments covering his areas of responsibility, in each of the last 20 years.

Mr. Fowler: The numbers are as follows:

Year*	Acts†	SIs‡
1965	6	51
1966	3	92
1967	6	85
1968	4	82
1969	4	88
1970	5	71
1971	3	121
1972	6	93
1973	5	155
1974	3	152
1975	9	134
1976	5	97
1977	3	140
1978	2	108
1979	6	101
1980	7	132
1981	3	100
1982	4	145
1983	5	125
1984	4	132

* The particulars relate to the Ministry of Health (1965 to 1968), the Ministry of Pensions and National Insurance (1965 to 1966) the Ministry of Social Security (1966 to 1968) and the Department of Health and Social Security (1968 to 1984).

† Where particular responsibilities were transferred from other Departments the numbers above do not include Acts passed or instruments made before the date of transfer.

‡ A small number of Acts resulting from Private Members' Bills, on matters for which the Ministries or Department mentioned in Note 1 were responsible, is included in the particulars in column (2).

General Practitioners

Mr. Hickmet asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his reply of 25 March, *Official Report*, column *97*, from what other sources of public monies for which he has responsibility general practitioners received sums; if he has made any estimate or is proposing to make any estimate of the value of those sums to the average full-time general practitioner; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Payments are made to general practitioners for the provision of medical advice and for expenses incurred. Our Department makes payments mainly in connection with social security benefits. Health authorities make payments for work done for the health and community health services. Health authorities or local authorities as appropriate make payments for assistance given to social services departments. Statistics do not normally identify such payments made to general practitioners and details of the payments are not available centrally. We have not made any estimate of the value of such payments to the average full-time general medical practitioner.

Mr. Hickmet asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many general practitioners operate within the National Health Service in England; how many operate on a part-time basis and how many on a full time basis; what was the average sum received by unrestricted general medical practitioners who operated full time for the provision of family practitioner services in 1983 and 1984, respectively; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The number of unrestricted principals in England at 1 October 1984 was 23,642 (provisional). We do not make a breakdown between full time and part-time principals. So far as remuneration is concerned I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to him on 25 March at column *97*. The average sums referred to in that Answer cover all unrestricted principals whether part-time or full time.

Pharmaceutical Price Regulation Scheme

Mr. Hickmet asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to the reply of 25 March, *Official Report*, column *96*, what steps his Department takes to ascertain whether companies within the pharmaceutical price regulation scheme have exceededed the sales promotion limit; how many companies exceed it within the last year for which figures are available; and if he will identify them giving the amount of excess in each case.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Sales promotion expenditure is included in the financial returns sent to us and reported on by company auditors. In 1982, 51 larger companies exceeded their sales promotion limit. We treated this excess as profit forgone. We have now introduced a new provision whereby from 1 April 1984 companies have also to pay to us a sum equivalent to any excess. For reasons of commercial confidence we do not identify individual company results.

Mr. Hickmet asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he takes to control distribution and administration costs of companies within the pharmaceutical price regulation scheme; what they comprise; whether he has any plans to investigate the same; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: All costs are included in the financial returns sent to us and reported on by company auditors. These are accepted only if we believe them to be reasonable and we can and do disallow any thought to be excessive. Distribution includes expenses of warehousing, storage and transport. Administration covers items such as Directors' and Headquarters salaries, rent, rates and other office expenses.

Drugs (Costs)

Mr. Hickmet asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) pursuant to the reply of 14 March, *Official Report*, column *243*, what was the total value of the discount on drugs costs from wholesalers and manufacturers given to dispensing doctors in the last year for which figures are available; and what savings would be made to the National Health Service as a whole if a similar level of discount were given by drugs wholesalers and manufacturers to all purchasers of drugs by or on behalf of the National Health Service;

(2) pursuant to the reply of 25th February, *Official Report*, column *71*, whether discounts will continue to be available on drugs dispensed by dispensing doctors after 1 April; whether similar discounts are offered by drugs wholesalers and manufacturers to all or any other purchases of drugs by the National Health Service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

National Insurance

Mr Latham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will break down the projected £800 million of additional revenue in a full year from the Budget proposal to abolish the upper limit on employer's national insurance contributions as between additional revenue from *(a)* earnings between the current cut-off point or its monthly or weekly equivalent and £15,000, *(b)* earnings from £15,000 to £20,000, *(c)* earnings from £20,000 to £30,000, and *(d)* earnings above £30,000.

Mr. Whitney: The Government Actuary's estimates are:

Annual earnings £	*Additional revenue from secondary contributions in a full year* £ *million*
Up to 15,000	25
15,000 to 20,000	300
20,000 to 30,000	325
Over 30,000	150

Health Education Council

Mr. Shersby asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what discussions he has had with the Health Education Council about its first-time endorsement in *The Grocer* of 2 February of branded food products; and if it is now the policy of Her Majesty's Government that the council should provide such endorsements.

Mr. John Patten: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what were the waiting list figures for National Health Service patients in England and Wales as at 1 June 1979 and 31st December 1984 or the nearest convenient dates; what were the staffing figures at the same dates; and what was the expenditure on the National Health Service at the same dates in both cash and real terms.

Mr. John Patten: The available information for England is given in the table. Expenditure figures for the financial year 1983-84 are the latest available. Figures for Wales are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

NHS England

	1979	*1984*
Hospital in-patient waiting list	740,300 (on 30 June)	682,000 (provisional on 30 September)
Directly employed staff* (whole time equivalent on 30 September)	773,300	817,600 (provisional)
	1979-80 £ *million*	*1983-84* £ *million*
Expenditure by health authorities in the financial year		
Cash	7,357	12,148·8
Cost at 1983-84 prices measured by the GDP deflator	10,673·5	12,148·8

* Manpower figures include agency nursing and midwifery staff, and locum medical and dental staff.

Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton District Health Authority

Mr. Jessel asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will set out in the *Official Report* the population of the Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton district health authority and the absolute and percentage figures for the numbers and proportions within the constituencies of Twickenham, Richmond and Barnes, and Putney.

Mr. John Patten: The latest information is in the table.

District Health Authority/ Parliamentary Constituency	*Estimated Resident Population At 30 June 1983**	
	Number	*Percentage*
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton DHA	228,700	100
Twickenham	84,300	37
Richmond and Barnes	76,000	33
Putney	68,400	30

* Estimates of population for parliamentary constituencies are not compiled on an annual basis. The above figures for the parliamentary constituencies within Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton district health authority use proportions derived from the 1981 census data. Putney has one ward which lies outside the DHA and the population of this ward is excluded; the other two constituencies lie wholly within the DHA.

Privatisation

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many letters Ministers in his Department have sent to regional, area and district health authorities chairmen since 1981 on privatisation;

(2) how many speeches Ministers in his Department have made since 1981 *(a)* in the House and *(b)* outside the House on the subject of his Department's press notices on privatisation.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We do not keep these figures. Ministers have taken a close interest in ensuring the success of our competitive tendering policy. This policy is already producing large savings which are being used to improve services to patients.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many circulars on privatisation he has issued to health authorities since 1981.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I assume the hon. Member is referring to competitive tendering and only one circular, HC(83)18, has been issued on this subject.

Cervical Cytology

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many letters Ministers in his Department have sent to regional, area and district health authority chairmen since 1981 on cervical cytology;

(2) how many speeches Ministers in his Department have made since 1981 *(a)* in the House and *(b)* outside the House on the subject of his Department's press notices on cervical cytology.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We do not keep those figures but Ministers have made repeated attempts to bring home to health authorities the importance of cervical cytology.

Our policy on this subject has been clearly set out in circulars HC(81)14 and HC(84)17 and health authorities know that they have been expected to implement it. Speeches by Ministers are not the only or even the best method of monitoring the performance of authorities.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many circulars on cervical cytology he has issued to health authorities since 1981.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Two. HC(81)14 and HC(84)17.

Committee on Gynaecological Cytology

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will *(a)* list the members of the committee on gynaecological cytology since 1 January 1981, *(b)* give the dates when it has met since 1 January 1981, and *(c)* place in the Library any minutes of its meetings, official recommendations or other communications with Ministers or officials of his Department since 1 January 1981.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

In Vitro Fertilisation

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services which National Health Service clinics conducting in vitro fertilisation were consulted by his Department before officials advised that a four-month limit would cover the period of treatment by in vitro fertilisation.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Our Department has never given advice in these terms. I have written to the hon. Member explaining the misunderstanding.

Centre for Applied Microbiology and Research

Mr. Key asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement about arrangements for the marketing of products and processes at the Public Health Laboratory Service Board's centre for applied microbiology and research.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: A substantial part of the work of the centre for applied microbiology and research (CAMR) has generated products and processes that are commercially exploitable. I am pleased to announce that, in line with its long-standing policy of income generation at CAMR, and after careful consideration with our Department, the Public Health Laboratory Service Board (which is responsible for CAMR) has entered into an agreement with Porton International Limited to handle the marketing and distribution of CAMR products and processes.

A copy of the press release issued jointly by the Public Health Laboratory Service Board and Porton International Limited has been placed in the Library.

Nursing Homes

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what were the total numbers of *(a)* private hospitals, homes and clinics registered on 31 December 1983 under section 3 of the Nursing Homes Act 1975 and *(b)* beds they contain; and if he will give the figures for each region;

(2) what were the total numbers of *(a)* private hospitals, homes and clinics registered on 31 December 1983 under section 3 of the Nursing Homes Act 1975 which contain operating theatres and *(b)* beds they contain; and if he will give the figures for each region.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 January 1985, c. *327*]: The available information is given in the table.

Private hospitals, nursing homes and clinics registered under section 3 of the Nursing Homes Act 1975, as amended by the Health Service Act 1980
Position at 31 December 1983

Region	All institutions		Those with operating theatres	
	Number of institutions	Number of beds	Number of institutions	Number of beds
Northern	22	794	2	74
Yorkshire	80	2,508	15	445
Trent	82	2,377	14	518
East Anglian	40	956	9	308
North West Thames	58	2,504	17	1,179
North East Thames	76	2,988	31	1,580
South East Thames	212	5,601	17	796
South West Thames	161	4,454	13	687
Wessex	142	3,146	12	376
Oxford	57	2,048	12	452
South Western	144	3,478	10	386
West Midlands	90	2,531	17	578
Mersey	83	2,135	8	316
North Western	69	2,534	12	543
ENGLAND	1,316	38,054	189	8,238

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the total number of private hospitals, homes and clinics registered on 31 December 1983 under section 3 of the Nursing Homes Act 1975 which contain both operating theatres and *(a)* pathology departments and *(b)* radiology departments; and if he will give the figures for each region.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 January 1985, c. *327*]: The available information is given in the table.

Private hospitals, nursing homes and clinics registered under the Nursing Homes Act 1975, as amended by the Health Service Act 1980 Position at 31 December 1983

Region	Number of institutions with operating theatres and pathology departments	Number of institutions with operating theatres and radiology departments
Northern	2	2
Yorkshire	5	9
Trent	6	7
East Anglian	2	5
North West Thames	8	11
North East Thames	6	16
South East Thames	6	11
South West Thames	6	11
Wessex	4	7
Oxford	3	11
South Western	Nil	7
West Midlands	5	9
Mersey	3	5
North Western	4	7
ENGLAND	60	118

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the total numbers of *(a)* nursing staff and *(b)* medical practitioners employed (i) by all the private hospitals, homes and clinics registered on 31 December 1983 under section 3 of the Nursing Homes Act 1975 and (ii) by those private hospitals, homes and clinics which contain operating theatres; and if he will give the figures for each region.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 January 1985, c. *327*]: The available information is given in the table.

Private hospitals, nursing homes and clinics registered under the Nursing Homes Act 1975, as amended by the Health Service Act 1980 Position at 31 December 1983

Region	Number of nursing staff*		Number of institutions with resident medical practitioners	
	All institutions	Those with operating theatres	All institutions	Those with operating theatres
Northern	395·6	86·5	0	0
Yorkshire	1,524·4	435·9	4	2
Trent	1,510·9	393·7	0	0
East Anglian	692·6	260·6	2	2
North West Thames	1,806·6	1,053·2	12	11
North East Thames	2,503·4	1,644·8	16	13
South East Thames	3,588·1	762·2	8	0
South West Thames	2,854·0	610·3	6	3
Wessex	2,188·4	350·6	5	3
Oxford	1,445·4	482·8	5	3
South Western	2,321·8	408·1	8	4
West Midlands	1,840·9	545·2	2	2
Mersey	1,336·5	303·5	5	1
North Western	1,660·8	460·4	3	3
England	25,669·4	7,797·8	76	53

* Whole time equivalent.

EMPLOYMENT

Departmental Achievements

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list his Department's principal achievements since 1979.

Mr. Tom King: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Link Courses

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many and what percentage of women on link courses withdraw because of becoming pregnant; and what were the equivalent figures for each of the last five years for which records are available.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The information is not available.

Trade Unions (Political Funds)

Mr. Robert Atkins asked the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has as to the proportion of trade union political fund expenditure represented by affiliation fees to political parties.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Information about trade unions' expenditure from both general and political funds is contained in annual returns of accounts which all trade unions are required to submit to the Certification Officer. It is not possible in every case to distinguish between expenditure on affiliation fees and other grants and donations to political parties. An analysis of the latest accounts of the ten trade unions with the highest level of political expenditure, representing about three quarters of all political fund expenditure shows that in 1983 at least 78 per cent. of that expenditure was accounted for by affiliation fees and other grants and donations to a political party.

The figures for each of these trade unions were as follows:

Union	Amount of payments to a political party £	Proportion of total political fund expenditure per cent.
TGWU	1,449,000	91
GMBATU	1,164,000	81
NUPE	585,000	46
AUEW(E)	722,000	92
NUM	440,000	92
USDAW	223,000	50
NUR	272,000	90
COHSE	208,000	76
UCW	242,000	96
EETPU	205,000	99
Total	5,510,000	78

The purposes to which the remaining political fund expenditure is put are not always apparent from the accounts but it is possible that some of that expenditure also represents payments to or on behalf of a political party. In 1982 payments to a political party accounted for at least 69 per cent. of the political fund expenditure of the same ten trade unions. The difference is probably attributable to the fact that 1983 was a year in which a general election took place.

Mr. Robert Atkins asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many trade unions have balloted their members in the last 10 years on whether they should have a political fund.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: In the last 10 years seven trade unions have balloted their members under the provisions of the Trade Union Act 1913 on whether they should set up a political fund, with the following results:

Year of ballot and Union	*Votes for*	*Votes against*
1976 Society of Graphical and Allied Trades	25,837	24,665
1981 National Union of Hosiery and Knitwear Workers	13,414	17,054
1981 Association of Broadcasting and Allied Staffs	871	4,506
1982 Society of Union Employees	100	20
1983 Society of Telecom Executives	10,761	9,217
1983 Civil and Public Services Association	31,479	65,922
1984 Amalgamated Society of Textile Workers and Kindred Trades	1,011	673

None of the 53 trade unions with political funds has balloted during the last ten years on the continuance of its political fund.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Wainwright asked the Secretary of State for Employment for how many hours per month as a minimum a new employee has to be required to work in order to figure as one full digit in the official total of persons in employment.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department's inquiries into the number of employees in employment ask employers to state the number of persons employed by them on a particular date. No information is sought as to how long a person has been employed. Employers are asked to distinguish whether a person works full-time or part-time. Full-time employees are those who are normally expected to work more than 30 hours per week excluding main meal breaks and overtime. Part-time workers are included in the total on a one-to-one basis.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Employment by how much the number of employees rose over the last 12 months for which figures are available; and by how much the number of female part-time employees, male part-time employees, female full-time employees, and male full-time employees rose in the same period.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: In the 12 months to September 1984, the number of employees in employment in Great Britain rose by an estimated 102,000. The increases for full-time and part-time females were estimates at 18,000 and 170,000 respectively. Analyses of full-time and part-time males are not made, but it is estimated that the total number of male employees in employment fell by 87,000 over the same period.

Youth Training

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Employment how the gross cost of the expansion of the youth training scheme in 1986-87 and 1987-88 is calculated; and what estimates have been made of the number and average cost of the additional mode A, mode B1 and mode B2 places required.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The total cost of the new youth training scheme will depend on the outcome of the consultations which the Manpower Services Commission are carrying out. The Government are prepared to provide £125 million in 1986-87 and £300 million in 1987-88 in addition to spending on the existing scheme, subject to the satisfactory outcome of those consultations. We are looking to employers, who stand to gain a great deal from this development in our training arrangements, to pay their fair share as well. The number and average cost of additional places, and the funding and administrative arrangements will also depend on the outcome of those consultations.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Employment what is the estimated net cost of the expansion of the youth training scheme in 1986-87 and 1987-88; how the estimate is calculated; and what estimates have been made of the amount saved by the abolition of the young workers scheme, the number of young people who would have been covered by the scheme in each year and the average sum saved per person, and of the number of 16 and 17-year-olds in each year who will cease to claim supplementary benefit as a result of the expansion of the youth training scheme, the average sum saved per person, and the total sum saved on benefit in each year.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I will write to the hon. Member shortly.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give his best estimate of the proportion of the rise in youth unemployment since 1979 that can be attributed to the three factors cited in the White Paper "Employment: The Challenge for the Nation," Cmnd. 9474, namely the general shortage of jobs, the high relative pay of young people, and the disadvantages of those who missed the big expansion of youth training since 1983, paragraph 3.11.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Unit Labour Costs

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Employment whether the estimates of the rise in the unit labour costs of various countries given in figure 9 of the White Paper "Employment: The Challenge for the Nation," Cmnd. 9474, have been adjusted to allow the movements in each country's exchange rate; and whether he will publish an index for each of the countries cited showing the rise in unit labour costs in each year since 1974, or the nearest approximation available, taking 1974 as a base date and deriving the index in terms of United States dollars.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: As the note to figure 9 of the White Paper "Employment: The Challenge for the Nation" (Cmnd. 9474) makes clear, the data portrayed relate to unit labour costs in local currency terms.

The table gives figures adjusted for exchange rate changes. Although short run movements in exchange rates will affect competitiveness, movements in domestic labour costs are a crucial long run determinant. Over the period since 1974, unit labour costs adjusted for exchange rate changes have risen by more in the United Kingdom

(+33 per cent.) than in the United States (+26½ per cent.). They fell in the Federal Republic of Germany (−8½ per cent.) and Japan (−18½ per cent.).

Unit labour costs adjusted for exchange rate changes

	United Kingdom	*United States*	*Federal Republic of Germany*	*Japan*
1974	64·7	116·3	98·8	131·8
1975	69·1	104·0	90·7	124·6
1976	63·3	108·7	91·9	123·0
1977	62·4	106·1	96·8	128·6
1978	68·0	98·1	100·8	141·5
1979	81·1	98·0	101·9	118·7
1980	100·0	100·0	100·0	100·0
1981	100·4	112·7	91·0	111·0
1982	94·6	126·3	94·0	97·2
1983	86·2	131·1	93·5	105·1
1984 Q3	86·2	147·0	90·4	107·4

Note: 1980 = 100
Source: International Monetary Fund

Ballot Rigging

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will seek powers to prevent ballot rigging in trade union elections.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Part 1 of the Trade Union Act 1984, which comes into force on 1 October 1985, introduces for the first time extensive statutory safeguards for trade union elections. It would be premature to consider any further steps before these provisions have come into force.

The Act creates a presumption in favour of postal ballots. It lays down requirements concerning, among other things, secrecy, elgibility to stand and to vote, freedom from intimidation and electoral malpractice. It also lays down requirements concerning methods of election. For example, executive members must be directly elected and "block systems" of voting must not be used. Further, the Act gives ordinary union members a new statutory right to take any complaint to the independent certification officer or to the courts, who can order fresh elections or other corrective action as appropriate. It also requires unions to compile, by 1 October 1985, registers of their members' names and addresses and to keep these up-to-date.

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Employment if, in the light of recent allegations of ballot rigging in trade union elections, he will seek a further meeting with the Trades Union Congress to discuss further the arrangements for trade union elections.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: My right hon. Friend and I are always ready to meet representatives of the TUC to discuss with them how trade unions can best fulfil their statutory obligations in relation to the Trade Union Act 1984.

Coventry

Mr. Park asked the Secretary of State for Employment what is the latest number who are now unemployed in Coventry; and how many have been unemployed for 12 months or over.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The following information is in the Library. On 14 February 1985 the total number of unemployed claimants in the Coventry local authority district was 26,453, of whom 13,185 are estimated to have been unemployed for over 12 months.

Mr. Park asked the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he is taking to reduce the number of those unemployed for over 52 weeks in Coventry.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend's reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Hirst) on 2 April, at column *1050*, and to the general strategy set out in "Employment: the Challenge for the Nation" (Cmnd. 9474).

Mr. Park asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many people in Coventry between the ages of 40 and 50 years are presently unemployed but engaged in retraining programmes.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The precise information requested is not available. But at the end of February, around 130 unemployed people aged between 40 and 50 years were undertaking retraining on programmes run by the Manpower Services Commission in the Coventry area. In addition some long-term unemployed people in temporary jobs funded under the community programme will be receiving training.

Mr. Park asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many people in Coventry have their wages determined by wages councils.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: This information is not available.

Mr. Park asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to increase the allocation of community programme places in Coventry.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) on 25 March at column *38*.

Mr. Park asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many offences in Coventry under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act were identified in the latest available year; and how many prosecutions took place.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The information is not available in the form requested. In 1984 factory inspectors laid eight informations in Coventry under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and its associated legislation. These resulted in eight convictions.

Mr. Park asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he is satisfied that the training in new technologies available under the youth training scheme in Coventry is adequate to meet the need.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Yes. Nearly 900 of the places in the youth training scheme available to young people in the Coventry area involve significant elements of training in new technologies. In addition, all youth training scheme trainees receive an introduction to computer literacy and information technology during their time on the scheme.

Mr. Park asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many people in the Coventry travel-to-work area have received the enterprise allowance since its inception; how many are presently in receipt of the allowance; and how many continue trading after 18 months.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I regret the figures are not available in the form requested. However, in the Coventry and Warwickshire area by 8 March 1985, 1,818 people had joined the enterprise allowance scheme since its inception. On the same date 687 people were receiving the allowance in the Coventry and Warwickshire area.

Information on how businesses fare when payment of the allowance ceases is not yet available for the national scheme but experience in the pilot areas suggests that about 70 per cent. of all businesses supported are still trading up to 18 months after joining the scheme.

Mr. Park asked the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of the registered insured population, male and female, are in part-time employment in the Coventry travel-to-work area.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The information is not available in the precise form requested. Information about the numbers of employees, male and female, in full-time and part-time employment can be provided but only for those dates when censuses of employment are taken.

Censuses of employment have been taken triennially since 1978 and the latest results are for September 1981. At that time, there were 191,000 employees in employment in the Coventry travel-to-work area with 20 per cent. working part-time. There were 114,000 male workers and 77,000 female workers with 4·4 per cent. of the males and 42·3 per cent. of the females working part-time.

Mr. Park asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many places there are in sheltered employment in the Coventry travel-to-work area; and if there is a waiting list.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: In the Coventry travel-to-work area, defined as the area covered by Coventry and Nuneaton jobcentres and Hinkley and Bedworth employment offices, there is a total of 212 filled places supported under the sheltered employment programme. A further four places are expected to be filled shortly. There are 72 severely disabled people on waiting lists for places in the sheltered workshops in the area. The Manpower Services Commission will continue to look for opportunities to place them in suitable provision including places created under the sheltered placement scheme.

Mr. Park asked the Secretary of State for Employment what level of funding is devoted by the Manpower Services Commission to the Coventry travel-to-work area.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I regret that the information is not available in the precise form requested. However, it is estimated that about £29 million was spent by the Manpower Services Commission in 1984-85 in the Coventry and Warwickshire area, exclusive of administrative costs, and the operating costs of jobcentres.

Community Programme

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give in 1985 prices the operating cost per approved place allowed to the sponsoring agency on the community programme since its inception; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Since the programme's inception sponsors and agents have been reimbursed operating costs up to a maximum of £440 per year for each full or part-time approved place over 52 weeks, with the exception that managers and supervisors places do not attract operating costs.

The level of operating costs is kept under review and, to date, the level of costs actually claimed by sponsors and allowed for reimbursement has remained considerably below the maximum.

Retail Price Index

Mr. Wainwright asked the Secretary of State for Employment when he expects to receive the report of the committee investigating the composition of the retail price index.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We hope to receive a report by the end of this year.

Wages Councils

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many workers are presently covered by wages councils in Wales and in which categories of employment.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: This information is not available.

Vocational Qualifications

Mr. Eggar asked the Secretary of State for Employment who is to be chairman of the group to review vocational qualifications in England and Wales announced in paragraph 39 of the White Paper, "Education and Training for Young People", Cmnd. 9482, published on 3 April.

Mr. Tom King: Mr. H. G. De Ville CBE has agreed to act as chairman of the review group. Mr. De Ville is about to retire as executive deputy chairman of BICC plc and has a life time of experience of personnel training and industrial matters. At BICC his responsibilities included personnel and management services and before that he was for some 10 years responsible for personnel and training at the Ford Motor Company, Dagenham. He has been a member of the Council of the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) since 1976.

The Secretary of State for Education and Science, the Secretary of State for Wales and I are delighted that he has accepted our invitation to act as chairman of the review group. The Manpower Services Commission with the Department for Education and Science is now arranging for the group to be constituted and to begin its work and we look forward to receiving an interim report in the autumn and a final report in about a year's time.

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many young people are on youth training schemes within the city of Leicester; how many companies are supporting the youth training scheme in Leicester; and if he will give the number of companies and young people involved in each month since the scheme began.

Mr. Peter Morrison [*pursuant to his reply*, 28 March 1985, c. *293*]: Information for the city of Leicester is not available. The table shows the number of young people in

training on the youth training scheme in the Leicester local authority district at the end of each month since the scheme began.

	Number
1983-84	
April	161
May	210
June	366
July	458
August	574
September	1,162
October	1,307
November	1,330
December	1,331
January	1,315
February	1,275
March	1,216
1984-85	
April	1,216
May	1,207
June	1,434
July	1,615
August	1,832
September	1,900
October	2,030
November	2,014
December	2,046
January	2,024
February	1,918

Information on the number of companies taking part in the youth training scheme is not available. However, it is estimated that training under the scheme takes place in some 650 locations in the Leicester local authority district (but not all of these will be in companies).

Wages Inspectorate

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will publish for the north-west (east) division of the Wages Inspectorate a breakdown by wages council of *(a)* the number of firms inspected and number of workers whose pay was checked, showing those by visit and those by other method, *(b)* the number of firms found to be underpaying, *(c)* the number of workers underpaid, *(d)* the total arrears assessed and *(e)* the total arrears actually recovered, in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Peter Bottomley [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 April 1985, c. *626-7*]: It is not the practice of the Wages Inspectorate to publish divisional analyses of the results of inspections by wages council trade. With that exception, the information requested relating to 1984 is given in the following table for the north-west (east) division.

North-West (East) division of the Wages Inspectorate—provisional results of inspections, 1984

	Number
Establishments where pay was checked by visit	1,301
Establishments found to be underpaying one or more workers	560
Workers whose pay was checked by visit	6,104
Workers found to have been underpaid	979
	£
Arrears paid	115,859
Arrears waived by workers	26,455
Arrears not pursued	33,262
Total arrears assessed	175,576

In addition, the pay of 828 workers at 221 establishments was checked by postal questionnaire and found to be satisfactory. The pay of a further 52,199 workers at 954 branches of multiples which have head offices in the division was covered by satisfactory checks not involving an inspection visit. A number of these branches are located in other areas.

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will publish by region and sub-region, the latest breakdown of Wages Inspectorate staff, showing separately those who are outdoor inspectors, on an establishment and in post basis, and if he will also publish comparable figures for April 1979.

Mr. Peter Bottomley [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 April 1985, c. *626-27*]: The smallest area for which staffing figures are available is the Wages Inspectorate division.

Staff-in-post are not readily available for April 1979. The following table shows the number of authorised posts at April 1979 and the number of staff in post at September 1979 compared with the position at January 1985.

Wages Inspectorate Staff

	Outdoor wages inspectors				*Other inspectorate staff*			
	April 1979	*September 1979*	*January 1985*		*April 1979*	*September 1979*	*January 1985*	
Division	*Authorised posts*	*Staff in post*	*Authorised post*	*Staff in post*	*Authorised posts*	*Staff in post*	*Authorised posts*	*Staff in post*
London (East)	15	13	8	7	15	12	14	13
London (West)	17	14	9	10	9	8		
South Eastern	16	11	10	10	11	9	6½	6½
Southern	11	11	7	7	8	7	6½	6½
Eastern	11	9	7	8	10½	9	7	7
South Western	13	11	9	9	11	10	8½	7½
Midlands (E)	12	11	7	6	10	8	6½	6½
Midlands (W)	14	11	12	11	12½	11	6½	7½
North West (E)	11	11	7	6	8	8	7	7
North West (W)	11	10	9	9	8	8	7	7
Yorkshire and Humberside	14	14	10	10	13	13	8	8
Northern	10	10	7	7	7	6	6½	6½

Division	Outdoor wages inspectors				Other inspectorate staff			
	April 1979	September 1979	January 1985		April 1979	September 1979	January 1985	
	Authorised posts	Staff in post	Authorised post	Staff in post	Authorised posts	Staff in post	Authorised posts	Staff in post
Scotland (E)	7	7	7	8	7	7	6½	6
Scotland (W)	8	8	6	6	7½	6½	6½	8½
Wales	7	7	5	5	7	7	6	6
Total	177	158	120	119	144½	129½	104	102½

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will publish for the years 1970, 1974 and 1978 onwards in respect of the north-west (east) division of the Wages Inspectorate *(a)* the number of wages council establishments registered, *(b)* the proportion of these inspected by visit, *(c)* the proportion of firms inspected by visit found to be underpaying, *(d)* the total arrears assessed and *(e)* the total arrears paid.

Mr. Peter Bottomley [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 April 1985, c. *626-27*]: The information requested is given in the following table.

North-West (East) division

	1970	1974	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	†1984
Establishments on Wages Inspectorate register	32,016	30,772	26,788	24,679	25,401	25,236	24,855	24,669	24,705
Proportion of establishments at which pay was checked by visit	11%	8·5%	8·3%	9·7%	7·5%	4·7%	5·8%	6·4%	5·3%
Proportion of establishments visited and found to be underpaying one or more workers (See note below)	*18·3%	*27·8%	*38·3%	39·3%	45·9%	51·7%	45·1%	44·7%	43%
Total arrears assessed	*n/a	*n/a	*n/a	£131,238	£161,824	£129,477	£148,495	£176,654	£175,576
Total arrears paid	£10,213	£25,106	£101,677	£115,900	£151,307	£118,884	£122,210	£127,169	£115,859

* Figures for the proportion of establishments visited and found to be underpaying one or more workers in 1970, 1974 and 1978 are available only for employers actually paying arrears.

† Provisional.

Note: These figures cannot be taken as an indication of the general level of compliance as the Inspectorate tends to concentrate visits on establishments which are more likely to be underpaying.

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will publish estimates for 1984 on *(a)* establishments covered by wages councils, *(b)* numbers of inspections and underpayments, *(c)* numbers of workers covered, together with figures on underpayment and arrears assessed and *(d)* a regional breakdown of wages council inquiries, in the same format as that used in the reply given on 4 June 1984, *Official Report*, columns *103-104*, together with a breakdown of arrears assessed and arrears actually paid by wages council and region; and whether he will also indicate the number and regional location of cases of underpayment where the employer was prosecuted, and where civil proceedings were taken to recover arrears of wages.

Mr. Peter Bottomley [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 April 1985, c. *626-27*]: It is not the practice of the Wages Inspectorate to publish divisional analyses of underpayment by wages council trade. With that exception, the information requested relating to 1984 is given in the following tables.

Two employers in the south-west and eastern divisions of the Wages Inspectorate were prosecuted in 1984 for offences under the Wages Councils Act 1979.

Civil proceedings were brought against eight employers for the recovery of sums assessed as due in the eastern, Yorkshire and Humberside, London (east), London (west), south-west, south-east, Scotland (east) and Scotland (west) divisions.

Table 1

Establishments covered by wages councils on register—January 1985

Wages councils	London (East)	London (West)	South Eastern	Southern	Eastern	South Western	Midlands (East)	Midlands (West)
Aerated waters	11	—	14	145	27	13	28	46
Clothing manufacture	1,894	726	112	242	318	187	835	558
Boot and shoe repairing	259	374	123	99	108	152	159	230
Button manufacturing	14	7	3	5	1	2	8	9
Coffin furniture and cerement making	—	1	—	—	—	2	—	6
Cotton waste reclamation	4	—	—	—	—	1	—	—
Flax and hemp	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—
Fur	138	113	14	18	12	7	8	10
General waste materials reclamation	89	52	56	72	85	103	140	203

Wages councils	London (East)	London (West)	South Eastern	Southern	Eastern	South Western	Midlands (East)	Midlands (West)
Hairdressing undertakings	1,405	1,982	2,094	2,433	2,331	2,575	2,430	3,097
Hat, cap and millinery	17	27	3	4	45	4	7	10
Lace finishing	1	—	—	—	—	—	58	—
Laundry	31	103	71	78	60	99	67	74
Linen and cotton handkerchief	2	4	4	—	1	3	20	2
Made-up textiles	14	16	10	18	37	19	33	23
Ostrich and fancy feather	7	2	2	5	7	2	1	—
Perambulator and invalid carriage	1	1	1	4	1	1	8	3
Retail bespoke tailoring	82	169	19	45	38	38	27	33
Rope, twine and net	1	—	1	—	6	12	4	4
Sack and bag	5	3	1	—	8	2	7	13
Toy manufacturing	19	5	29	31	29	29	40	16
Retail trades (non-food)	6,131	10,021	6,338	7,329	6,613	7,154	11,394	8,421
Retail food and allied trades	5,628	4,606	8,229	9,431	8,063	8,781	6,972	8,754
Licensed non-residential	4,888	2,386	4,248	4,659	3,927	5,305	5,196	6,705
Licensed residental establishment and licensed restaurant	908	3,075	2,393	1,940	1,833	5,155	1,565	1,420
Unlicensed place of refreshment	1,252	2,071	1,155	1,054	1,127	1,514	939	897
Total	22,801	25,744	24,920	27,612	24,677	31,161	29,946	30,534

Wages councils	North Western (East)	North Western (West)	Yorkshire and Humberside	Northern	Scotland (East)	Scotland (West)	Wales	Total
Aerated waters	78	26	27	32	28	47	15	537
Clothing manufacture	722	244	488	229	88	375	172	7,190
Boot and shoe repairing	307	72	245	75	59	88	51	2,401
Button manufacturing	5	1	5	1	—	2	3	66
Coffin furniture and cerement making	2	3	5	—	2	10	—	31
Cotton waste reclamation	16	12	4	—	—	—	1	38
Flax and hemp	—	—	1	1	20	—	—	23
Fur	33	17	19	4	8	39	5	445
General waste materials reclamation	176	158	277	83	52	76	96	1,718
Hairdressing undertakings	2,099	3,474	3,286	1,805	1,420	1,357	1,603	33,391
Hat, cap and millinery	19	2	13	9	1	8	3	172
Lace finishing	—	—	—	—	4	—	1	64
Laundry	28	31	44	51	91	28	53	909
Linen and cotton handkerchief	83	34	9	1	6	1	2	172
Made-up textiles	19	25	34	23	15	28	17	331
Ostrich and fancy feather	—	—	—	4	1	—	2	33
Perambulator and invalid carriage	5	—	5	1	—	2	1	34
Retail bespoke tailoring	23	32	60	19	20	9	8	622
Rope, twine and net	12	10	17	3	22	—	2	94
Sack and bag	17	15	13	3	2	—	6	95
Toy manufacturing	26	23	44	10	4	—	19	324
Retail trades (non-food)	6,627	5,811	9,053	4,088	4,346	5,146	3,788	102,260
Retail food and allied trades	7,763	7,453	10,573	7,900	6,002	5,943	5,253	111,351
Licensed non-residential	5,443	4,501	7,129	4,211	3,288	2,187	4,102	68,175
Licensed residential establishment and licensed restaurant	880	1,448	1,834	1,420	2,434	1,365	2,078	29,748
Unlicensed place of refreshment	571	917	1,216	875	782	817	890	16,077
Total	24,954	24,309	34,401	20,848	18,695	17,528	18,171	326,301

Provisional results 1984
Analysis by Wages Council

Wages Council	All checks of pay (visited and not visited) Establishments checked	Per cent. of register checked	Number of establishments underpaying	Per cent. of establishments underpaying	Inspections by visit Establishments visited	Per cent. of register visited	Number of establishments visited underpaying	Per cent. of establishments visited underpaying
Aerated waters	42	6·7	6	14·3	42	6·7	6	14·3
Clothing manufacture	1,184	14·3	321	27·1	995	12·0	321	32·3
Boot and shoe repairing	171	7·2	16	9·4	164	6·9	16	9·8
Button manufacturing	11	17·7	6	54·5	11	17·7	6	54·5
Coffin furniture and cerement making	2	10·0	—	—	2	10·0	—	—
Cotton waste reclamation	3	8·8	—	—	3	8·8	—	—
Flax and hemp	2	15·4	—	—	2	15·4	—	—

Wages Council	All checks of pay (visited and not visited): Establishments checked	Per cent. of register checked	Number of establishments underpaying	Per cent. of establishments underpaying	Inspections by visit: Establishments visited	Per cent. of register visited	Number of establishments visited underpaying	Per cent. of establishments visited underpaying
Fur	15	3·1	3	20·0	13	2·7	3	23·1
General waste material reclamation	186	9·5	19	10·2	175	9·0	19	10·9
Hairdressing undertakings	3,481	10·4	823	23·6	2,385	7·2	823	34·5
Hat, cap and millinery	20	13·8	4	15·4	25	13·2	4	16·0
Lace finishing	5	7·4	1	20·0	5	7·4	1	20·0
Laundry	147	13·2	28	19·0	132	11·9	28	21·2
Linen and cotton handkerchief	20	9·9	7	35·0	20	9·9	7	35·0
Made-up textiles	28	8·2	5	17·9	27	7·9	5	18·5
Ostrich and fancy feather	5	15·6	—	—	5	15·6	—	—
Perambulator and invalid carriage	3	8·3	—	—	3	8·3	—	—
Retail bespoke tailoring	80	10·6	6	7·5	79	10·4	6	7·6
Rope, twine and net	16	13·7	2	12·5	11	9·4	2	18·2
Sack and bag	9	6·3	2	22·2	9	6·3	2	22·2
Toy manufacturing	27	6·9	3	11·1	27	6·9	3	11·1
Retail trades (non-food)	11,505	11·2	2,067	18·0	5,324	5·2	2,067	38·8
Retail food and allied trades	11,613	9·8	2,891	23·2	6,261	5·5	2,691	43·0
Licensed non-residential	7,192	10·7	1,446	20·1	5,494	8·1	1,446	26·3
Licensed residential establishments and licensed restaurant	3,713	13·3	1,365	36·8	3,531	11·7	1,365	38·7
Unlicensed place of refreshment	2,090	12·2	940	30·6	1,800	10·5	640	35·6
Total	41,576	10·8	9,481	22·8	26,545	6·9	9,461	35·6

Table 3

Workers covered by wages councils and provisional results of pay checks in 1984

	Estimated number of workers covered by wages council orders at June 1982	Workers whose pay was checked by visit and other methods	Workers whose pay was checked by visit	Workers underpaid	Percentage underpaid of all workers checked	Percentage underpaid of all workers checked by visit	Arrears paid	Arrears waived by workers	Arrears not pursued	Arrears assessed
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	£ 8	£ 9	£ 10	£ 11
Aerated waters	13,000	530	530	29	5·5	5·5	2,055	—	155	2,210
Clothing manufacture	252,800	24,513	18,598	781	3·2	4·2	87,887	6,086	21,150	115,123
Boot and shoe manufacturing	7,100	392	373	18	4·6	4·8	1,536	804	422	2,762
Button manufacturing	2,100	137	137	11	8·0	8·0	1,363	—	183	1,546
Coffin furniture and cerement making	300	19	19	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Cotton waste reclamation	500	21	21	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Flax and hemp	1,400	200	200	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Fur	4,500	100	62	3	3·0	4·8	185	—	—	185
General waste materials reclamation	19,300	1,268	1,130	37	2·9	3·3	5,052	—	196	5,248
Hairdressing undertakings	135,600	11,316	7,344	1,036	9·1	14·1	92,021	3,789	13,612	111,422
Hat, cap and millinery	6,800	385	348	8	1·4	1·5	655	579	—	1,244
Lace finishing	800	86	86	2	2·3	2·3	5,269	—	—	5,269
Laundry	33,700	3,142	2,367	63	2·0	2·6	10,996	1,036	2,118	14,150
Linen and cotton handkerchief	3,200	334	334	42	12·5	12·5	1,999	—	87	2,086
Made-up textile	4,800	223	220	10	4·5	4·5	717	—	561	1,278
Ostrich and fancy feather	1,400	35	35	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Perambulator and invalid carriage	1,500	355	355	—	—	—	% —	—	—	—
Retail bespoke tailoring	5,200	240	295	7	2·8	2·8	1,865	—	—	1,865
Rope, twine and net	4,000	480	455	2	0·4	0·4	113	—	—	113
Sack and bag	1,400	137	137	2	1·5	1·4	9	—	4	13
Toy manufacturing	18,900	1,180	1,180	23	2·0	2·0	1,865	—	—	1,865
Retail non-food trades	512,800	105,990	21,295	3,478	3·3	16·3	394,226	70,276	65,492	529,994
Retail food and allied trades	519,300	161,796	22,336	3,305	2·1	23·7	512,780	120,877	75,269	708,906
Licensed non-residential	508,700	30,273	30,540	3,185	6·3	10·4	366,240	43,203	31,011	440,454
Licensed residential and restaurant	555,300	35,628	30,596	2,655	7·4	7·4	261,534	18,412	34,891	294,837
Unlicensed place of refreshment	116,400	17,886	8,910	1,346	7·5	15·4	140,997	24,580	22,064	188,041
Total	2,734,800	416,894	148,073	18,043	4·3	12·2	1,889,954	292,022	267,015	2,428,991

Checks of pay carried out at establishments and underpayments found—provisional results 1984
Analysis by division

Division	All checks of pay (visited and not visited): Establishments checked	Per cent. of register checked	Number of establishments underpaying	Per cent. of establishments underpaying	Inspections by visit: Establishments visited	Per cent. of register visited	Number of establishments visited underpaying	Per cent. of establishments visited underpaying
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
London (East)	2,841	14·2	324	11·4	1,348	6·7	324	24·0
London (West)	4,506	21·6	354	7·9	1,483	7·1	354	23·9
South Eastern	3,106	10·3	703	22·6	2,504	8·3	703	28·1
Southern	3,223	11·0	475	14·7	1,941	6·6	475	24·5
Eastern	2,858	10·3	914	32·0	1,907	6·9	914	47·9
South Western	3,375	9·9	1,033	30·6	2,499	7·3	1,033	41·3
Midlands (East)	2,830	11·9	534	18·9	1,829	7·7	534	29·2
Midlands (West)	2,537	7·9	552	21·8	2,048	6·3	552	27·0
North Western (East)	2,476	10·0	560	22·6	1,310	5·3	560	43·0
North Western (West)	2,676	10·1	886	33·1	1,815	6·9	886	48·8
Yorkshire and Humberside	4,025	11·1	1,026	25·5	2,652	7·3	1,026	38·7
Northern	1,711	8·2	721	42·1	1,196	5·8	721	60·3
Scotland (East)	1,885	8·7	480	25·5	1,506	6·9	480	31·9
Scotland (West)	1,877	11·7	365	19·4	1,267	7·9	365	28·8

Division	All checks of pay (visited and not visited)				Inspections by visit			
	Establishments checked	Per cent. of register checked	Number of establishments underpaying	Per cent. of establishments underpaying	Establishments visited	Per cent. of register visited	Number of establishments visited underpaying	Per cent. of establishments visited underpaying
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Wales	1,650	7·5	534	32·4	1,249	5·6	534	42·8
Great Britain	41,576	10·8	9,461	22·8	26,545	6·9	9,461	35·6

The Divisional figures for the numbers of establishments where pay was checked by methods not involving inspection visits include multiple firms whose head office is located in the Division but whose branches are in other areas. This needs to be taken into account when comparing the Divisional figures shown in columns 1-4 of Table 4.

Table 5

Workers whose pay was checked in each Wages Inspectorate Division—provisional figures 1984

Division	Workers whose pay was checked by visit and other methods	Workers whose pay was checked by visit	Workers underpaid	Percentage underpaid of all workers checked	Percentage underpaid of workers checked by visit	Arrears paid	Arrears waived by workers	Arrears not pursued	Total arrears incurred
						£	£	£	£
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
London (East)	77,282	8,054	551	0·7	6·9	8,521	8,892	19,681	106,494
London (West)	70,543	9,577	574	0·8	6·0	104,797	19,816	14,166	138,779
South East	15,901	12,421	1,345	8·4	10·8	125,469	17,868	10,081	153,198
Southern	37,003	13,148	751	2·0	5·7	85,401	9,941	4,267	99,609
Eastern	13,702	9,422	1,800	13·1	19·1	159,901	40,422	23,273	223,596
South West	21,021	13,962	1,785	8·5	12·8	147,144	13,019	24,864	185,027
Midlands (East)	20,502	10,759	1,131	5·5	10·5	134,864	30,514	19,495	184,873
Midlands (West)	13,850	11,423	910	6·6	8·0	130,257	8,663	22,559	160,859
North West (East)	59,151	6,106	979	1·6	16·0	115,859	26,455	33,282	175,576
North West (West)	21,299	9,537	1,832	8·6	19·2	154,843	29,005	24,698	208,546
Yorkshire and Humberside	29,370	10,738	2,252	7·7	13·4	159,068	44,657	27,516	231,241
Northern	8,534	5,640	1,423	16·7	25·2	167,282	8,758	10,838	186,878
Scotland (East)	10,497	8,704	912	8·7	10·5	90,503	19,921	6,564	125,398
Scotland (West)	10,184	6,537	680	6·7	10·4	72,436	7,347	5,218	85,001
Wales	8,015	6,047	1,118	13·9	18·5	135,009	8,396	20,753	164,158
Total	416,894	148,073	18,043	4·3	12·2	1,889,954	292,022	267,015	2,428,991

The Divisional figures for the number of workers whose pay was checked by methods not involving inspection visits include workers employed by multiple firms whose head office is located in the Division who are employed in branches in other areas.

This needs to be taken into account when comparing the Divisional figures shown in columns 2 and 5 of Table 5.

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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 76**

SESSION 1984-85

25th March—4th April 1985

SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

This index is derived from the House of Commons Library's Parliamentary On-Line Information System (POLIS), and the subject terms used are based on those used in POLIS. There are often changes in column numbering, etc., between the daily part or weekly Hansard (which simply collects together the daily parts without revision) and the bound volume. The index for the bound volume is revised to take account of these changes.

Scope and arrangement of the Index

Oral and Written Parliamentary Questions are indexed under subject headings and the names of Members asking and Ministers replying to them. Questions are not listed under the names of Departments replying. Departmental listings can be arrived at indirectly by looking under the names of the Minister(s) of that Department. There will, however, be headings 'Northern Ireland', 'Scotland', and 'Wales' under which one will find not only most Questions answered by the Northern Ireland Office, Scottish Office, Welsh Office but also Questions about these areas of the United Kingdom which are answered by other Departments. Ministerial statements are indexed under subject headings, under 'Ministerial statements' and the names of Ministers making them and Members speaking on them. General debates are indexed under broad subject headings and under the names of all Members and Ministers taking part. Debates on legislation (Bills, Orders, Regulations etc.) are indexed under the name of the Bill, Statutory Instrument etc., under subject headings and under the names of those taking part.

Rulings and Statements by Mr. Speaker and his deputies are brought together under the heading 'Speakers rulings and statements'.

Other contributions by Mr. Speaker and his deputies appear under the heading 'Speaker'.

Opposition Day Debates, Estimates Day Debates and Standing Order No. 10 applications are listed under those respective headings and under subject headings too.

The date of each item except Parliamentary Questions is inserted immediately before the reference.

Members' names are given in the form by which they prefer to be known and are printed in bold italics. Under their names, entries are arranged under one of the two headings *Debates etc.* (to include interventions on statements, points of order and so on) or *Questions*.

Abbreviations

Bills 1R=first reading, 2R=second reading, Money res=money resolution, Com=Committee stage, Rep=Report stage, 3R=third reading, amendt/amendts=amendment/amendments, *=matter taken formally, without debate.

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